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Chances for the Aquino government.**

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

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The decisive tests facing the Aquino government

CORAZON AQUINO, the new president of the Philippines, has proclaimed a "revolutionary government," dissolving the institutions inherited from the period of martial law (which was decreed in September 1972 and formally lifted in 1981). The political reforms are speeding up, but the new regime's economic program remains very vague.

However, it is precisely in the economic arena that the future of the new government will in large part be decided. It is there that its capacity will be tested to reunify the Philippine elites and get the country out of the crisis into which President Marcos (and the advice of the World Bank) had plunged it.

PAUL PETITJEAN

In the economic arena, the new government will demonstrate to what extent it can stabilize the country's relations with imperialism, as well as respond to the most urgent needs of working people, whose standard of living has dropped dramatically over the past two decades.

On March 25, Corazon Aquino abolished the old National Assembly (Batasang Pambansa) and the Marcos constitution of 1973. A provisional constitution has been adopted giving the president very wide powers, including that of governing by decree. A committee is going to be set up to draft a new constitution.

Within a year, the constitution drafted will be put to a plebiscite, and a new National Assembly is to be elected. The objective, according to Corazon Aquino, is to "put out the cancer in our political system." (1) This is to be done by acquiring the means to liquidate the political and institutional legacy of the dictatorship.

This radical decision was expected. But it has deeply divided government circles. According to the minister Aquilino Pimentel, himself less than enthusiastic about the president's decision, half of the cabinet members raised objections.

In fact, the provisional constitution gives discretionary powers to Corazon Aquino at a time when competition is raging among the parties and groups that make up the present majority. Once again, the weight of the presidency has been reinforced.

The dismantling of the institutions of the former regime is continuing in several areas. Marcos had built up a network of tame mass communications, gagging the free press. The new regime has begun to attack this media empire.

The *Times Journal* (owned by Benjamin Romualdez, Imelda Marcos' brother) and the *Daily Express* (owned by the sugar czar Roberto Benedicto) have been seized. The government has taken control of three television channels that belonged to Imee Marcos, the former dictator's daughter. Later they are to be sold off.

The premartial-law press is reappearing. The new minister of information, Teodoro Locsin Jr., himself was editor in chief of the *Philippine Free Press*.

Democratic freedoms, including the right of *habeas corpus* have been reestablished. The Philippine government has ratified the United Nations international accord on civic and political freedoms, a pact signed 20 years ago but which Marcos refused to sign because of his martial law. The enormous repressive powers of the Marcos presidency have been abolished.

In taking the radical step of decreeing a "revolutionary government" unbound by the laws and structures left over from the Marcos regime, Corazon Aquino not only dissolved the National Assembly. She also assumed the power to oust more than 1,500 mayors linked to the old regime.

A tug of war has begun for control of the provinces. The election campaign waged by Cory and "Doy" Laurel mobilized considerable crowds in the provinces, testifying to the national popular support for Marcos' challengers. But the "revolution" that drove out the former dictator on February 26 was a Manila affair.

It was only in the capital area, Manila-Quezon City, that hundreds of thousands of people came onto the streets and experienced "people's power." The events transpired too quickly (four days) for the mobilizations to spread.

Thus, even in the central provinces of the island of Luzon, such as Tarlac, which are quite close to the capital, the power of the armed forces and the local notables has not been directly challenged by the mass mobilization. (2)

The right opposition to the new regime is mustering its forces. From his Hawaiian exile, Marcos is keeping in close touch with his retainers in the capital and in his native province of Ilocos Norte (in Northern Luzon).

The ousted dictator's New Society Movement (KBL) and Blas Ople, Marcos' former minister of labor, who has just formed a new opposition party, the Partido Nacionalista ng Pilipinas (PNP — Nationalist Party of the Philippines) are denouncing the "revolutionary government" in the name of no less than legality and democracy.

Mayors resist new government

Blas Ople has not hesitated to say that Cory has "vested herself with the power of a dictator." (3) More than a thousand mayors called on by the president to resign have declared their determination to resist.

However, in those provinces where local strongmen, such as Armando Gustilo, the mayor of Negros del Norte (on Negros, the sugar island) rule thanks to veritable private armies, the confrontation threatens to be the most deep-going. That is also the case in Lanao del Sur (on the island of Mindanao), where Ali Dimaporo controls at least 500 armed men.

The dismantling of the political structures inherited from the Marcos regime has its economic corollary. Under martial law and thanks to

1. *International Herald Tribune*, March 26, 1986.

2. See, for example, the report of Patrick Sabatier in the Paris daily *'Libération'*, March 4, 1986.

3. *International Herald Tribune*, March 26, 1986.



Demonstration by supporters of the radical nationalist coalition, Bayan (DR)

state support, monopolies were constituted in the key sectors, and a parasitic state bourgeoisie was reinforced — a “crony capitalism,” or “bureaucratic capitalism.”

In its 20 years in power, the Marcos regime formed more than 300 state enterprises, while at the same time opening up the country widely to foreign capital. The main financial and commercial monopolies were in sugar (Roberto Bendicto) and coconuts (Eduardo Cojuangco, a cousin of the new president, who has fled).

The presidential family, the Marcos-Romualdez clan, itself offered, to the point of caricature, a picture of a corrupt, nepotistic, and graft-ridden bourgeoisie.

The new regime has seized or frozen Marcos' holdings in the Philippines and is trying to get such measures applied against the assets that he has stashed away abroad, in particular in the United States and Switzerland. It is liquidating the privileges and protection of the “bureaucratic” bourgeoisie. It is attacking the monopolies in sugar and coconuts.

In the course of this, it is going to run up against sharp resistance and some delicate problems. For example, Juan Ponce Enrile, minister of defence under Marcos and still in that post today, made his fortune under martial law in the coconut business, working hand in glove with Eduardo Cojuangco.

It is, however, in this area that the Aquino government's economic policy is the clearest. In fact, dismantling the parasitic apparatus built up under the dictatorship is in line both with the demands of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the

program of the modern big-business bourgeoisie. It also coincides with the interests of the sugar and coconut planters, who have long been under the heel of the financial and commercial monopolies and subjected to the competition of Marcos' cronies. The regime hopes thereby to restore the confidence and initiative of international big-business circles and the Philippine bourgeoisie.

To this end, Corazon Aquino has named professionals to the key economic posts in the government. The minister of finance, Jaime Ongpin, chief of one of the main mining trusts and close to the Church, is quite representative of the Makati Business Club, which under Marcos served as a kind of parliament for the opposition bourgeoisie. The minister of commerce and industry, Jose Concepcion, has a similar background. He is the head of a big-business clan with interests in agriculture, food and light industry. Also, he heads the country's biggest association of Catholic laypeople. The minister of tourism, Jose Antonio Gonzales, controls an industrial and commercial group. The minister of agriculture, Ramon Mitra, a member of the Philippine Democratic Party — Combat (PDP-Laban), is a big stock raiser on the island of Palawan.

Nonetheless, the government's desire to revive and reform the economy is going to run up against fundamental problems in the context of a bad economic situation. The economy is in a bad state because of the disarray left behind by Ferdinand Marcos, who literally looted the public treasury. At the end of his regime, he built up his holdings abroad consid-

erably. And he printed money without any restraint to finance his election campaign. The printing presses churned out around 12.5 thousand million pesos for that purpose.

Since the end of 1983, business closures have multiplied, and unemployment has gone up drastically. Raw materials prices are generally very low on the world market. In two years, 1984-1985, the country's gross national product has declined by 10%. It is probably going to shrink again in 1986. The economic and social crisis in the Philippines has no parallel among its partners in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Dependence on imperialism presents a major problem

The primary underlying problem is a very great dependence on the world market and imperialism. The scale of “crony capitalism” (sometimes protected by tariff barriers that the IMF wants to see dismantled) should not give rise to any illusions. The Marcos regime did not implement a policy for industrializing the country. Its dependence — always great because of its colonial past — has increased over the last two decades.

The direct influence of foreign capital and the control it has over commercial exports (fruit in Mindanao, for instance) have increased. On the insistent “advice” of the World Bank, economic development has been oriented toward exports, thereby perpetuating the country's dependence on international markets. This is heightened by the

fact that the export trade is concentrated to a great extent in a few main areas — sugar, coconuts, copper, forestry products, tourism (including prostitution), labor power, semi-conductors, and clothing.

Most of these industries today face a severe crisis. This is particularly true for sugar, in which the Aquino-Cojuangco family has major interests. Sugar-cane growing faces very strong competition from supermechanized plantations in other countries; from the European sugar-beet growers, who enjoy solicitous protection from their governments; and from artificial sweeteners.

At the end of 1985, a pound of sugar was worth 25 US cents on the world market, while the Philippine production cost was 14 cents! As a result, out of the 400,000 hectares that had been under sugar cane in the islands, 170,000 were taken out of production. But hundreds of thousands of workers depend on this industry. Some 250,000 of them are already without work and prey to want. (4)

After a brief upturn in 1983, revenue from exports of coconut products fell again in 1985 to 50 per cent of the level of the previous year, and a third of the islands' population depends on this industry.

Exports of manufactured products are restricted by the policy of quotas imposed by the Western countries, in clothing for example. Competition from other dominated countries and technological advances in the imperialist countries, in particular in the armament industry and microelectronics, further limit exports.

Dismal examples of the dynamic of an "outward-turned" economy, tourism and tourism-prostitution, as well as the export of labor power, have become key sources of foreign currency. But in this area also, the future is somber.

The massive export of labor power promoted by the Marcos government has considerably weakened the country's potential. It is often skilled workers who are exported — from doctors and nurses, who are cruelly lacking in the countryside and the poor urban neighborhoods, to electricians and telephone workers.

The dictatorship took its pound of flesh from this emigration by trying to control the repatriation of the emigrants' wages and by imposing double taxation. Phony employment offices multiplied, ruthlessly fleecing many of those looking for jobs abroad or promising honest jobs to women who found themselves forced into prostitution when they reached their destinations.

The consequences of this massive exporting of workers on social and family life have sometimes been very

The trade unions in the Philippines

THE OVERALL structures of the Philippine trade-union movement may change profoundly as a result of the fall of the Marcos regime. The main groupings are the following:

- The May 1 Movement (Kilusang Mayo Uno, KMMU). Founded in 1980, it is the main "class struggle" union confederation. It is militant and independent of the regime. At its founding, it had 50,000 members. In 1985, it claimed 500,000. It includes federations, regional unions and independent unions. It does not belong to any world confederation but is recognized by some national confederations (the ICTU in Ireland, the NZFL of New Zealand, ACTU in Australia and the CGIL in Italy). Its general secretary, Rolando Olalia, succeeded his father, Felixberto. The KMMU is present in the industrial sector, in mining and in the plantations. (1)

- The TUPAS. Founded in 1972 by Bonifacio Tupaz, it claimed 120,000 members in 1985. It belongs to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), whose headquarters is in Prague and which includes the unions in the Eastern bloc countries, as well as others such as the French CGT.

- The Federation of Free Workers (FFW). It was founded in 1980 by American Jesuits in the context of the Cold War. After supporting the Marcos regime, it took its distance from it in the 1980s. It belongs to the World Confederation of Labor (WCL, the Catholic confederation) and is supported by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in West Germany.

- The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP). It was organized in 1975 by the Marcos regime under martial law. It claimed 1,200,000 members in 1985. It is led by Democrito Mendoza and belongs to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), like FO in France and the AFL-CIO in the United States. It has become quite compromised by its collaboration with the regime over a decade.

- "Trade-union" alliances have appeared with the radicalization of the social struggle in the Philippines. One was the PMP (Pagkakaisa ng Manggagawang Pilipino, Philippine Workers Unity) which was formed in 1981 and included the KMMU, the TUPAS and independent unions. This alliance was banned by the government in 1982 and its leaders were arrested. In 1984, the PKMP (Pambansang Koalisyon ng mga Manggagawa Laban sa Kahirapan, National Coalition of Workers Against Poverty) appeared. It includes the same organizations as the PMP and extended its support to the dissident federations of the FFW and the TUCP.

1. See the interview with Rolando Olalia published in 'International Viewpoint', No. 68, January 28, 1985.

grave. But getting a job overseas has often served as a life preserver for poor families suffering from unemployment and declining living standards. Hundreds of thousands of workers have in fact benefited from much higher wages overseas than they could have hoped to get if they stayed at home.

Today, with the economic crisis and falling oil revenues, the international labor market is contracting. In fact, for a decade most Philippine emigrant workers have gone to the building sites in the Middle East (while doctors, nurses, domestics and prostitutes have found jobs more readily in the West or in Hong Kong).

If the economic crisis continues in the Philippines, the cutbacks in infrastructural developmental projects in the oil-producing countries threaten to have profound social consequences in the islands.

The whole policy of developing the country by means of an export economy is now in question. The new government recognizes that and is talking about building up the domestic market. But the country's dependence also shows up on the politico-financial level. The form of growth that the Marcos government adopted, under the aegis of the World Bank, has

led to one of the worse situations of indebtedness in Asia. The external debt is officially estimated at 26,000 million dollars and semi-officially at 30,000 million.

In the negotiations on rescheduling of interest payments on the debt, the IMF imposed drastic conditions giving to itself a veritable right of overseeing government decisions. The journalist Jose Galand wrote: "The IMF has extended a standby credit facility of 615 million special drawing rights (SDR, worth 710.8 million US dollars) under an agreement that gives the fund considerable say over the country's economic policies." (5)

The IMF makes a quarterly report on the implementation of the political directions it has imposed. Its judgements influence the group of 483 foreign banks that hold the Philippine debts. It is possible that

4. Figures cited by Walden Bello in "Philippine economic crisis: Waiting for the receiver," *Inside Asia*, November-December 1985. On the crisis of the sugar industry, see in particular Philippe Pons, "Le sucre amer de Negros," *Le Monde*, March 25, 1986, and Paul Petitjean, "Growing guerrilla movement fuelled by peasant desperation," *International Viewpoint*, No. 49, March 26, 1984.

5. Jose Galand, 'Far Eastern Economic Review', March 13, 1986.

in view of the present situation the IMF will display caution. It wants to avoid having to declare the country bankrupt out of fear of the possible repercussions. But through its control of credit it holds a very powerful means of applying pressure. And the Philippines' margin for maneuver in regard to this powerful imperialist institution was further reduced under the Marcos regime, which thus again sold out the national sovereignty.

In fact, the policy of the IMF is for removing all protection against the competition of imperialist capital, for drastic austerity policies paid for by the poor masses, for a contraction rather than an expansion of the internal market and for weakening rather than strengthening the autonomy of national capital.

The country's dependence has become a formidable obstacle in the way of social and economic reforms. But any policy of radical reform, in particular in agriculture, runs up against two other underlying problems — the weight of the traditionally dominant social strata and the inherent dynamic of the capitalist market.

The new government, like its predecessors, knows that 70 per cent of the population lives from agriculture and that it has to establish its authority in the countryside where the Communist insurrection is most deeply rooted.

Corazon Aquino and her advisers are probably aware of the importance of a policy of agrarian reform and support for the peasantry. But the whole of the contemporary history of the Philippines shows that there is a long way between proclaiming an agrarian reform and really transforming the agrarian structures in the interests of the working people in the rural population.

Already in the 1950s, in response to the Hukbalahap peasant uprising on the island of Luzon, Ramon Magsaysay was elected president on a program calling for agrarian reform. In December 1952, moreover, an American investigating committee had created a scandal among the Philippine notables. The Harding Report produced by this committee called in fact for nothing less than the elimination of tenant farming and sharecropping by distributing the land.

In 1963, it was the turn of President Diosdado Macapagal to introduce an agrarian reform law. President Marcos himself was the official promoter of the "green revolution": the agrarian reform law of 1972, the Masagana 99 program for rural credit of 1973, research on high-yield seeds (the Institute of Rice-Growing Research — IRI — was set up in the Philippines) and later the cooperative movement, *Samahang*

Nayon.

In the past 30 years, Philippine agriculture has undergone considerable evolution. The Magsaysay plan helped to bring about the success of the American counterinsurgency policy by raising the hopes of the peasants concerned. The market economy has spread widely throughout the country. Agribusiness has spread to new regions and taken on more modern forms. The methods of cultivation have been modified with the introduction of high-yield seeds, mechanization and industrial fertilizers and pesticides.

However, no government reform has put an end to the conditions of exploitation, oppression, poverty and dependence suffered by the working peasants, as well as by the agricultural workers. On the contrary, a dramatic contrast has grown up between the wealth of agricultural produce produced by the country and the growing poverty of those who create this wealth.

Small farmers trapped by capitalist market

There are two underlying causes of this. The political and economic power of the traditional possessing classes (the landowners who are also traders and usurers, the big planters) and of the modern possessing classes (the entrepreneurs, agents of multinational companies) over the small peasants, tenants, and agricultural workers has never been broken. Quite often it has been those who had no interest in applying the radical clauses of agrarian reform laws who were officially charged with implementing them (mayors who are also landlords, for example).

Furthermore, the omnipresent capitalist market does not favor the small producers. Modern agriculture involves big investments. The price of fertilizers and pesticides has been increasing faster than profits from the harvest. The peasants have no control over the market. The traditional social structures and the expanding capitalist market have combined to maintain the dependence of the poor strata, in particular through debt.

To break the conservative power of the rural elites and the logic of the capitalist market, laws and programs from above have never been sufficient in the Philippines. There are a lot of people today who know that from experience in the provinces. And so it is understandable that peasants and agricultural workers display skepticism about such things. (6)

A real agrarian reform is not going to be imposed by decree. It will have to be won by mass struggle. In order to keep agrarian reform from

getting bogged down in the traditional social structures and from being diverted to the profit of agribusiness, it has to be carried out by revolutionary methods.

It is on this point obviously that the weakness of the "revolution" of February 22-26, 1986, is most glaring. The provinces did not get time to move a muscle. Even in Manila, where the population got a taste of the experience of "people's power" — the might represented by hundreds of thousands of demonstrators — this power was not structured by bodies representative of it, by mass committees.

Moreover, what is true for the countryside also holds for the urban centers, where poverty has reached unbearable levels, as attested by the growth of child prostitution. (7) Without an independent, radical mass struggle, the transformations promised by the new government will never become a reality.

The activity of the revolutionary forces (8) and the organized mass movement will be decisive in determining what benefit the poor strata will derive from the overthrow of Marcos. The role of the neighborhood associations, unions (9) and peasant movements (10) cannot be underestimated.

In a "central statement," the May 1 Movement (Kilusang Mayo Uno — KMU) has said that its components "recognize the Aquino government as the product of the sovereign will of the Filipino people and support the democratic reforms that it has initiated."

But at the same time the KMU is advancing 16 demands that represent the immediate interests of the poor masses themselves, as well as five more general ones, stressing that "the fight to uplift the economic and political rights of the impoverished and repressed Filipino workers continues to be our urgent task." (11) It must be pointed out that on

6. See for example, Daniel South-erland, "Farmers are Skeptical of Aquino," *International Herald Tribune*, March 18, 1986.

7. According to an official report, in 1985 in the city of Manila alone, there were at least 20,000 minors engaged in prostitution. Child prostitution is notable in a dozen regions (including the environs of big US military bases). See Roland-Pierre Parinaux, *Le Monde*, May 18, 1985. See also his article in *le Monde diplomatique*, January 1986: "Un autre combat pour la survie aux Philippines. Au coeur de la misère urbaine."

8. In a future article I will come back to the evolution of the Philippine left.

9. On the unions, see the box and *Philippines Information*, No. 35, October 1985; No. 36, November 1985; and No. 37, December 1985.

10. On the birth of the peasant movement in the Philippines (KMP), see *Philippines Information*, No. 39, February 1986.

11. *Kilusang Mayo Uno Central Statement*, three typed pages, March 1986.

The legal political parties

BEFORE THE imposition of martial law, two big bourgeois parties alternated in power — the Liberal Party and the Nationalist Party. Marcos belonged to the former and then shifted to the latter in 1965 in order to assure his election to the presidency. Then he destroyed the two-party system. Under martial law, he imposed his own official party, the New Society Movement (KBL).

Today the major legal parties, not including the extra-parliamentary organizations, are the following:

— The United Nationalist and Democratic Organization (UNIDO). Formed in August 1980, UNIDO is a grouping of about a dozen political groups, generally conservative, including the leftovers from the Nationalist Party and the Liberal Party. Among its more prominent members are Salvador Laurel (vice president, prime minister, minister of foreign affairs), Rogaciano Mercado (minister of public works), Alberto Romulo (minister of the budget) Ernesto Maceda (minister of natural resources). It remains to be seen if UNIDO, which is a coalition, will become a real party.

— The Nationalist Party. It was on its ticket that Marcos was elected president in 1965. It was led by the brothers Jose and Salvador Laurel, and the latter broke in 1979 with Marcos to become, a year later, the principal representative of UNIDO.

— The Liberal Party. Benigno Aquino was its secretary general and Gerardo Roxas, its chairperson. Under martial law, this party split in two, with a progressive wing represented by the former president Diosdado Macapagal and Jovito Salonga (who today is at the head of a presidential committee for clean government). The right wing is identified with Eva

Estrada Kalaw, a former senator who ran on the UNIDO ticket in 1984, despite the call for boycotting the elections from the party chairperson, Salonga, who was then in exile in the United States.

— The Philippine Democratic Party — Combat (PDP-Laban). This party came out of the fusion of two organizations opposing Marcos. The Laban was formed in 1978 by Benigno Aquino, husband of the present president of the Philippines, who was arrested by Marcos in 1972. In 1978, he was still in prison. He was finally released in 1980, and then assassinated in 1983. The other component, the Philippine Democratic Party, founded in February 1982, was strongly influenced by the so-called social democratic current, of Catholic origin.

Among the more prominent members of the PDP-Laban are Aquilino Pimentel from the province of Cagayan de Oro (present minister of local administration), Ramon Mitra, a Palawan rancher (minister of agriculture and food).

— Regional movements: The Mindanao Alliance, led by Homobono Adaza in the province of West Misamis; the Concerned Citizens Party (CCP) of Cesar Climaco, mayor of Zamboanga (Mindanao), who was assassinated in November 1984; and Panaghiusa (Unity) in Cebu.

— The KBL, formed by Marcos, is today in the midst of crisis. Juan Ponce Enrile (minister of defence) was a member of this party. Now it is led by Jose Rono and Cesar Cirata (former prime minister under the Marcos regime).

The Philippines Nationalist Party (PNDP). Formed on March 15, 1986, by Blas Ople (former minister of labor under Marcos and a leader of the KBL). It has revived the name of the old Nationalist Party of the Laurel brothers.

kinship ... Rudyard Kipling implored Americans to take up 'the white man's burden' in the Philippines ... Whether it was what the historian Richard Hofstadter called 'the voice of God' intoning Manifest Destiny that urged us on, or only 'the carnal larynx of Theodore Roosevelt,' America imperially imposed its might on a devoutly Roman Catholic society ...

"People have long been debating the perplexing questions about when, if ever, it is appropriate to intervene in the affairs of others. Events in the Philippines raise this question anew ... Whatever actions the United States does or does not take now, it cannot help but influence events in the Philippines ... America should accept these facts and not be embarrassed to use its economic muscle, political influence and moral authority ... America is still a proselytizing democracy. It still believes that it is a city on a hill, a new Jerusalem, 'the last best hope of mankind.' Even more significant, many Filipinos also believe this ... Surely America still has an obligation to loan its kin a ladder." (12)

This almost unbelievable rhetoric says a lot about the ideological climate that the interventionists are trying to create — in the name of democracy obviously. The international scope of this offensive aimed at legitimizing US intervention appears clearly in an article written by Charles Krauthammer for the Washington Post Writers Group:

"Notice how few people, American or Filipino, seem bothered by all this 'interference in the internal affairs of other countries.' And rightly so. In friendly countries ruled by dictators, it should be the policy of the United States to meddle on behalf of a 'third force,' a democratic alternative to a pro-American despot on the one hand and to Communist insurgents on the other."

What is true for the Philippines should be true for Chile also — and Nicaragua. The "semi-interventionists," those who support American action in the Philippines but denounce it in Nicaragua (and vice versa) are told:

"Why not come clean and admit this principle: that out of strategic and moral necessity the United States should and will intervene in the world to promote democracy wherever it can and when it can do so without unbearable cost or risk. It has started to face its responsibilities in the Philippines. Other democrats around the world have the right to ask: Why not here, too?" (13)

Every point is false in this "common sense" argument. It is not

the countries of the Third World.

This campaign to shape public opinion has at times taken on extraordinarily nostalgic and mystical notes, as in the statement of David J. Steinberg, president of Long Island University: "American objectives in the Philippines have not changed since the turn of the century, when the United States took possession (sic) of the Islands: America wanted to establish and preserve a stable, pro-US society. It also sought to enhance its geopolitical position and military power ... while encouraging Filipinos to develop and preserve their democracy. ... Condescending as it may appear today, William Howard Taft's phrase 'little brown brothers' has been internalized by many Filipinos, who feel a kind of fictive

12. 'International Herald Tribune', February 4, 1986.

13. 'International Herald Tribune', February 7, 1986.

Washington that freed the islands from Marcos but the Philippine people. By their mass mobilizations, they upset the American plans for "reform with continuity." (14)

The problem does not lie in having the United States — an imperialist great power — intervene in the name of democracy. It lies simply in stopping its intervention. If Washington had not intervened in the country, the Marcos dictatorship would have been overthrown long ago!

There is nothing in common between the Chile of Pinochet and the Nicaragua of the Sandinista revolution! In Nicaragua, which has a people's government, the mechanisms of dependency were broken with the overthrow of Somoza.

The problem is the policy of strangling the revolution (and thereby the democratic freedoms won by the people in the course of the revolution) that Washington has been pursuing by escalating intervention.

History tends to repeat itself. Already at the end of the last century, the Philippine people liberated themselves from the three-centuries-long yoke of Spanish domination. They were in fact the first people in the region to overthrow a colonial government through insurrection.

After buying from the Spanish what they did not own, the United States imposed its own domination on the islands at the cost of a bloody war and thanks to the capitulation of a large part of the elites. This did not keep the United States from portraying itself subsequently as a force for democracy come to liberate their "little brown brothers."

The democratic verbiage of the United States under Reagan should not create any illusions. The American policy is a strong-arm policy. In the name of the "Reagan Doctrine" of fighting Communism, "The administration has turned to a Central Intelligence Agency reinvigorated and greatly expanded under the activist leadership of William J. Casey." (15)

"Moderate" elements of the CIA, such as deputy director John N. MacMahon, were pushed aside. The annual budget of the agency "far exceeds 500 million dollars, which is much more funding than at any time since the Vietnam war." (16) In the Philippines as elsewhere, American imperialism will defend its own interests — never those of the Filipino people. □

14. See Paul Petitjean, "After the fall of Marcos," *IV* No. 95, March 24, 1986.

15. Patrick E. Tyler and David B. Ottaway, "CIA Covert Role Flourishes Under 'Reagan Doctrine,'" *International Herald Tribune*, March 10, 1986.

16. *Ibid.*

The print dispute: a fight for trade-union rights

ON JANUARY 24, press magnate Rupert Murdoch provoked a strike by 5,500 union members employed on production of his four newspapers — *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, the *News of the World*, and *The Sun*. He moved production of the newspapers from Fleet Street, London's traditional newspaper-producing area, to Wapping in East London and demanded drastic reductions in the workforce, refusing to recognise long-established trade-union rights. When the four unions involved protested with strike action, every single worker was sacked, and the unions' funds were later sequestered.

Since then the sacked trade unionists and their supporters have been out regularly to Wapping to picket the new plant which is built like a fortress, complete with barbed wire, guard towers and a moat. The building is thus equipped in order to protect the scab members of the electricians' union, the EETPU, now working inside the new plant.

We spoke to Larry and Jackie Hyett about the dispute and its wider implications. Larry was sacked from the *Sunday Times* and is a member of the London Machine branch of the SOGAT '82 union. Jackie is active in the support unit for the printworkers in the London borough of Lambeth. Both are members of the Labour Party.

Question. Can you explain to us what the dispute is about?

Larry Hyett. There are five unions involved. SOGAT '82 [Society of Graphical and Allied Trades], which is my union, NGA [National Graphical Association], AUEW [Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers] and NUJ [National Union of Journalists], which is only partly on strike. There is also the EETPU [Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union], which is not on strike at the present moment. A section of the EETPU membership is acting as scabs in this dispute by working for Murdoch at the Wapping print works.

The strike is basically over trade-union rights and trade-union recognition at the new Wapping plant. This is what brought me out on strike, when Rupert Murdoch proposed, without negotiation, the following conditions of work:

— That there would be no closed shop. This would mean that employees who are members of a union could leave it at any time. This is a basic principle as far as I'm concerned because this undermines union strength.

— That anyone taking part in

a strike or industrial action would be subject to immediate dismissal without the right of appeal. That is, that there is no right to strike.

— That there would be no recognition of different chapels [branches] and no negotiation with them. This is a further effort to undermine in-house agreements.

— That new technology could be adopted at any time, followed by job cuts.

As rank-and-file members, our view is that new technology should be used to benefit the workers and enhance working conditions, not just to increase the profits of multinational companies.

— Another fundamental issue was that the employer has the exclusive right to manage. In other words management can hire and fire, transfer, demote etc. as they see fit. All this would be legally binding upon union members. Within this framework, the management demanded that any union representative could be deselected from his or her position for any misdemeanour.

We are totally opposed to these conditions. We want independent trade unions. The negotiations at the *Sunday Times* started some 18 months

ago. An agreement was drawn up and signed. This agreement was torn up by a new management representative named Pole-Carew — a notorious union-bashing agency. Our negotiations involved the transfer to new sites and the introduction of increased pagination. Our current workplace only has a capability of printing 80 pages. We signed an agreement that we would print 170 pages on the *Sunday Times*. We knew that would have to be linked to a transfer programme. The *News of the World* also had a signed agreement to move with the staff to Wapping. That agreement was also torn up before the union's eyes.

These are the reasons why today we find ourselves in dispute.

Q. In the meantime, Murdoch had already taken people on at Wapping?

LH. This is true. He told us that he was preparing for a new publication at Wapping called the *London Post*. He said this was why he needed the extra staff. We now realize that this was a lie. These fabrications were engineered by management to prolong negotiations. During the new set of negotiations the terms I outlined earlier were drawn up. The dispute was clearly provoked by the management.

Through leaks from solicitors' offices we later learned that Murdoch had been advised that the best way for him to get rid of the original workforce, from a legal point of view, was through sacking them whilst on strike. So now 6,000 of us have been sacked.

Q. What is the position of the EETPU on Fleet Street in this dispute?

LH. The EETPU press branch is a very militant branch. They support our action. They have not taken industrial action to support us yet though.

As far as I am concerned, we need to step up the dispute and there are a number of ways that we can do that.

One way is to call for the boycotting of media coverage which tries to put forward adverse propaganda against strikers and their supporters. The other way is to spread the dispute to other newspapers. During the dispute every other newspaper title has been waiting to introduce similar measures on the back of Murdoch's battle with the unions. Every title is making demands for redundancy and for the introduction of new technology whilst Murdoch has been in dispute. For example on the *Daily Telegraph* the negotiations with the day- and night-shift workers have been frozen pending the outcome of the dispute. The *Daily Mirror* is the same.

We must resolve these problems by escalating the Murdoch dispute and taking it to the other national newspapers.

Q. What support have you received from other unions or from the Labour Party?

LH. The Labour Party is keeping a very low profile. They are giving us the same type of support they gave to the miners.

Other unions have given us more support than they originally gave the miners. The Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) has issued an instruction from the National Executive Council, telling their drivers not to cross our picket lines. The drivers, unfortunately, have chosen not to observe these.

Other unions outside the printing industry have shown quite a bit of financial and moral support. Through the pressure of the rank and file, physical support is building up too.

We are now advocating mass picketing and we have won the political argument within SOGAT in actually bringing about mass picketing. We have pressurized the National Executive which was reluctant to do this, and now the strike is being run by the London District Committee. The numbers on the picket lines have grown from hundreds into thousands. For example, on March 15 there were 8,000-10,000 workers on the picket line at Wapping. In my opinion you saw true workers' power on the streets that day. First the picketers destroyed the perimeter railings of what has become known as fortress Wapping. Barricades were erected at major road junctions used by scab lorry drivers. Printers and other trade unionists helped to defend them. Vehicles were used to block the road. The police used every effort but were unable to beat us into submission.

Women were shoulder to shoulder with the men that night. They helped to dismantle buildings, to build barricades. These are the types of actions we think are going to lead to the turn in the tide against trade unionism in this country.

This is putting pressure on the union nationally. I don't have much faith in them but they are beginning to change. Brenda Dean, general secretary of SOGAT, has said that "We will rely on traditional trade-union tactics." The way I interpret that statement, it should mean: boycotting of all Murdoch's products, world wide; mass picketing and support from the wider trade-union movement.

Q. Jackie, what is your role in the strike and what are you doing?

Jackie Hyett. Well, I was involved

Murdoch's gimmick

FOR MOST print union members Murdoch's latest offer to end the print dispute is no more than a gimmick.

The offer involves handing over the £12 million Fleet Street site, which Murdoch deserted in order to set up the scab plant at Wapping, to the unions to run their own newspaper. Murdoch is hoping to play on the fact that for many years now the labour movement has wanted to have its own daily newspaper.

At the 15,000-strong labour movement rally held in support of printworkers on April 6 in London, the offer was rejected by most of the speakers, although some Labour Party leaders are said to be favourable to the idea. In fact the rally itself, which was also addressed by NUM leader Arthur Scargill and attended by many miners' contingents, is testimony to the growing support that is building up behind the printworkers.

in setting up a support unit in our area from day one of the strike. I have supported Larry in everything that he has done. We have tried to get lists of the names of other wives but so far this hasn't been forthcoming from the union chapel. The wives turned out on the women's demonstration but it's more difficult to get them involved in picketing. The first women's demonstration was completely spontaneous — it wasn't advertised and about 3,000 women turned up. The second time was on March 8, International Women's Day, and about 6,000 women turned up, from the wider movement as well. That night we did stop production. But a lot of women had kids with them and didn't want to do the picketing.

The support unit was set up by the Labour Party. I support the fight for trade unionism in this country whether you're employed or unemployed. If this Tory government and Maggie Thatcher are allowed to get away with what they are doing in our country, trade unionism will be no more. I was involved in getting the support unit for the miners off the ground and I have been politically active for some time now. I think if more printers had been involved during the miners' strike that would have helped our fight today.

Q. What does the support group do?

JH. At the first meeting there were about 100 people. We discussed how to get people down to the picket lines — lots of people don't want to go on their own. Meetings have been arranged. Larry and his comrades have spoken at between 70 and 80 meetings. We have raised about

£3,000. We have had a tremendous response from unions, especially NALGO [National Association of Local Government Officers], the NUT [National Union of Teachers] and from women's groups, gays and lesbians and the Black community. I think there are now 17 support units within the London area. There are also support groups further afield and they are federated into the union of support groups.

Q. What did you learn from the miners' strike?

LH. Personally, I learnt a lot from it because I was heavily involved in the miners' dispute. We saw the police tactics in that dispute and we saw other unions' responses to the miners. This is why I say we must be strong as printworkers and rely upon traditional trade-union tactics.

What we learnt from the miners' strike was that we could not trust the laws of this land to give justice to working-class people. We must use our industrial strength to bring about justice. The strongest weapon we have is organized labour. We must agitate for the shutdown of Fleet Street and we must agitate for the Trades Union Congress [TUC] to implement its pledges. The TUC holds the ultimate weapon, which is to expel the EETPU so that the rank and file of that union can elect a new leadership. There have been many resolutions passed by rank-and-file electricians from about 30 branches, calling for expulsion and no-confidence in Eric Hammond and the rest of the executive. Also, if the Tory laws continue we must agitate and organize for a general strike.

The main difference between the miners' strike and the printworkers' strike is that in the miners' strike coal was stockpiled: you can't stockpile newspapers. Every day is a new fight in the print industry. Today's news is tomorrow's fish-and-chip paper.

Q. Have you received any international solidarity?

LH. Yes, we had a public rally at Wembley Stadium two weeks ago. We received pledges of solidarity from Scandinavian countries, and from Canada and the United States. This is where the paper comes from. In Australia, also, chapel representatives will discuss the dispute at a forthcoming national meeting. We welcome that support and any other support from trade unionists worldwide.

Messages of support should be sent to SOGAT at 274-288, London Road, Hadleigh Essex. Tel: 01-261 9302. Larry and Jackie can be contacted through the Lambeth Support Unit on 01-733 5670. □



Demonstrators lobby the TUC. On the left general secretary Brenda Dean (DR)

What is at stake in the printworkers' strike?

THE STRIKE by the National Graphical Association and SOGAT '82 against Rupert Murdoch's News International Group of newspapers is one which has the gravest implications for the trade-union movement in Britain. The sacking of 5,500 printers and their replacement by members of the EETPU is the most important union-busting operation since the 1920s. It is a further significant step in the process which began with the split in the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the emergence of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) as an openly scab trade union. (1)

PAT HICKEY

Around this development a coalition of forces has emerged which includes the most class-conscious warriors of the bourgeoisie and the most reactionary and collaborationist wing of the trade-union bureaucracy. The mass sackings and the barbed wire should not delude anyone into thinking that Wapping is an aberration in the normal course of industrial relations in Britain — a case of a maverick and particularly ruthless employer confronting a particularly archaic and bloody-minded group of trade unionists.

Events at Wapping underline the problems now hitting the trade-union movement as a result of mass unem-

ployment, industrial decline and anti-union legislation. It is a process which did not begin and will not end with this dispute. But the print industry is a clear example of the way in which a combination of technical, political and legal changes have undermined the traditional basis of the unions — and of the failure of the trade-union leadership to develop an adequate strategy to deal with the

1. On October 19, 1985, eight months after the end of the miners' strike, scab miners in Nottinghamshire and South Derbyshire voted to set up a breakaway union, the UDM. For an analysis of what lay behind this, see 'International Viewpoint' No. 86, November 11, 1985.

problems.

News International is not alone amongst Fleet Street employers in seeking to break the power of the unions in the industry. The Mirror Group has secured agreement for 2,100 redundancies. The Express group is seeking 2,800 redundancies — about 35 per cent. Associated Newspapers has similar plans, as have the Guardian and The Telegraph. Even these cuts are only an interim stage. All of the major employers have plans for introducing the kind of new technology used by News International.

In this context, an attempt has already been made to take on the print unions in 1983 (see *International Viewpoint* No. 47, February 27, 1984). Eddie Shah, owner of the Warrington, Lancashire-based newspaper, the *Stockport Messenger*, sacked six of his employees belonging to the NGA and employed scab labour to replace them. Up to 4,000 militants picketed the plant regularly, drawing support from all over the country. The picketing and the solidarity action were outside the terms set by the 1980 and 1982 employment acts.

The NGA appealed to the TUC [Trades Union Congress — the main trade union federation] to honour its decisions to oppose the anti-union laws, taken at a 1982 special conference in Wembley, London. The TUC refused. The NGA national leadership's own policy of refusing to call a national stoppage contributed to this defeat as did the failure of the print unions to present a united response.

The bourgeoisie drew two lessons from this strike. The most important was that the TUC had faced the first big test of the Wembley conference and had not fought. This was a major factor in the subsequent decision that the time was right to take on the miners.

In the print industry also the employers decided to launch a major assault following the Warrington victory. Shah himself announced plans for a new national daily newspaper and did a deal with the EETPU, ignoring the other print unions. The new newspaper, *Today*, was launched during the current dispute. The provincial newspaper groups also moved in, with several introducing new technology. The unions in the industry showed little unity in the face of this attack. SOGAT '82 and the NUJ both came into conflict with the NGA, which was the main loser from the new technology. It had pursued a "follow the job" strategy, which meant NGA members moving into departments traditionally dominated by the other two unions. The result

was SOGAT and NUJ members crossing NGA picket lines at the *Kent Messenger*, and NGA members crossing NUJ picket lines at the *Portsmouth News*.

The failure of the print unions to develop a united fight in the industry inevitably opened the door to the employers — and to the EETPU. The print unions face an industry-wide attack, demanding an industry-wide response. That will mean a major confrontation with the anti-union laws, which in turn means calling on the TUC for support. The Warrington dispute and the miners' strike are not encouraging experiences in this regard. But not to take this course means defeat at the hands of the employers and the law and also opens the door to those unions which see opportunities for themselves through collaboration with employers and the law.

Soft on Murdoch

The leaderships of the print unions have not adopted this course. On the contrary, their strategy has been to limit the dispute to News International and to have the least possible conflict with the law. Picketing has been kept to a minimum though this has not stopped the High Court sequestering the union's assets. The aim appears to be to win public sympathy and to pressure Murdoch into being more reasonable.

This approach has the complete agreement of the TUC which was also involved in an offer to Murdoch which gave him all of his demands except a legally binding no-strike deal. The offer was rejected because

30,000 miners' wives rally on August 11 (DR)



Murdoch does not believe in the ability of the Fleet Street unions to discipline their members in the way that the EETPU can. In any case, why stop half way when complete victory is within one's grasp?

If this is true for Murdoch, it is also true for the right wing in the TUC. Using the threat of the creation of a rival right-wing federation, which would include at least the EETPU, the AUEW, the UDM and the PTA (Professional Teachers Association) — they are effectively determining TUC policy.

Despite the decision at the 1982 special conference to defy the anti-union laws, the TUC has backed away from every challenge to the law and the courts.

At Wapping it has done so again. The EETPU is clearly guilty of openly collaborating with an employer in a far-reaching attack on other unions. The TUC has found the union guilty of "acting [in a way] detrimental to the interests of the trade-union movement". But its only action was to direct the EETPU to "Inform EETPU members at Wapping and Glasgow that they are engaged upon work that is normally done by members of other print-trade unions" — a fact which can hardly have escaped their attention. A motion to direct the EETPU to instruct its members not to do this work was defeated, because it would have brought the TUC into conflict with the law and because the union declared its readiness to face expulsion from the TUC rather than do so.

This is in line with the EETPU's openly declared policy of rejecting what it calls "old-time class struggle" in favour of co-operation with management. The union was a bitter opponent of the Scargill leadership of the NUM during the miners' strike and has since been a supporter of the break-away Union of Democratic Mineworkers. Along with the AUEW, it has established a right-wing caucus of unions called "Mainstream" whose aim is to counter the influence of the left. The UDM is a member of this caucus.

But the issues at stake cannot be solved by the expulsion of the EETPU. First, it is clear that while the EETPU is in the vanguard of the trade-union right wing, the policies which it has been openly pursuing have been followed by most other unions. On the question of secret ballots, which are now required by law, virtually all major unions now hold them before deciding on industrial action. Other unions have concluded single-union deals by which means a union can obtain exclusive negotiating and recruiting rights within a particular workplace in exchange for certain concessions to the employer, such

Selling a Union

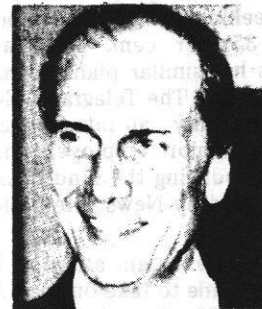
"Our progressive approach is reflected in agreement with companies like Toshiba, Sanyo, Hitachi, and Optical Fibres which have attracted widespread expert attention and the approval of objective observers and commentators. They eliminate strikes through binding arbitration and provide a radical transformation of traditional workplace job boundaries."



Lord Marshall, Chairman, Central Electricity Generating Board, "Your Union is a haven of commonsense and rational thought."



George Harris, Personnel Manager, Toshiba Consumer Products, "Along with the EETPU we have charted an exciting new approach that cuts out futile strife and offers fair rewards for all those involved."



The Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit, MP, (Former Secretary of State for Industry, present Chairman of the Conservative Party). "The EETPU not only accepts technological change, but is tackling the problems that can arise, including technical skills training. I see this as apiece with the Union's progressive approach on the shopfloor and elsewhere."

Extracts from EETPU brochure, reproduced by International Labour Reports, January-February 1986 (DR)

as a no-strike agreement. All of the main unions were complicit in the defeat of the NGA at Warrington. In the miners' strike, virtually none of the main unions made a serious effort to deliver on promises made.

The TUC has been moving to the right since the Tory victory in June 1983. The process was begun with the September 1983 congress and its policy of "new realism". This process was interrupted by the Warrington dispute later that year, and even more of course, by the historic struggle of the NUM. Since those defeats, however, the rightward move has resumed. The main beneficiaries of these defeats were the centre/right bureaucracy. The extreme right of the TUC has seized the opportunity to accelerate the process.

The danger of a split

In order to do this they have exploited the central contradiction in the TUC's policy. This contradiction is that while the TUC has a policy on paper of opposition to the anti-union laws, in practice all of the unions are taking steps to comply with them. The right has proclaimed publicly what the others are doing privately, albeit more slowly and more reluctantly. The basic fact is that each time the need and opportunity arose to fight, the TUC has backed off.

The possibility of a split emerging within the TUC is a very real one. But the issue of the EETPU is not the same as that of the UDM which has excluded itself from the TUC. The UDM was created out of those who consciously decided to leave the NUM because of their hostility to the

miners' strike and the left leadership of the union. The same cannot be said of all 400,000 members of the EETPU. It would be totally bureaucratic and politically disastrous to expel the whole union from the TUC and not to deal with the real problem. That is the failure of the TUC leadership to provide a lead on the major issues facing trade unionists or even, when the chips are down, to live up to their own promises, policies and declarations.

The EETPU, under its present leadership and in alliance with the AUEW and other right-wing-led unions, will exert political pressure on the TUC whether in or out of the TUC. Its main objective, whatever twists and turns may occur *en route* is to win a solid right-wing majority in the TUC. The threat of an alternative right-wing federation is a powerful weapon in this project. But it does not, at this stage, intend a permanent breach with the TUC. As Hammond, EETPU leader, put it, "why get off the ship when its going in our direction?"

It is important to note in this regard that no major sections of the bourgeoisie are pushing for such a split. They do not wish to see their companies become the arena for open inter-union warfare. They consider that to a large extent the unions have been tamed — figures for 1985, if the miners are excluded, show the lowest number of strikes for 50 years. They have noted the TUC's unwillingness to put militant talk into action. And they consider that the right wing is doing a very good job on their behalf within the TUC. A split which removed the right and consigned a weakened but still powerful TUC into the hands of the left,

is not in their interests at this stage.

The fundamental question is how to deal with a right wing which is determining the policy of the TUC and, if a split is to come, how it will be carried through. The policy which must be followed in this regard is one of open warfare against the scab leaders. In the case of the EETPU there should be no question of expelling all 400,000 members along with Hammond. He should undoubtedly be expelled — but he should not be allowed to walk away with his union intact. The left does not regard the union as the property of its leaders. The TUC, and certainly the left, should be helping the left in the EETPU to organize against the leadership to remove it, and in any case to remain loyal to the TUC, and their fellow trade unionists.

To give such a strategy teeth the TUC would have to start delivering on its policies. Concretely, now, it means the TUC declaring its intention to give full backing to an all-out strike by the print unions and to confront the law in order to defeat Murdoch. Such a course has real prospects of success. The government is weakened and under considerable pressure. The current retreat by the TUC is occurring when there is real opportunity for advance. A similar process is going on in the Labour Party, where the leadership has adopted a range of right-wing policies.

If these policies become the basis of a future government (and the general election draws ever closer), then the increasingly fragile unity of the TUC will come under even greater strain. In the meantime, every retreat and concession will make the inevitable battle harder to win. □

A major step forward for the revolution

AT THE START OF 1986, a new agrarian reform law was enacted. It codified the changes in distribution of the land that were initiated in practice in 1985 and opened the way for extending them. In the new assemblies of poor peasants getting land, two slogans predominated: "In Nicaragua no peasant will be left without land," and "We want the land and guns, to produce and fight."

In addition, the National Union of Farmers and Stock Raisers (UNAG) is building a first national congress of peasants on this question, which is to take place April 25-26 in Managua.

The tone has been set. Defence of the revolution against the military campaign of the contras and access to the land for thousands of families are the two sides of the policy of the Sandinista revolutionary leadership.

The following article on this process is from the March 29 issue of *La Breche*, the French language newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party (PSO/SAP), Swiss section of the Fourth International.

CHARLES ANDRE UDRY

The agrarian reform is central to the social and political transformations in Nicaragua. It could hardly be otherwise given the weight of the agricultural sector. Some 50% of the economically active population are employed on the land, and they produce 80% of the volume of products. Four-fifths of Nicaragua's exports are agricultural.

The agrarian reform does not involve only the forms of redistributing the land (individual plots, cooperatives, state farms) but also access for the rural population to services (health, education, technical aid). Finally it offers dignity: "being able to go to the banks and make yourself at home and not just be hustled out," "the right to discuss prices without facing repression" — that is the way this big transformation looks to small farmers.

When it took power in July 1979, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) opted for an original road in applying agrarian reform. That was for various reasons. They included the following: the type of alliance forged in the struggle against Somoza (involving middle peasants and capitalist peasants), the role of the middle peasants and the small capitalist peasants in the production of export crops (coffee and cotton); the

demands of rebuilding a country devastated by civil war and the urgency of getting a productive effort from these layers of export producers; the scarcity of professionals and technical resources; the necessity of getting financial aid from diversified sources in order to stave off financial strangulation by imperialism; the conclusions drawn from the difficulties encountered by other agrarian reforms. Finally, the FSLN knew that the United States would launch a military counteroffensive. That happened in 1982.

So, at the beginning, only the

1. The UNAG has 124,000 members, who produce 65% of the coffee, 68% of the meat, 60% of the cotton, 83% of the maize, 98% of the beans and all of the vegetables produced in the country. This union brings together small individual farmers, as well as those organized in cooperatives; middle-sized land owners, some of whom employ agricultural wage earners; and some big capitalist landowners. Last year, the cotton planters in the Chinandega region, who had previously belonged to the Supreme Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP) joined UNAG. While maintaining this unity in the name of an "alliance of producers," UNAG aims above all to defend the interests of the small peasants. This is apparent from the statements of the chairperson of UNAG, Daniel Nunez, who said late in January: "UNAG must be the eyes and the heart of the poorest peasants and an indefatigable force acting on their behalf ... We want this to be clear once and for all for everybody, our main strength

property of Somoza and his clan were confiscated. It was transferred to the People's Property Sector (APP), which amounted to nationalization. The holdings of the Somozaists were concentrated in the production of sugar, rice, tobacco and large-scale stock-raising. This initial measure, therefore, represented a blow to the very big, often absentee, landlords (*latifundistas*).

On the other hand, the capitalists remained very powerful in the production of coffee, cotton, and in large-scale stock-raising, which are major sources of foreign currency.

The Sandinista government is going to offer easier access to credit, including for big producers. It is lowering land rents for the benefit of various types of tenant farmers and sharecroppers. It is taking control of the export of agricultural products and organizing a distribution circuit to supply the peasants.

At the same time, the government is encouraging peasants to organize to defend their interests, first of all in a common organization. Then the agricultural laborers will have their Association of Workers on the Land (ACT), and the small and middle peasants will have their UNAG, which was set up in May 1981. (1)

The course of the FSLN's agrarian reform

In July 1981, the first agrarian law was enacted. One of its objectives was to go after big landowners who were not producing enough. This law made it possible to confiscate land left lying fallow by owners holding more than 350 hectares of land on the Pacific Coast and 750 hectares on the Atlantic Coast. (2)

The tracts expropriated will increase the stock of lands distributed to production cooperatives and to service and credit cooperatives (which do not produce in common but cooperate in receiving technical assis-

lies in the cooperatives among the small producers."

2. Figures provided by the Ministry of Agrarian Reform (MIDINRA) at the end of 1985 and cited in 'Infopress Centro-americana' January 30, 1986, show very clearly the evolution of the agrarian structure after the Sandinista victory. In 1978, according to a study by the Center for Research and Study in Agrarian Reform (CIERA), the available agricultural land was entirely private and more than half of this (52%) was large holdings. This private sector had been reduced by 60% by the end of 1985. According to the statistical data published in the bulletin of the Agencia Nueva Nicaragua (ANN), published in Paris on March 22, 1986, the big agricultural and stock-raising estates represented only 11% of the country's land under production in 1985; and in 1986, that will be only 9.5%. On the other hand, the small owners with less than 7 hectares, who held 2% of the land in 1979, today hold 30%.



The new reform will strengthen the revolution's popular base (DR)

tance and credits).

Thus, Nicaragua has an agrarian structure in which state ownership is in the minority. However, around the APP, big agri-industrial projects have built up, which have not always delivered the results counted on.

Alongside the APP, an associative sector has taken form. At the end of 1985, these cooperatives occupied 19% of the land, the same as the APP. There also remained a strong, heterogeneous private sector, in which small and middle peasants (holdings under 140 hectares) occupied 38% of the land, and big landowners, 24%.

In 1983, especially in the east and north of the country, the Sandinista government speeded up the handing over of land titles to the poor peasants. In many cases, it simply legalized "wildcat" land occupations. Between 1981 and 1985, land was distributed in various forms (cooperatives, individual ownership, ownership by ethnic communities), to 47,000 families in the central zone (Matagalpa, Esteli, Chontales), to 20,000 families in the Pacific zone (Leon, Managua, Masaya) and 8,400 in the Atlantic zone (Zelaya, Rio San Juan). (3)

The 1981 agrarian reform law was becoming a real obstacle to poor peasants and agricultural workers gaining access to the land. It could have endangered the defence of the revolution by undermining the regime's peasant base. (4)

The new law, which is the result of experiments in various regions (including Masaya), removes the threshold of 350 and 750 hectares above which uncultivated land could be confiscated. In fact, a lot of landowners with less land left a part of it fallow.

From now on, big landowners

who do not plan for more or less efficient production can be expropriated. In some cases, this can be done without compensation. In others, compensation will be given in the form of Agrarian Reform Bonds. The amount of the compensation will be calculated on the basis of the last three years' tax statements. So, the tax evaders will get their just deserts!

A weapon for defending the revolution

The land will be distributed in the following order: to tenants and sharecroppers, to landless peasants or those without enough land to provide subsistence for their families, to peasant cooperatives and to families that have lost relatives in fighting the contras.

Agricultural workers employed on state farms are also demanding private plots to grow produce for their own consumption. "Sufficient land" is to be put at the disposition of the Miskitos, Sumos, Ramas and other ethnic groups on the Atlantic coast.

There are several reasons for this new stage of the agrarian reform.

Either "spontaneously," or because the government evacuated them, some 250,000 peasants have left the regions hardest hit by the war. The demand for land could only mount. Left unanswered, it would threaten to disorganize still more the productive effort based on the alliance between the APP, the cooperatives and the multiform private sector.

If the land were not distributed, the influx of peasants into the cities — above all Managua — would only

swell. This would further increase shortages of goods and services and reduce productive work in agriculture.

According to the minister of agriculture, Jaime Wheelock, the agrarian reform has still not answered the pressing problems of 20% of the peasant population who have no land or suffer from a severe lack of it.

The distribution of the land — and of guns to defend it — is a social and political weapon against those inside the country and outside of it who want to strangle the revolution.

The landowners who have gotten generous credits from the national financial system and have taken advantage of this to export their capital or waste it, should be punished. (5)

The Nicaraguan agrarian reform is being carried out in the context of a war economy where a major part of the budget is allotted to the military effort. This complicates what is already by nature a complicated task — the transformation of the countryside.

The new agrarian reform law, therefore, is only one element in solving a delicate equation. The production and property relations have to be changed in agriculture at tempos and by means that will assure the maintenance and growth of production. At the same time, this process has to be compatible with holding the support of the middle peasants for the Sandinista revolution. It is, moreover, necessary to strengthen the alliance between the workers (both agricultural and industrial) with broad strata of the peasantry in a context where industrial and technical aid to agriculture remains very weak. (6) □

3. Since 1981, the agrarian reform has made possible the distribution of more than 2 million hectares to 83,167 families. This involved expropriating the lands of 490 landowners.

4. The Sandinista leaders, moreover say that the 1981 law "was no longer functional," in particular to meet the demands for land by 40,000 peasant families who had none, or not enough.

5. In this regard, the chairperson of UNAG, Daniel Nunez, proposed that this organization oppose the payment in dollars of export bonuses to farmers. In fact, such currency has gone in large amounts to the biggest producers. Nunez argued that these payments should be made in cordobas, the national currency, and that the government should keep its dollars for building up the infrastructure, for social projects, or for importing agricultural equipment.

6. Putting his finger on the problem of relations between the cities and the countryside, Comandante Victor Tirado said at a UNAG assembly in January that an aspect of the worker-peasant alliance was "to fight speculators, to make sure that supplies reach those for whom they are really intended, that the workers' movement produces products that reach the peasants at a just price and, vice versa, that the peasant movement produces the essential foods and gets them to the workers' movement at a fair price."

The role of the Church in the revolution

THE CONFLICT between the revolutionary state in Nicaragua and the Catholic Church has been rising sharply in the last year.

The Church hierarchy uses the pulpit as a platform against the revolution and continually harasses those in the Church who support the revolution. Since he became a cardinal in May 1985, the archbishop of Managua, Miguel Obando y Bravo has been increasingly provocative towards the government. The Vatican itself has backed up this offensive.

The government has responded by seizing *Iglesia*, the publication of the archbishop's palace which had refused to conform to legal regulations and by the closure of Radio Catolica because it did not broadcast President Daniel Ortega's new year message.

The Church has protested against what it calls persecution, but as Minister of the Interior Tomas Borge points out, if there is persecution in Nicaragua, "it is used by the Catholic hierarchy against progressive priests, monks and nuns." (1)

MARIA MERRI

An important aspect of the Nicaraguan revolution has, without doubt, been the massive presence of practising Christians, mainly Catholics, in the revolutionary process. (2) It is not just the role of individuals such as priests like Father Gaspar Garcia, who joined the FSLN and the guerrilla movement, that is worthy of note. (3) What is more remarkable is the massive participation of active Christians whose commitment to the fight was not something apart from their faith and still less in conflict with it, but actually flowed from their evangelical thinking.

In an article by Giulio Girardi, which appeared in the review *Nueva Nicaragua* we read that "A church which is faithful to Christ can only be on the side of the poor ... This is not a matter of a purely ideological choice but of a real participation in this historic undertaking. For many Nicaraguans, to be a Christian is to have made a revolutionary choice; a choice to be with the poor in the sense of being on the side of social revolution. This is a way of living out faith and struggle for liberation as a single commitment." (4)

The expression of this was the participation of Christians, who had not given up their religious ideals,

in the FSLN and, after the seizure of power, the presence of priests in the revolutionary government.

This conflict between two perspectives for the Church, which also constitute two different political perspectives, is the clearest expression of an internal crisis since the Second Vatican Council, which took place 20 years ago. Noting the gap between the Church and the wider society, the meeting decided to launch the Church "into" the real world. Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian theologian of liberation theology, emphasizes this aspect: "In the case of Latin America this means we have to face up to the terrible poverty and oppression that the vast majority of the people in this region live under and be sensitive to their aspiration for liberation." (5) The Vatican II Council only barely touched on this option for the poor.

The conference of Latin American bishops which was held in Medellin, Colombia, in 1968, marked a turning point for a Church which, having been for centuries the best ally of the colonial powers and subsequently of the national bourgeoisies, now wanted to be "authentically poor, missionary and paschal, free from association with any temporal power and wholly

committed to the liberation of man and of all mankind." (6)

The choice of favouring the poor was subsequently developed at the 1979 conference in Puebla, Mexico, which declared that it should be demonstrated through "a real solidarity with the poor (which) means making their problems ours and their struggles ours and learning how to speak for them." (7)

The Medellin conference can thus be considered as the birthplace of liberation theology. In terms of the organization of the Church, this change was to be transmuted into a flowering of eucharistic base communities (CEBs) and the advent of a system of "*delegados de la Palabra*" ("Representatives of the Word"). This preaching of the word by laypeople has explosive implications in a vertically structured Church and on the ideological level as well.

The impact of the Medellin conference

At that time the Nicaraguan Church differed little, and if anything, was in a worse situation than in the rest of Latin America. There were few priests and most of these were foreign. The religious communities had turned inwards. The liturgy had not been renewed. The conservative Church hierarchy, allied to the government, did not seem to acknowledge the existence of a dictatorship until sections of the bourgeoisie went into opposition.

The peasant community experiment set up in 1965 by Father Ernesto Cardenal in Solentiname was the exception that proved the general rule. In general the Church was "asleep when Medellin came along". (8) Though this conference did not have the same impact in Nicaragua as it did in Brazil, in Guatemala or in El Salvador, for example, nevertheless changes were in the wind, with the rise in struggles in the towns and countryside.

Between 1968 and 1970 CEBs began to develop in the poorest parishes, especially in Managua. This coincided with increasing agitation

1. "Barricada", January 7, 1985.
2. The evangelical protestant churches, which represented about 3% of the population at the time of the revolution were also part of this process especially on the Atlantic coast with the Moravian church.
3. Gaspar Garcia Liviana, joined the Sandinista guerrillas as a priest and died at the front on December 11, 1978.
4. Giulio Girardi, 'Faith in the revolution', *Nueva Nicaragua*, 1983.
5. Gustavo Gutierrez 'Vatican II and the Latin American Church', in "*Diakona*", No. 36, December, 1985. Along with Leonardo Boff, Gutierrez is one of the main theoreticians of liberation theology.
6. Medellin, "Juventud 15".
7. Medellin, "Pobreza 13".
8. "Envio", December 1983.

amongst students at the Central American University (UCA), which was run by Jesuits.

It was significant that in October and November 1970 and again in 1971, when the UCA students, supported by about 20 priests, occupied Managua Cathedral to protest against arrest and torture, the archbishop's palace confirmed its solidarity, whilst deploring and condemning the action of the college heads.

At this time, the FSLN was beginning to make contact with priests, monks and nuns, Catholic youth and base communities. The Revolutionary Christian Movement, which was founded by Father Uriel Molina in 1971, was to train a large number of young people who either joined the armed struggle of the FSLN directly or else became couriers hiding arms and men. (9)

The Rigüero community, in a poor district of Managua, founded by the UCA students and Father Molina was to serve both as a pool of activists and of cadres for the FSLN, such as Luis Carrion and Joaquim Cuadra. (10)

The 1972 earthquake accelerated the growth of the movement. The terrible situation of the people, the shameful robbery by Somoza — who appropriated almost all the international aid — combined with an increase in repression, gave the armed struggle led by the FSLN more credibility as a way forward to bring down the dictatorship. Many young Christians joined the FSLN at this time as its activities became bolder.

Since 1971-72, the Church hierarchy had been taking its distance from Somoza. From then on it lined up with the positions of the bourgeois opposition organized in the Broad Opposition Front (FAO) or in professional bodies such as the Supreme Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP), which wanted to negotiate a transition from the dictatorship.

Thus in January 1977, in yet another pastoral message, the Church rejected Somozaism and the FSLN, denouncing "these movements which proclaim themselves liberators but which promote an excess of passions". (11)

Right up until the last moment and the victory of the insurrection, the Catholic hierarchy, in league with the bourgeois opposition, was trying to negotiate in Caracas, Venezuela, for the broadening of the revolutionary government to include the National Guard etc.

In a statement issued on July 2, 1979, the Church hierarchy reluctantly accepted the insurrection declaring: "We all suffer from, and are affected by, the extremes represented by revolutionary insur-



Cardinal-archbishop, Miguel Obando y Bravo. (DR)

rections, but we cannot deny their moral and legal legitimacy." (12)

The Church had no choice, but at the same time, the Catholic hierarchy was careful to warn against "any abuses of the revolutionary process," such as "threats against ownership and private property."

The triumph of the revolution on July 19 and the unchallenged place occupied by the FSLN as the only organization capable of carrying the struggle to a revolutionary victory, along with the support for Sandinismo from most religious believers, put the Church hierarchy in a difficult political position. To deny the legitimacy of the revolution and to oppose the FSLN would have meant cutting itself off from the mass of the population.

Also, the apparent anti-Somoza unity, which had prevailed in recent years, was merely covering up a sharp divide within the Church, which could only deepen to the detriment of the hierarchy, if the latter were to adopt a hostile policy.

Also, in some ways the Church had drawn the lessons of the Cuban revolution. Because of its role in the counter-revolution, the Cuban Church had lost a lot of influence. Such dire consequences weighed heavily in the minds of the Nicaraguan bishops.

Priests in the revolutionary government

The stance taken by the Sandinistas the day after the seizure of power left the bishops little room for manoeuvre. The Sandinistas' recognition of the role of religious believers in the revolution did not just amount to friendly declarations. The Government

Junta for National Reconstruction (JGRN) appointed four priests to ministerial posts: Miguel d'Escoto for foreign affairs, Ernesto Cardenal as minister of culture, Fernando Cardenal responsible for the literacy campaign and, a little later on, Edgar Parrales who was appointed under-secretary for the Nicaraguan Institute of Social Security. (13) In all, about a dozen priests were given public responsibilities on different levels.

It seems that the hierarchy, having hesitated for several months, had finally decided to support the revolutionary process. The publication by the Nicaraguan episcopacy of the pastoral letter on November 17, 1979, greatly surprised those who had thought, and rightly, that the Catholic hierarchy was thoroughly reactionary, and greatly pleased all those practising Christians who now believed that the bishops had decided to join them in the revolutionary struggle.

9. Father Molina is one of the main organizers of the Antonio Valdivieso ecumenical centre which organizes Catholics and evangelical priests involved in the revolution. It is the 'bête noire' of the Catholic hierarchy, along with the Central American Historic Institute which publishes the review, "Envío."

10. The history of this experiment and of the one at Solentiname is contained in "Christianos en la revolución", by Margaret Randall, Managua, 1983.

11. Statement by the episcopacy, in "The ideological struggle in the religious camp and its political significance", Second Nicaraguan Congress of Social Sciences, Managua, 1981.

12. Idem.

13. Ernesto Cardenal, a diocesan priest, Fernando Cardenal, priest and member of the Company of Jesus, Miguel d'Escoto, priest and member of the Maryknoll congregation, Edgar Parrales, diocesan priest, Father Parrales has been demanding from Rome his return to lay status since 1983. The Pope, whose policy is always to refuse those who make this request, preferred instead to suspend him in January 1985, "a divinis" along with the three others.

Both reactions are understandable when one reads the letter: "We are addressing ourselves to the Nicaraguan people of whom we are a part and who are searching for the road of truth and the realization of justice in the current revolutionary process that our country is undergoing and on which the eyes of the world are fixed. ... We do so as pastors of the Church, aware that many Christians have participated in the insurrection and are currently seeking to consolidate the victory. ... Sometimes you hear people say with trepidation that the process underway will lead towards socialism. We should look at this: ... if such socialism is one which the majority of Nicaraguans can benefit from, if all of us Nicaraguans can participate in a planned economy and if the wealth of the country is given over to the common good and if the differences between rich and poor, between town and country are reduced ... a socialism like this is a gain for our revolution." (14)

It is difficult to express the "divine surprise" which this letter represented to those who knew the more than moderate positions taken by the Church before the revolution and the road taken during the struggle. But, first it is important to make clear that the official Church never refers to this letter any more, treating it as the product of a rash moment when Marxists had penetrated its ranks.

Three factors played a role at the time. First, at that point in the revolutionary process, the Church hierarchy was divided as to what attitude to take, and it still is today. Second, many priests, religious functionaries and lay people were involved in the construction of the new Nicaragua and had not waited for orders from the bishops, which in itself tended to undermine the weight and authority of the latter. (15)

Thirdly, and this was without doubt the decisive factor, the bourgeoisie itself was also in suspense. Although it felt that it was not in political control, it still did not know what attitude to take to the FSLN.

At the beginning of May 1980, the bourgeois leaders, Violetta Chamorro and then Alfonso Robelo resigned from the Council of State hoping thereby to create a political crisis. A few days later on May 16, the bishops issued the following statement to the press: "In light of the exceptional events which have occurred today, lay people can just as effectively take on those political responsibilities formerly undertaken by certain priests." (16)

It is difficult to believe that it is just coincidence that less than a year after the victory the conflict between

the Catholic hierarchy and the Sandinista government should open up at the same time as the first significant rupture between the FSLN and the bourgeois opposition.

If we look at the main stages of the crisis between the Church and the revolutionary state from 1980 to today, we see that they coincide exactly with other attacks against the revolution, and even take on an international dimension.

It would be a mistake to see only an internal conflict here, with the Nicaraguan Church hierarchy on one side and the FSLN and revolutionary Christians on the other.

As well as arming the contras, US imperialism has built up, in co-operation with the Vatican, an ideological campaign around the supposed persecution of the Church. From 1981 onwards, when Washington first began massive aid to the mercenaries, three important things occurred that illustrate the escalation undertaken by the Catholic hierarchy:

In June 1981, the bishops issued an ultimatum to those priests who were in the government, inviting them to choose between their religious duties and their public responsibilities.

In August 1983, the hierarchy opposed Patriotic Military Service (SMP) and denounced "armed violence" by the Sandinistas.

And finally in April 1984, in a pastoral letter published on the occasion of Holy Week, the archbishop's palace launched an appeal for "national reconciliation," that is for a dialogue with the armed counter-revolution.

Bishop Vega went as far as to say that a "people who do not feel that their civil and social rights are guaranteed also have the right to seek aid wherever they can", a reference to US financing of the contras. (17)

One might add to this the battle against government policy in education, the attempt to strip the 1984 presidential and legislative elections of legitimacy, combined with the increasingly virulent denunciation of priests and religious functionaries opposed to the hierarchy and the characterization of them as false prophets.

This is exactly the same line of march as that of the internal opposition — Coordinación Democrática Nicaraguense (CDN — Democratic Nicaraguan Coordination), COSEP, *la Prensa* — and the contras grouped together in the Fuerza Democrática Nicaraguense (FDN — Democratic Nicaraguan Force).

Today there is no doubt that the Church is the trump card of the opposition to the revolution. The bourgeois parties are weak and scarcely credible. Their popular support is non-existent and they are a prey to internal

divisions. The November 1984 elections, for which they had clamoured with a great hue and cry, proved that they were incapable of fighting on their own against the Sandinistas. The Church alone is in a position to combat the FSLN ideologically and to dispute its legitimacy.

Catholic hierarchy moves in

The Church wishes to channel, if not the discontent, then at least the weariness that may exist among some layers of the population because of the depth of the economic crisis, the real deterioration of living conditions and poverty. After the war of liberation with its cost in human life, the ravaging war of aggression with apparently no end in sight, preys on the minds of the least politicized sections of the population. The appeals to desert the SMP or to hold a dialogue with the contras, therefore strikes a chord amongst these layers.

The attacks on priests in the Sandinista government and, more generally, on all Christians engaged in the revolutionary process, have the same goal: to separate the Christians from the revolution by counterposing a "popular Church", understood as the church of the government, to the only legitimate Church, that of Rome and the Catholic hierarchy, showing that Marxism and Christianity are incompatible.

Left to its own devices, the Nicaraguan Church would not be able to carry out this task. It is difficult to estimate exactly the number of priests in Nicaragua. They number perhaps 200 or 250, a majority of whom, about 60 per cent, are foreigners. (18) The diocesan and native clergy — the two tend to coincide — are generally more reactionary than the religious orders and foreign clergy. Traditionally, there have always been more foreign than Nicaraguan priests.

To draw a political profile of the clergy is still more difficult. With the

14. "Christian compromise for the new Nicaragua", November 17, 1979, Antonio Valdivieso centre, Managua, 1982.

15. Never mind the problem of protestant 'competition'. Between 1979 and 1984 the number of people adhering to the evangelical faiths went from 3% to 13%.

16. "The ideological struggle ..." Op. Cit.

17. "Amanecer", the review of the Valdivieso Centre, No. 38-39, December 1985.

18. Figures given in "Envío" No. 30, December, 1983, which relate only to priests since there are no figures for the numerous members of the different religious orders, men and women, working in the country.

same reservations as to the accuracy of the statistics and figures given, it was estimated that in 1984 about 46 per cent of the priests supported the revolutionary process in varying degrees, and that 54 per cent more or less opposed it.

We must not forget that since that time the Church hierarchy has undertaken to send out of the country a good many of the most actively involved priests and to bring in others whose views are more in keeping with those of the hierarchy. Be that as it may, the forces of the Church are weak and the stakes are enormous: the Church's struggle, both external and internal, concerns not just Nicaragua, but all of Latin America. The White House and the Vatican, understand that very well.

Reagan supports the Catholic hierarchy

As early as his first election Ronald Reagan's advisers were stressing the dangers that liberation theology represented for US domination in the backyard of its empire. The Republican Party's Santa Fe document affirms: "The foreign policy of the United States must begin to confront (and not just simply react *a posteriori* to) liberation theology as it is utilized in Latin America by the clergy [who support it] ... The role of the Church in Latin America is vital for the concept of political liberty. Lamentably, the Marxist-Leninist forces have used the Church as a political weapon against private property and the capitalist system of production, infiltrating the religious community with ideas more communistic than Christian." (19)

In order to intervene in this way, American imperialism is equipped with several institutions, the most powerful of which is the Institute of Religion and Democracy (IRD). This organization was founded in 1981 by a group of the American new right called the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM), which includes in its membership none other than Jeane Kirkpatrick. The IRD is subsidized essentially by the Smith Richardson and Sarah Scaife foundations, which on numerous occasions have served as financial figureheads for the CIA.

This institute, which, with remarkable subtlety, considers that liberation theology is part of Soviet strategy on a worldwide scale, has concentrated all its efforts on Nicaragua in the last few years. Its material support is divided — oh so ecumenically. On the one hand it gives aid to certain members of the National Council

of Evangelical Churches of Nicaragua (CPEN) to help them in their fight against the Aid for Development Committee (CEPAD), which contains the majority of evangelical (Protestant) churches and is considered to be "Marxist-Leninist". On the other hand, aid is supplied to the Catholic hierarchy by way of the Commission for Social Improvement of the Archbishopric of Managua (COPROSA).

Monseignor Obando was personally decorated by the IRD in 1982. COPROSA, which edited *Iglesia*, the revue seized last October by State Security, is in charge of developing community projects and the training of seminarists. It must be in quite good financial condition since it also receives funds from Aid for International Development (AID), which is linked to the American State Department. The sums poured into it by AID had reached the figure of 593,000 US dollars by October 1985. And that is not all. A private company, the WR Grace Corporation — whose director, John Peter Grace, is the founder-president of the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) — notoriously linked to the CIA — donated its mite to the good cardinal's works. In May 1984 one of the directors of the firm, John Meeham, drew up a report to the directors in which he rendered an account of his discussions with Obando and concluded: "The archbishop has set up a development plan to obstruct the Marxist-Leninist schemes of the Sandinistas ... He needs help, and if you think that he is correct, we should help him materially since he seems capable of managing his opposition well. Except for the Church there is no solid opposition that can claim to have so much local support". [Retranslated from the French] (20) The argument must have struck home since shortly thereafter this organization turned over more than 30,000 US dollars to COPROSA.

But material aid, necessary though it is, is not enough. The ecclesiastical hierarchy prides itself today on being the only legitimate Church and is supported in that by the Vatican. The campaign waged by John Paul II against anything that challenges Church tradition, whether on the theological plane or in regard to the functioning of the institution, leads the Vatican to develop a policy that converges objectively with that of the US administration in regard to Nicaragua. Rome has thrown its entire authority in the balance on the side of the hierarchy against the Christian activists engaged in the revolution. The issue of the presence of priests in the Sandinista government is the best illustration.

It is extremely important for Nicaragua that these priests, who enjoy an immense popularity among the people, remain in the government. And it is just as important for imperialism and the opposition that they leave it or that they cease to be priests. Now, they have all refused this alternative made in the form of an ultimatum. Resting on the November 1983 revision of canon law that prohibits priests and other religious personnel from occupying public office, the Vatican settled the juridical-clerical tangle created by the different statuses of the four priests, by suspending them *a divinis* from their duties in January 1985, thus bypassing the regular proceedings of the Church.

The Pope, who scarcely relished his stormy encounter with the multitudes of the faithful on his visit to Nicaragua in March 1983, wanted to issue a warning to all those who claim to follow liberation theology.

The chasm inside the Church

What is happening in Nicaragua has repercussions throughout the Church and has caused everyone to "choose their camp". The Pope has chosen his by promoting the archbishop of Managua, Obando, to the rank of cardinal, knowing full well that he was thus endorsing, legitimizing and enhancing the importance of the person who the contras call "our cardinal of peace". Obando has returned the favour, since it was in Miami, in the presence of all the "elite" of the contras — Robelo, Eden Pastora, Arturo Cruz, etc. — that he donned the cardinal's crimson for the first time last June.

Those who fight inside the Church against this ideological and organizational striving for "a restoration identical to that of Metternich" (21) have also had to choose their camp. At the time of the exclusion of Father Fernando Cardenal from the Jesuit order, those in charge in Central America of that religious order replied by assuring him of their solidarity. The head of the Franciscans raised a protest against Obando's accusations in Rome against those who refuse to obey the hierarchy.

And this same Obando, who claimed to see one more step toward totalitarianism in the government's

19. Santa Fe document, third proposal, May 1980.

20. "Amanecer", July-August 1984.

21. Hans Kung, "El Nuevo Amanecer", cultural supplement to "El Nuevo Diario", December 7, 1985.

emergency measures of October 15, 1985, was answered by a hundred or so priests and religious personnel who accused the hierarchy of being largely responsible for that situation. The rift that existed in the Church at the time of the revolution has now become a chasm which, from now on, will be difficult to bridge.

Today, the Nicaraguan revolution is defying liberation theology itself, for "until now this theology had worked out in relation to a possible, or even an imaginary, revolution". (22) Today it is no longer simply a question of defending the right to fight against exploitation or against repression, that is against the established order, but of giving substance to something new. The revolution has put its finger on the contradiction that is inherent in this theology, which does not lie in the contradiction between Christianity and Marxism but in the conflict between consistent loyalty to the poor and loyalty to the Church as an institution. Condemned to silence for a year by the Vatican, Leonardo Boff, one of the "fathers" of this theology, accepted the sanction, declaring: "I prefer to remain in the Church rather than to walk alone with my theology". (23) The brothers Cardenal and Miguel d'Escoto, subject to a harsher sanction, made the opposite choice, deciding not to walk alone, but to march with their people in the revolution rather than with a church that repudiated them.

What is the relationship of forces today between the Catholic hierarchy and the revolutionary state? Has the Church achieved its end, at least in part? Has it shaken the faith of the

masses in the Sandinista Front? That does not seem to be the case. On the contrary, in the last few months, the FSLN has scored some points at the expense of the Church hierarchy. It has been divided: the tactic of the Archbishop of Managua is not visibly shared by all of the hierarchy since it is the hierarchy that is held accountable when it goes too far in anti-government provocation, and the effect produced is the opposite of that anticipated. This helps the FSLN and impairs the credibility of the episcopacy. The refusal to condemn the extortions of the contras; the complacency in regard to the use of mercenaries, whose activities are justified in the name of the cardinal and whom he has never denounced; such blatant acts as the mass in Miami — all these tend to "defrock" the Catholic hierarchy in the eyes of the masses. They show the hierarchy in its true colours as a partisan, counter-revolutionary force rather than as the picture of neutrality it would like to project.

Who is winning the ideological battle?

However, both the official, and the 'popular' Church are now facing another problem; that of the decline of religious beliefs amongst young people, especially in the urban areas. Is it possible to speak here and now of an ongoing process of de-Christianization? It is undoubtedly too early to tell, but one thing is certain: before the revolution, religion and the Church filled a spiritual and material void. Today, the national liberation

struggle and the FSLN occupy ideologically all or part of that place for the immense majority of young people. As for social services in education and health which the Church provided in Somoza's time, because of the deficiencies of a state which was reduced simply to "bodies of armed men", these services are today assumed on the public level by the revolutionary state.

No one can say how long Nicaragua will remain "a Catholic country". The Church of the poor is at the heart of this problem, since, siding with the revolution, it is in a sense the more under threat, while the official Church, harking back to tradition, can retain because of political positions, the support of the petty bourgeois layers. The hierarchy is aware of the stakes. It is not for nothing that it is concentrating its efforts where the revolution has had little effect, in the countryside or among those who have eluded the FSLN such as those in the informal economic sector in Managua. The revolutionary leadership knows that the best way to pull the rug out from under the feet of the clerical counter-revolution is, on the one hand, to win over more profoundly the rural sections, to the revolution, and on the other hand, to try to reduce, or at least neutralize the marginalized urban layers. The modification of the agrarian reform law of January 11, 1986, which in the last few months has legalized massive redistribution of land and permits the extension of it, gives to broad sectors of the poor peasantry a tangible expression of the revolution. The combination of coercive measures against the black market and the extension of popular control over distribution and prices is intended to thwart the speculation and inflation of which the workers are the first victims. The military successes won against the contras combined with a policy of amnesty for deserters from the SMP as well as the adoption of a statute of autonomy for the Atlantic Coast defusing the touchy question of the Miskitos, are all points marked up for the revolution.

But we must not be under any illusions: the loss of the mercenaries' military credibility does not mean that imperialism is going to lie down to negotiate and accept defeat. On the contrary, if this situation is confirmed in the coming months the danger of direct North American intervention will certainly increase, since, now more than ever, imperialism has no intention of letting a socialist revolution become consolidated in Central America. □



Building a popular recreation centre in Managua (DR)

22. Giulio Girardi, *Op. Cit.*

23. "International Herald Tribune", March 21, 1985.

Why Reagan is targeting Libya

THE RECENT acts of aggression by the US fleet against Libya followed a long series of US provocations in the Gulf of Sidra. They represent a qualitatively new stage in the campaign that Washington has been mounting for more than ten years against the Moamer Qadhafi regime.

For the Reagan administration, in particular after its setback in Lebanon and its "success" in Grenada, this was a new opportunity to "take off the gloves" against a small state (only about 3 million people).

Reagan had two complementary objectives. One was to overcome the "Vietnam syndrome." The other was to issue a warning to Nicaragua, Cuba, Iran and the USSR, the other "demons" of modern imperialist mythology.

SALAH JABER

It goes without saying that the elementary duty of revolutionary Marxists is to defend a Third World country that is the prey of imperialist aggression. Nonetheless, it remains necessary to make clear in each instance what has to be defended. Is it national sovereignty only, as was the case in the Malvinas war, in which revolutionary Marxists called at the same time for overthrowing the reactionary military dictatorship? Or is it also necessary to defend national and social gains achieved by a "progressive" regime threatened by reaction in alliance with imperialism, as was the case for Egypt in 1956 and 1967?

In other words, does Qadhafi fit into the category of Leopoldo Galtieri or that of Gamal Abdel Nasser?

An initial indirect response has been provided by the attitude of imperialism itself. It never sought to overthrow Galtieri. It did, however, seek indefatigably to overthrow Nasser yesterday, and the same is true for Qadhafi today.

Reports in the Egyptian and US press coincide on the fact that Reagan even proposed to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak a joint military operation to overthrow the Libyan leader. If Mubarak rejected this proposition, it is because the domestic situation in his country, as attested by the recent mutiny of the security forces (1), does not allow him to engage in such an adventure.

Why, then, this imperialist obsession with Libya? There are two reasons that are intimately linked. They have to do with the nature of the regime and of its foreign policy. I will try to explain them briefly in this article.

The coup d'état-revolution of September 1, 1969, overthrew the Libyan monarchy, one of the most retrograde regimes in the world, in a thinly populated country, whose considerable petroleum resources were exploited in every sense of the term by the Anglo-Saxon oil companies. It was a country, moreover, that had two British bases and one US military base on its territory.

The coup was organized by nationalist officers (captains) grouped in a "Free Officers" committee modelled on the Nasserist one. Qadhafi, like his second in command, Jalloud, is of Bedouin origin, and he has continued to be marked by this in several aspects of his social and political behavior, as well as in the ideology that he has been formulating.

In the initial phase, it was the nationalism of Nasser, whose disciple and successor he sought to be — that Qadhafi imitated. That meant evacuation of all foreign bases, nationalizing the foreign banks and then gradual nationalization of the oil industry.

In the latter aspect in particular, after 1970 Libya was to play a vanguard role, dragging the other oil

exporters in its train. These measures came in the context of a foreign policy reminiscent of the first years of Nasserism or of Iran today. It was anti-imperialist, but also anti-communist, in the name of Islam and of Arab nationalism. (2)

Finally, and above all, Qadhafi has sought to achieve what his spiritual father failed to do: to bring about Arab unity. For this purpose, he has proposed fusion to several states, in particular those on Libya's borders, Egypt and, of course, Tunisia.

All of these attempts at union have failed. While the bourgeoisies of the countries concerned were attracted by the smell of Libyan oil, they feared the destabilizing effect Qadhafi could have on their states.

In fact, in his country, the Libyan leader was waging a vast campaign against the administrative bureaucracy inherited from the former regime. In 1973, he launched a "cultural revolution" on the Maoist model. Nothing was left out, not even the "little red book," which was dyed green [the color of Islam] for the occasion.

In reality, despite some genuine mass mobilizations, the power remained concentrated in the hands of the team led by Qadhafi and Jalloud.

Several factors induced the Libyan leader, starting in 1974-77, to radicalize his policy. They included the failures of his attempts to advance Arab unity, which he tried to surmount by appealing directly to the masses over the heads of their rulers; and his clashes with the local trading bourgeoisie and the rightist opposition, as well as with sections of the state apparatus that wanted to invest locally the resources that Qadhafi was devoting to his foreign policy.

Similar factors led to a radicalization of the Nasser regime in 1961-63. But in this area, as in others, Qadhafi, a real caricature of Nasser, carried the features of Nasserism to an extreme.

Private capitalism was abolished in Libya for the sake of a state capitalism, on a scale unparalleled in the framework of a bourgeois state. Not only were the main productive sectors, taken over by the state, but the services were as well to a large extent,

1. See "Mutiny puts pressure on Egyptian Regime," by Salah Jaber, in *International Viewpoint*, No. 94, March 10, 1986.

2. This is the time when Qadhafi went to the aid of another military regime that claimed to be Nasserist, the Nemery regime in Sudan, which was threatened by a left-wing coup. The subsequent reactionary evolution of the Sudanese dictator, who was overthrown last year, was largely determined by the fact that he faced the strongest workers' movement in the Arab countries.

to the point that small shopkeepers were supplanted by public-sector supermarkets.

Moreover, this statization was not carried out against a background of poverty, as was the case in Nasser's Egypt, which was confronted with a serious problem of overpopulation. Libya, in fact, faced the opposite problem. It suffered from a shortage of labor power in relation to the potential for investment, which required resorting on a large scale to imported labor power.

"Socialism" with money

Qadhafi's "socialism," unlike that of Nasser, is rich. The standard of living of the Libyan population increased considerably — free health-care and education, modern housing for everybody. The regime plunged into a series of development projects, some of which, in the image of Qadhafi, were overambitious.

For example, in agriculture, billions of dollars have been spent on bringing in certain techniques, which are otherwise found only in the United States, for growing crops in the desert. These could, in the best of cases, be imported at infinitely less cost.

This, moreover, is far from the only irrational aspect of a regime that would have been quite impossible if Libya did not enjoy a tidy oil income that puts it among the countries with the highest per capita income.

Qadhafi is also extremist in his foreign policy, as well as in his nationalism, which often has anti-Semitic touches. As Nasser did before him in 1974-77, when he was radicalizing his domestic policy, Qadhafi turned to a close alliance with the USSR, which went hand in hand with almost total military dependence, in the name of a common struggle against imperialism.

Qadhafi did not confine himself to the Arab region. He has supported in various ways — politically, financially, militarily and sometimes purely verbally — anti-imperialist regimes or movements around the globe, from Kanaky (New Caledonia) in the East, to El Salvador and Nicaragua in the West, including the Philippines, Ethiopia, Burkina, Ghana and Ireland.

In the Arab world, Qadhafi supports the Palestinian nationalist left and the Lebanese left. He maintains special relations with Syria, Sudan, South Yemen, as well as with Iran, which although not an Arab country is involved in the politics of the region. Moreover, he is accused of supporting

"subversion" in Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan.

This policy of wide-ranging support for anti-imperialist movements and regimes is a great irritation to world imperialism. Libya is the only state in the world that has put its petrodollars at the service of anti-imperialist struggles. It is an invaluable ally for the USSR — its only rich ally — although the Kremlin is often embarrassed by Qadhafi's braggadoccio.

It is such considerations that explain the violent anti-Libyan campaign of the imperialist states. The "worldwide terrorism" that the imperialists accuse Libya of supporting also supposedly includes all of the Palestinian organizations, as well as the Kanak FLNKS [Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front], the IRA, and the Central American revolution, all thrown together.

On the other hand, the genuinely terrorist group of Abu Nidal, the presumptive author of the attacks at the Vienna and Rome airports, is supported mainly by Syria. As for the grouplet of Abul Abas, the author of the seizure of the Achille Lauro, it has no connection with Libya but is entirely dependent on Iraq, Libya's sworn enemy.

These few facts should be sufficient to show the hypocrisy of the imperialist hysteria campaign, attributing to Libya a "state terrorism," of which the imperialist governments and their South African and Zionist allies are the champions anyway.

Against them, it is necessary to

defend Libya, to defend Libya's frontiers against imperialist aggression, and also to defend the national and social gains achieved in Libya against imperialism and Libyan and Arab reaction.

Such defence has to be carried out, however, without any of the all-too-common illusions about the social and political character of the Libyan regime. It is true that the Libyan regime has achieved some impressive results. But for the reason explained, it is an exceptional case. It cannot be seen as some special sort of workers' state. The Libyan state is essentially bourgeois. The Libyan economy is essentially capitalist.

The class nature of the regime

Let us start with the state. It has never been broken up in Libya. Despite Qadhafi's myth of the "state of the masses" (Jamahiriya), the regime born out of the 1969 coup remains essentially a military dictatorship of the bourgeois army led by a team with petty-bourgeois aspirations. And various vicissitudes of the Libyan "cultural revolution" change nothing in this respect.

It is true that the "people's base communities," which have been established since 1977, represent to a degree a form through which the masses have been able to express themselves at the level of local admini-

Second issue of Arab journal out now

THE SECOND issue of the revolutionary communist review for the Arab region is now out. *Al Mitraqa* is jointly produced by the sections of the Fourth International in Lebanon, Tunisia and the Israeli state.

In this second issue (January-March 1986) there are articles on: the conflict in South Yemen; the situation in Morocco; the political and economic situation in the Israeli state on the eve of changes in the government; the lumpen bourgeoisie in Lebanon on the verge of collapse; and a balance sheet of the Tunisian left.

Orders should be sent to 2, Rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France. Price £1, 1.40 US dollars.



stration, with a minimum of spontaneity. But the fact remains, nonetheless, that power is tightly centralized by the Libyan junta. It uses these committees as transmission belts, while maintaining an absolute monopoly of political expression, suppressing all forms of opposition by police means, including the assassination of oppositionists abroad. The Qadhafi regime has a certain Jacobin aspect, combining terror and popular mobilization.

As for the economy, the best testimony to its (state) capitalist essence was provided last year. Facing the sharp drop in its oil income, and following the example of all the other oil exporters, the Libyan regime acted in the same way or even worse than its partners in Saudi Arabia or in the Gulf Emirates. It expelled without compensation tens of thousands of immigrant workers, mostly Tunisians and Egyptians. It even expropriated them by blocking their bank deposits.

The logic of the capitalist market abruptly shattered Qadhafi's anti-capitalist pretensions. Just before that, he had been exhorting the workers of the entire world to take over their factories (!). At the same time, this gave the lie to his Arab nationalist pretensions. Being both Arabs and workers did not save the immigrant workers from being thrown out!

Such then are the limits of the "Libyan revolution." They indicate that the Libyan regime cannot in any case be a trustworthy ally in the struggle against imperialism. Qadhafi has demonstrated abundantly that he is capable of turning somersaults, often quite unpredictably. Two movements have in fact recently experienced such an about face. The Polisario Front in the Western Sahara was dropped in 1984 for the sake of a sudden "Arab-African Union" between the Moroccan King Hassan II and Qadhafi, (3) who just before had been accused of plotting against the Moroccan throne. The People's Liberation Army of the Sudan has been today abandoned so that Qadhafi could embrace the new Sudanese regime, which is trying to continue the Nemerly state.

Solidarity with Libya against imperialism must be accompanied by combatting any illusions about the Libyan regime in the world anti-imperialist movement. This, moreover, is the basic Leninist condition for any policy of alliances with nonproletarian social forces. □

3. This was a reaction by Qadhafi to the rapprochement between Algeria, long his ally, and his Tunisian adversaries. Subsequently, his reconciliation with the Algerian President Chadli Bendjedid points to a coming split in this "union," which remains completely symbolic.

Sinn Fein's work in Dublin's poor neighborhoods

THE FOLLOWING interview was given to Gerry Foley in early February in Tallaght, a new working-class suburb to the southwest of Dublin by John Noonan, a local organizer of Sinn Fein. This is a vast flat area of soggy meadowland covered with an untidy scattering of basic cinder-block and concrete houses, overlooked by the blue Wicklow mountains. The Sinn Fein center was a couple of rooms over a store in a small shopping center behind a huge supermarket. The area is almost a caricature of desolate urban sprawl, and it was not made any more cheerful by the steady chill drizzle typical of the Irish late winter.

Question. What sort of work do you do out of this center?

Answer. This is one of our most recently opened centers. We deliberately opened it in Tallaght because this is a major population area and three-quarters of the people in the area would be unemployed. We serve a number of purposes. In the main, people are ignorant of their rights relative to social-welfare claims, housing and so forth. So, we give them the relevant information and urge them to take on the problem themselves. That doesn't always help, however. People feel inadequate in dealing with government officials. It's then that Sinn Fein becomes the vehicle that the people can use.

Q. How does that differ from the patronage work that the established parties do?

A. We see our work as different from the clientelism that the other parties would be into. People relate to this center, come in and have a chat and tell us what their problems are, and we chase it up. The other side of our community work would be what we term community action on issues relevant to the community overall — jobs, proper facilities, facilities for youth in particular. We organize campaigns to pressurize the different government bodies to get these facilities.

Q. Other groups before you have tried this business of organizing people to demand their rights rather than just trying to do that for them. It's tended to fall back into running an

office that serves people rather than organizes them. How do you think you can avoid that?

A. Well, the history of our community action is there to be seen by anybody. We don't just take up the popular issues, that is, the issues that would get us votes. A typical example was the campaign against travellers (1) that was whipped up in this area the last year and the year before by the local politicians. There was mass hysteria against the travellers. We took the view that the travellers were entitled to the same rights as the settled people, which was a minority view at the time. Our view won respect, and people have come to us ever since then and told us that we were right.

When people ring us up about their problems, we urge them to take the initiative themselves. It doesn't always happen that way, and we can't just tell them to go away if they won't do it for themselves. But they know that the next time they come it's not automatic that we will do it for them.

Q. What actual organizing work do you do?

A. What we have been successful in doing out in this area is organizing a number of tenants' associations, which take the responsibility for activity on community issues in the areas that they cover. We've formed

1. Something like gypsies. They are the descendants of people driven off their land, who then became itinerant tradespeople, and fell into poverty as the old trades died.

an unemployed group for people who are on the dole. The first issue it took up was better conditions for signing on. The situation here was that thousands had to queue out in the rain to go into a little caravan [trailer] to sign on.

We're organizing youth in the area. We have set up youth clubs covering specific areas. Tallaght is broken down into a number of areas. You have Feddercairn, for example, which consists of 750 houses. And what we try to do is get people to organize in their estates and then to collaborate when there's common problems affecting both.

Q. Do you have a big problem with youth crime in this area?

A. We did have. We had a major problem with "joy-riding" in particular. That is, kids would steal high-powered cars and then tempt the police out to chase them. That obviously endangers the people who live on the estates. So, a number of people were seriously injured, and a number of young kids were seriously injured and a number of joy riders were involved in crashes.

We went out to talk to these kids, and we found that we were the only adults they had ever talked to who had any kind of a caring view. We then developed a youth club, called the Setanta Youth (2), which covers this area. It includes a lot of the young people who had been involved in that sort of thing. We've given them an alternative for releasing their energy, in getting their youth club off the ground, exposing the wrongs that happen in the area, exposing the misdeeds of the police and other state bodies. This has not solved the problem altogether, but it has saved a lot of young people from going down that road.

Q. What about drugs?

A. There is an organization in Dublin called the Concerned Parents Against Drugs in which we are involved. I am the chairperson of the Tallaght Concerned Parents Against Drugs. What we are doing here is more preventative — keeping drugs out. This is only a new estate. Two years ago we evicted two drug pushers by organizing people in the area to confront them. For a good number of years, people had seen pushers as "heavies," who were too dangerous to be tackled. Now the people have seen that they have the power to deal with them. They have seen that when you actually go and knock on a drug-pusher's door and tell him to get out, and when he looks out his door and sees 500 or 600 people outside it, that's it, he goes. There has never been any physical violence used

against drug pushers out here. The publicity we got from that success wiped out the drugs problem in Tallaght.

Q. Is there an exceptionally high proportion of youth in this area?

A. The census says there are 70,000 people in the area. That leaves out a lot of the very young children in the estate. But of the official number, about three-quarters would be below the age of 18. That's a mass of young people coming along with ideas and problems of their own. What we hope to do is let them know what's right for them, and that's certainly not the system they're coming into. They're leaving school and there's nothing for them.

Q. What impact has the nationalist cultural revival had on youth in this area? Is there anything here like West Belfast with the growth of Irish language classes and the audience for traditional music?

A. Tallaght is probably the area in Dublin that has sparked off the Irish revival in Dublin itself. We have three all-Irish schools, and two of them in West Tallaght, which is the most socially deprived area. It started with a small group of people who moved into Tallaght and decided they wanted their children educated through Irish. The parents raised the money for them. They also get a certain amount off the government. Now we have three schools catering for hundreds of children, and I think the way it's going that it will eventually take over the state, the National School. And they've done all that in the face of great opposition from the state. (3)

Originally, people wanted to get their children into the all-Irish school because the classes in such schools are smaller than in the normal English medium schools. Then the language spreads from there to the parents. They listen to their children speaking Irish. And the schools run programs for the adults so that they can keep up with what their children are learning and talk to them in Irish at home.

That's spreading. If you sit down with people involved in an Irish school, in a pub or wherever you are, and you start to speak a bit of Irish to them, they recognize it and can answer you. The embarrassment that was in speaking Irish, which was a terrible thing in Irish society, has been broken down. (4)

Q. You mentioned the problem of travellers. Are there a particularly large number of them in the area?

A. Tallaght has been a traditional stopping ground for the

travellers. They were here before the settled people were.

Q. As far as I know travellers have always been outside politics in Ireland. But I heard that you had some success in recruiting them.

A. We have. The young travellers have said that they've had enough of being pushed around by the establishment, as they see it, by the settled people. And since we have been involved with them over the years, they've tended to side with us. A leading member of the travelling community, Nan Joyce, stood here in the general election a couple of years ago. Sinn Féin actively canvassed for her and helped them run the campaign.

Q. I've visited travellers' caravans, not here but down around Cork. It's obviously a very deprived life. What solutions do you pose for those problems. There is also this accumulation of desperate travellers in Dublin, with large numbers of children begging.

A. That's a major problem all right, the children who beg. Breaking that down will take time. What we believe is that the travellers are entitled to continue their way of life, which is their tradition. And we settled people should give them as much help as we can. That can mean providing proper sites where they can take their caravans, with running water, showers, toilets, that sort of thing. We should pay more attention to asking the travellers what they want. Because they do not want to be out in the streets or camped alongside of roads.

Q. You were a candidate in the European elections. What district did you run in and where did you get your vote?

A. The district covered all of the Dublin area, and we got our vote from places like Tallaght. We got our vote in places where Sinn Féin had been involved with the local people for some years.

Q. So you think that your vote was the result of your community work and not your involvement with the national question?

2. The boyhood name of the ancient Gaelic hero Cuchullain, who symbolizes bravery and honor above self-interest, the symbol of the sacrifice of nationalist fighters and of the Dublin uprising.

3. The language revival implied the determination to build a totally independent Ireland. It has long been abandoned in reality by the rulers.

4. There are two reasons for this embarrassment. Since the great famine, Irish has been the language only of very poor and isolated rural groups. Since the establishment of an Irish state, the main people speaking it have been civil servants, priests, and teachers — very middle-class elements, marked by stiffness and pretension.

A. The bulk of the 15,000 people who voted for us would have done that because of our involvement with them on a community level.

Q. Was there an H-Block Committee here during the hunger strike?

A. There was a very active H-Block Committee. There is a successful committee now active in opposing strip searches of women political prisoners in Armagh jail.

Q. What proportion of the people active in the H-Block Committee are now involved in community work?

A. The H-Block Committee was about 12 people, and a lot of those were non-Sinn Feiners. Of those 12, 10 would be members of Sinn Fein today, and the best part of those would be active in local work.

Q. How many people did you have in Sinn Fein before?

A. There would have been a solid nucleus of about six.

Q. By your accent, it's clear that you are a Dubliner, but I heard that you were imprisoned for a time in the North?

A. That's right. I was in the cages in Long Kesh from 1972 to 1976, before the H-Blocks were built.

Q. Is there any connection between your experience in the North and what you're doing here?

A. There is. I was in the cages with a lot of people who have become prominent members of Sinn Fein since, Bobby Sands and Gerry Adams, for instance. There was a lot of discussion, debate. In the early 1970s, people went in just on the national issue, then they began to discover the deeper issues involved, and therefore the relevance of this type of work.

When I was released in 1976, the problem was to get a lot of Sinn Fein people to see the relevance of this sort of work.

Q. Do you find that out here people are aware of the identification of Sinn Fein with socialism and movements such as the African National Congress?

A. A certain percentage of people are interested in what's happening in other places. But in the main, trying to survive in Tallaght is enough for anybody. What people want to know about here is what you are going to do about jobs for people here. But when we put out news sheets, we bring in the national question and national struggles elsewhere.

Q. What about education in the basic principles? I would imagine

that at least after a time people would wonder where all this is heading.

A. We have no education program at the moment. There are some basic problems. We can't get a premises for meetings. The minister for education has instructed all the schools in this area not to give any halls or rooms to Sinn Fein. The community centers only give a room once a year to all the political parties. You can only get a limited number of people into the front room of a house, and you certainly won't get them into a field in this kind of weather.

People are not really interested in the "isms" of political life. That is a barrier we have to break down. We have to break down the barrier that keeps people from seeing the relevance of the armed struggle, how its relevant to them.

What we are doing here is all the time related to the armed struggle, to the necessity for the armed struggle. Whenever we talk to people the armed struggle comes up.

Q. It would seem to me that there are two aspects to that. One is to explain why the armed struggle exists in the North, because of the pogroms, the British army, and all that. I would think that would be the easier aspect. But the other is the relevance of armed struggle here, where it has not really been seen since the civil war.

A. The media has imposed this idea that there is a 26-county and a six-county Ireland. We see the whole thing as a 32-county problem. If there is an armed struggle in six of those counties, it's very relevant to the people in the 26 also, and that has to be emphasized at every opportunity. We have to get people's minds geared up down here to understanding that the reason British soldiers or policemen are being shot up North is because Britain is safeguarding its interests in the 32 counties.

We have the hardest task here because we don't have a visible, readily identifiable enemy. People in the Six Counties have. We have to emphasize that the reason British soldiers are there is to safeguard Britain's hold on the 32 counties. They have a visible hold in the North and a financial stranglehold in the 26 counties.

If we can smash their hold militarily in the Six Counties, then with the power that people have we can break their financial and political hold here. And doing that we can set about a better society. But it is very hard to get that across to people. If you can get them to start thinking about it, you have accomplished something.

Q. The implication is that you find it much easier to reach people on economic issues than on the national question.

A. That's it.

Q. Are you making any progress on the second issue?

A. We are, our growth shows that. We would have a membership now of about 60. Two-and-a-half years ago, we had one cumann [cell], with 10 to 15 people.

Q. This would be one of your stronger areas in Dublin?

A. It would.

Q. When did this growth start?

A. About two-and-a-half years ago.

Q. That was well after the end of the H-Block campaign.

A. Yes. There was a gap.

Q. So, essentially your growth is out of your community work.

A. It is, yeah.

Q. Would that be true of other areas in Dublin?

A. There is the North Inner City, where we have a councillor. There is also a strong area in Ballyfermot.

Q. Is Sinn Fein going to run a candidate out here in the general elections, which are now less than two years away?

A. Yes. It has been decided that we will contest this area on an abstentionist platform, as well as Dublin North Central, Dublin South Central, most of the Dublin constituencies.

Q. I was at your ard-fheis [congress] where abstentionism was debated, and the debate has continued since in the letter columns of your paper. Do you find that it is something that people discuss here also?

A. Yeah, it has been an issue. There's no sense in saying that it hasn't. People are interested, and they're interested in putting their views to us. Some say we should stand on the basis that if we win we will take our seats, others no. But we are a principled party. We have taken principled stands that are unpopular right across the board and we will continue to do so until the ard-fheis changes it.

Besides, people out here can relate to the abstentionist position. They can identify with not taking the money, the big cars, not sitting in the Dail [parliament] talking. It's more important to work out here on the ground than spend our time debating in the Dail. □

Communique of meeting between COSATU, SACTU and the ANC

WE PUBLISH below the text of a communique issued following talks between COSATU [Congress of South African Trade Unions], SACTU [South African Congress of Trade Unions] and the ANC [African National Congress] on March 6 in Lusaka, Zambia. The communique is dated March 7, 1986.

Delegations of the Executive of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) the National Executive of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress (ANC) met in Lusaka on March 5 and 6, 1986.

The respective delegations were led by comrade Jay Naidoo, general secretary of COSATU, comrade John K Nkadimeng, general secretary of SACTU and comrade Oliver Tambo, president of the ANC. During the course of the discussions COSATU and SACTU held a separate session to discuss matters of common interest as trade unionists.

The meeting resulted from the common concern of all parties arising from the fundamental and deep-seated economic, social and political crisis into which the Botha regime and the apartheid system of national oppression and class exploitation have plunged our country. There was common understanding that the Pretoria regime and the ruling class of South Africa are powerless to provide any real and meaningful solutions to this general crisis, that lasting solutions can only emerge from the national liberation movement, headed by the ANC, and the entire democratic forces of our country, of which COSATU is an important and integral part.

In this regard it was recognized that the fundamental problem facing our country, the question of political power, cannot be resolved without the full participation of the ANC, which is regarded by the majority of the people of South Africa as the overall leader and genuine representative.

The meeting recognized that the emergence of COSATU as the giant democratic and progressive trade union federation in our country is an historic event in the process of uniting our working class and will immeasurably strengthen the democra-

tic movement as a whole.

After extensive discussions on the current internal and international situation, characterized by a warm spirit of comradeship, the three delegations agreed on a number of important issues. They agreed that the solution to the problems facing our country lies in the establishment of a system of majority rule in a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa. Further, that in the specific conditions of our country it is inconceivable that such a system can be separated from economic emancipation. Our people have been robbed of their land, deprived of their due share in the country's wealth, their skills have been suppressed and poverty and starvation have been their life experience. The correction of these centuries-old economic injustices lies at the core of our national aspirations. Accordingly they were united not only in their opposition to the entire apartheid system, but also in their common understanding that victory must embrace more than formal political democracy.

The COSATU delegation explained that the principal tasks facing their *The repressive face of the regime (DR)*

federation is to consolidate their membership and affiliates; rapidly effect conversion of the general unions which are part of COSATU into an industry-based union; within each industry bring about mergers in order to realise the principle of one industry, one union and to unite the entire working force of our country under the banner of COSATU. At the same time, as a representative of our working class, COSATU is seized with the task of engaging the workers in the general democratic struggle, both as an independent organization and as an essential component of the democratic forces of our country. In this regard, the advancement of the interests of the workers and the democratic struggle of our people requires that COSATU, in working together with the other democratic mass organizations, seek to build disciplined alliances so as to ensure that the mobilization of our people in united mass action also deepens the organizational basis of all democratic organizations of the people.

The delegation of the ANC also reported to the meeting on its policy, its programme, its strategy and tactics. The ANC emphasized the need for the greatest possible mobilization of all the people of our country to join in united political action against the apartheid regime, equally and in combination with the mass political struggle. The ANC also stressed the importance of the armed struggle to defend the people against the enemy armed forces and to give the people the possibility to seize power from a white minority regime which holds on to power by the use of force.

The three delegations agreed that it is of central importance that the campaign for the immediate unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, should develop with even greater intensity. They agreed that the three organizations would do their utmost



in pursuit of this goal.

As the crisis of our country deepens, so too does the resistance, anger and the will of our people to fight back. In the process many issues have emerged and will continue to emerge as central campaigning issues.

At this very moment the entire democratic movement is confronted with the task of finding the correct campaign basis to destroy bantustan education [segregated schooling] and establish in its place one single democratic, non-racial, free and compulsory system of education for all the children of our country.

Similarly it has become imperative that the workers of our country, together with all the democratic forces, work together to destroy the pass laws — the badge of slavery — and the whole system of influx control and prevent the Botha regime from re-introducing this hated system in any guise whatsoever.

In these and all other campaigns facing our people it is the duty of the democratic forces to work together and consult one another in order to establish the maximum unity in action by all our people. The delegations further agreed that the obstacle to any negotiated solution is the Botha regime. They concluded that no negotiations are possible while the leaders of the people are in prison and while the Pretoria regime refuses to accept that our country should be governed by all its people, both black and white, as equals, as brothers and sisters. In this context the national liberation movement, headed by the ANC, explained that neither negotiations nor "talks about talks" have taken place and that the ANC is committed that any negotiations, if and when they should take place, must be public and involve the entire democratic movement.

In the discussions between COSATU and SACTU, both agreed that the widest possible unity of trade unions in our country is of utmost importance in our people's struggle against the apartheid regime and the bosses. Both agreed that there was no contradiction whatsoever arising from their separate existence.

The meeting between all three organizations was characterized by an overwhelming optimism that despite all the manoeuvres by the Botha regime and its allies, despite the heightening repression, victory over the system of white minority racist rule is not far off.

The meeting reiterated the commitment of the three organizations to fight for a society free from the chains of poverty, racism and exploitation which would require the restructuring of the present economy. □

AROUND THE WORLD

South Africa

Investment declines

THE FOLLOWING information on United States investment in South Africa was quoted in the French journal *Marches Tropicaux* of March 28, 1986.

The policy of withdrawing assets from enterprises who do business in South Africa has now hit Wall Street itself according to the *Wall Street Journal* of March 4.

American companies who want to stay in South Africa are finding it more and more difficult to resist the twin pressure of unrest in South Africa and the protests in the United States. Result: they are leaving the country at an increased rate.

Very influential American companies like General Electric, Marriott Corp. and Phibro-Salomon Inc. have recently announced their withdrawal from South Africa. Moreover, according to several representatives of the business world, the numbers going over to the conclusion that the minority regime in Pretoria either cannot or will not introduce reforms, could increase.

Efforts to stem the flow of American legislative documents banning investment in South Africa have failed because the movement for disinvestment has grown. Up until now 16 states and 56 towns in the US have adopted measures to restrict investment and the purchase of goods from companies with investments in South Africa.

In spring 1985 a section of the business world in the United States had tried to convince the country that to withdraw from South Africa would only make Black people suffer and would deprive US companies of a means of putting pressure on the South African government. The deteriorating situation in South Africa has since stifled those voices.

In this regard the *Wall Street Journal* notes that there exists in US business circles a belief that the speedy release of Nelson Mandela is essential if an increased tendency toward disinvestment of US firms from South Africa is to be avoided.

This movement was already perceptible in 1985 when 28 US companies ceased all activity in the country although 257 were still active at the beginning of 1986, according to that daily journal,

quoting statistics compiled by a private organization.

Furthermore, for the first time for a long while, last year, no US company established new investments in South Africa according to the *Wall Street Journal*. □

El Salvador

Trade unions unite

LAST FEBRUARY 8 the principal Salvadoran trade-union confederations united to form the National Union of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS). The organization of UNTS, which has been described as "the most important unification in the whole history of the Salvadoran working class," includes the Confederation of Cooperatives of El Salvador (COACES), the People's Democratic Union (UPD), the Confederation of Salvadoran Workers (CTS), the Professional Association of the Employees of the Ministry of Economics (AGEMHA), the teachers' union (ANDES June-21), the Social Security Trade Union (STISS), the National Trade Union Federation of Salvadoran Workers (FENASTRAS), the May 1 Committee, the Association of Telecommunications Workers (ASTTEL) and other independent unions.

The most important element in this trade-union regroupment has been the participation of the UPD, a structure which was created in 1980 through the impetus of the Christian democracy. More particularly the UPD had entered into an alliance with the Christian Democratic Party which facilitated the Napoleon Duarte government's rise to power. The fact that the UPD has now clearly placed itself in the camp of the opposition trade-union movement illustrates the growing isolation of the regime. COACES was organized in July 1983, and some of its members participate in the UPD. And as for AGEMHA, it led the wave of demands of the public sector workers in 1985.

A National Assembly for Workers' Survival brought together about 500 delegates from 100 different organizations. It was decided at this convention to concentrate the forces of the workers' and trade-union movement in the fight against the economic policy of Jose Napoleon Duarte.

Basic to this struggle is the demand

for the withdrawal of the economic measures announced by the government at the end of last January, which anticipated, among other things, a 100 per cent devaluation of the currency and an increase in the price of fuel and of transportation tariffs.

The "Unitary declaration of Salvadoran workers organized in trade unions, professional associations and cooperatives," which was adopted at this meeting, also contains a series of criticisms of the regime's economic policy and a demand addressed to the Duarte government that it resume the dialogue with the FMLN and the FDR. The document declares that trade-union unity will contribute "in the most serious and responsible way to instituting peace in El Salvador" and the UNTS will support "national efforts leading to a dialogue between the conflicting parties."

The formation of UNTS is an important step in the process of re-composition of the mass movements which has been seen in action since the beginning of 1985 (see *International Viewpoint* No. 86, November 11, 1985). The February 8 assembly called a national march for the workers' survival for February 21. According to the local press this demonstration in San Salvador drew 50,000 persons. □

Mozambique

Right-wing offensive

AFTER SEVERAL months of setbacks, rebel reactionary forces in Mozambique have launched a new offensive and managed to inflict a severe defeat on President Samora Machel's government.

The recent reconquest by the Mozambique National Resistance (RNM) of the Gorongosa headquarters situated about 122 kilometres from the port of Beira is an important victory. Zimbabwean military personnel stated that 400 rebels made the assault on the camp on the night of February 14, chasing off a thousand Mozambican soldiers who abandoned without a struggle armoured vehicles, anti-aircraft missiles and munitions stocks. The base has its own landing strip, its own electric generators and workshops. It had fallen into Mozambican and Zimbabwean regular army hands only in August of last year following the decision of Zimbabwean prime minister, Robert Mugabe, to send between 10,000 and 15,000 troops to Mozambique to crush the RNM forces.

The new RNM offensive has been made possible through South African aid. This was forthcoming despite

the signing in March 1984, of the Nkomati agreement which supposedly enjoined Mozambique and South Africa to establish relations of peaceful co-existence. (see *International Viewpoint*, No. 54, June 4, 1984).

Aid to the RNM is a point of dispute between the South African government and the military lobby, because it cannot be pushed too far if Pretoria wants to take advantage of various political and economic benefits. But South African support for the RNM guerrillas nevertheless continues despite revelations and scandal-mongering in South Africa itself showing that the Nkomati agreements are not worth the paper they are written on as far as the government is concerned.

Even though the Mozambican regime keeps up its socialist and anti-imperialist rhetoric it is not viewed in the same way by the Reagan administration as is the Angolan government. Washington is trying to get the latter to expel Cuban troops. In relation to Mozambique, on the other hand, Reagan has adopted a more pragmatic approach, much to the surprise of some of his supporters. Aware of the limitations of this type of regime and with information that the RNM guerrillas are bringing Frelimo [Frente de Libertacao de Mocambique — Mozambican Liberation Front] to its knees, he is more open-minded in this case and has appealed for more US investment.

Samora Machel, the Mozambican head of state, paid a visit to the White House in September 1985, but the US administration could not convince the US Congress to provide military aid. Reagan wanted to play a more subtle game, but he could not explain why Congress should provide aid to Jonas Savimbi's Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) against the existing government whilst supporting the Frelimo government in Mozambique.

The military undermining of the Mozambican regime has come on top of severe economic and social problems, particularly in the rural areas. The colonial heritage combined with ten years of problems and mistakes have contributed to this. The RNM, with South African advice, has used all the opportunities that came its way to destabilize the regime. The retaking of the Gorongosa base has upset the Zimbabwean military command who maintained that the Mozambican troops charged with guarding the camp had received no provisions for three weeks before the assault and that their morale was very low.

The RNM has also stepped up pressure in the Zambezi river valley where many of the most important

sugar plantations in the country are located. At least two of these have had to close down recently. They were among those which managed to bring foreign currency into the country.

The RNM has also stepped up its attacks in the Maputo area, using trains and buses as the main targets as well as placing mines on the beach in the south of the town.

High voltage electricity lines coming from South Africa have been cut twice this year, and a few weeks ago the government announced that seven passengers travelling on a bus on the Maputo to Swaziland line had been killed and 20 others wounded by RNM commandos.

Harare is paying heavily for its support to neighbouring Mozambique. Although no figures have been publicly released, it is estimated that Zimbabwean support is costing 325,000 US dollars per day. Robert Mugabe went to the Soviet Union last December partly to get military aid to alleviate the financial burden of the Mozambican operation. Since January, Zimbabwe has been forced to adopt a lower profile, reducing by several thousand the number of foot soldiers in Mozambique; opting for a more defensive strategy in the Beira passage and installing the headquarters for an intervention force at Chimoio. (Zimbabwean troops have been deployed for four years along the Beira passage, which includes a railway, a road and an oil pipeline, and links Zimbabwe to the sea.) □

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"Terrorism" out of control?

AS WE GO to press, the threat of a US military strike against Libya continues to hold the world on edge. Washington's European allies themselves have been showing acute signs of the jitters.

There is good reason for worry. This is probably the first time since 1914 that a situation is being created in which any terrorist incident could be used as an excuse for launching a major military action by a great power.

GERRY FOLEY

The Zionist state launches such strikes all the time which tend to lead them into deeper and deeper waters. The bombing of the Iraqi nuclear project is the most lurid example of this. There is now an indication that this line may be extended even further.

A major Indian news magazine, *India Today*, reported in its April 15 issue that Israel had approached New Delhi with a request for secret refuelling facilities in Jamnagar so that it could bomb the Kahuta nuclear installation in Pakistan and put an end to the "Islamic bomb."

The US attacks launched from the Gulf of Sidra at the end of March against Libyan radar bases apparently had a similar objective. The only thing that the United States seemed to gain from the exercise on the military level was that it proved that the missile systems Qadhafi bought from the Soviet Union were of no use against the more advanced US electronic means of warfare and that it could put the Libyan guidance systems out of commission any time it wanted.

Politically, the threats against Qadhafi appear to have two objectives. One is to force the Soviet Union to back off from supporting Third World regimes in collision with the United States. While Washington might win certain concessions in that area, as it has in the past, it clearly cannot force the Soviet Union to desist from such practices in general. That would go against the USSR's fundamental interests.

The detachment of Third World countries from direct subordination to imperialism has been one of the major factors protecting the Soviet Union from Western military threats.

The second political objective, however, gaining the backing of US public opinion for military intervention abroad, was apparently achieved, at least temporarily and on a limited basis.

The support shown for Reagan's warlike gestures by public opinion polls in the United States seems to reflect two ideas. The first and the most important is that "international terrorism," identified with Qadhafi as well as other Arab states and movements, is a threat to ordinary Americans. The second is that such "outlaw" regimes and movements can be punished at little or no cost to ordinary people by superior US firepower operating from a distance.

Both of these ideas are false. The world is becoming more dangerous all the time for all its people — not just Americans — because of poverty; because of the pitiless exploitation of the masses of the Third World, who are increasingly pushed to the point of desperation; and because of a massive military build-up aimed at preserving an intolerable status quo.

What Reagan calls "international terrorism" is the tiniest part of these threats.

Moreover, it is the United States itself that has built up a really massive terrorist apparatus in its attempts to suppress the struggles of Third World peoples — Green Berets, "covert warfare," political assassination teams to "terminate with extreme prejudice" local agents and allies that become an encumbrance.

Who knows how many and what other regimes have employed such people. The United States has trained a whole layer of professional killers

ready to sell themselves to the highest bidder, regardless of any ideological considerations whatsoever, to say nothing of national loyalties.

Most importantly, what is fundamentally wrong with "punishing" acts of "state terrorism" by military operations is that bombs and bullets have no political convictions. They can be used equally by rightists, leftists, criminals, uncontrolled individuals and lunatics — for all sorts of reasons. Under the best of circumstances, it can be very difficult to determine responsibilities.

When terrorist acts are used as a pretext for military action by great powers, "terror" is really out of control.

The Austro-Hungarian government, in 1914, used an act carried out by a very radical petty-bourgeois nationalist group as a pretext for war against Serbia and Russia, because it chose to view that act as part of general nationalist agitation backed by these two governments.

Reagan portrays Qadhafi as the sponsor of "Terrorism" by all sorts of groups in an evident attempt to get a blank check for repression against many struggles. In this respect, the Libyan leader's braggadoccio and wild threats, raising the specter of strikes against southern European targets, are politically useful to him. But in fact what this reflects is the narrow nationalism and military base of the regime.

Qadhafi's Libya is not a revolutionary regime, such as Nicaragua, which uses wholly different methods and through them has won important sympathies, not only in Western Europe, but in the United States itself.

There is no way that the Qadhafi regime can build any kind of an international movement, or be a significant factor in an international movement against imperialism, exploitation, and oppression.

Just as clearly, the US imperialist government cannot be allowed to get away with any action on the pretext that it is interested in "punishing terrorism." Over the past decades, it has used all sorts of excuses for launching wars against rebellious Third World peoples, the most infamous example being the "Tonkin Gulf" incident. If it gets away with making terrorist acts a cause for war, it has a blank check for intervening any time it chooses.

It is essential to mobilize as much opposition as possible to US military threats against Libya. Far more than the Qadhafi regime, or even the rights of Libya, is at stake. The rights of all oppressed peoples are at stake, and the survival and future of humanity. □