

# A Socialist ACTION

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## Confrontation mounts in Central America

By LARRY COOPERMAN

As the two November elections approach—one in the United States and the other in Nicaragua—a critical juncture in the Central American revolution also nears. The military preparations of the U.S. government and its counterrevolutionary allies in Central America have already reached frightening proportions. The estimated 15,000 *contras* in border bases in Honduras and Costa Rica constitute a larger and better-trained military force than the established armies of several Central American and Latin American countries. And the brutal, right-wing Salvadoran government has just received \$117 million in additional aid from the U.S. Congress in order to continue its war against the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the Salvadoran people.

The CIA has just published a 16-page comic book-style manual for the counterrevolutionary Nicaraguan Democratic Force. The manual gives illustrated instructions on making Molotov cocktails and urges its readers to clog toilets, set fires, and "start rumors."

Taking the manual's advice on spreading rumors, Administration officials have been warning that the construction of a new military airport near Managua may "alter the balance of power in the region."

It was after similar warnings about Grenada's civilian airport that the U.S. government launched its invasion of that island.

Former presidential candidate George McGovern has predicted that the Reagan administration will invade Nicaragua just prior to the U.S. elections in an attempt not just to crush the Sandinista government, but also to gain support for Reagan's reelection campaign. Walter Mondale, the current presidential candidate of the Democratic Party, predicts a "December surprise" if Reagan is reelected.

Regardless of the timetable, a confrontation is mounting. Through the elections, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) is preparing to demonstrate to the entire world that the people of Nicaragua will defend their revolution at the polling places as well as in the trenches. The bourgeois opposition, on the other hand, is disoriented: They alternate between boycotting and participating in the elections.

In the United States, it is the elections themselves that have produced a disorientation within the opposition to Reagan's policies. Those who are opposed to austerity policies, opposed to war plans, opposed to racial and sexual discrimination, opposed to the life of economic and social insecurity that faces young people, have failed to organize the massive protests and rallies that are necessary for an effective fight against the government's policies.

Instead, they prefer to try to elect a dull and listless candidate who was the vice president during an administration which itself increased military spending, attacked the unions, and began the intervention in Central America. This electoral orientation has led to the

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## High court's decisions hit civil rights

By HAYDEN PERRY

In 1974 Roger Trenton, a Virginia resident, was convicted of possessing nine ounces of marijuana with intent to sell. He was sentenced by the state court to 40 years imprisonment. On appeal the Federal District Court declared that the 40-year sentence was cruel and unusual punishment out of proportion to other marijuana sentences. The fact that Trenton was a Black man married to a white woman must have been a factor in the savage sentence. Even the prosecutor in the case declared that the sentence was "extremely unjust."

The case wound up in the U.S. Supreme Court on appeal. In January 1982 the justices rendered their verdict. The 40-year sentence for marijuana possession was not cruel or unusual. Furthermore, the court declared, it would lead to "anarchy" in the courts if sentences were challenged in disregard to previous court decisions.

This opinion was reached by a 6-to-3 vote and summarily handed down without hearing arguments or allowing lawyers to file briefs on the legal issues.

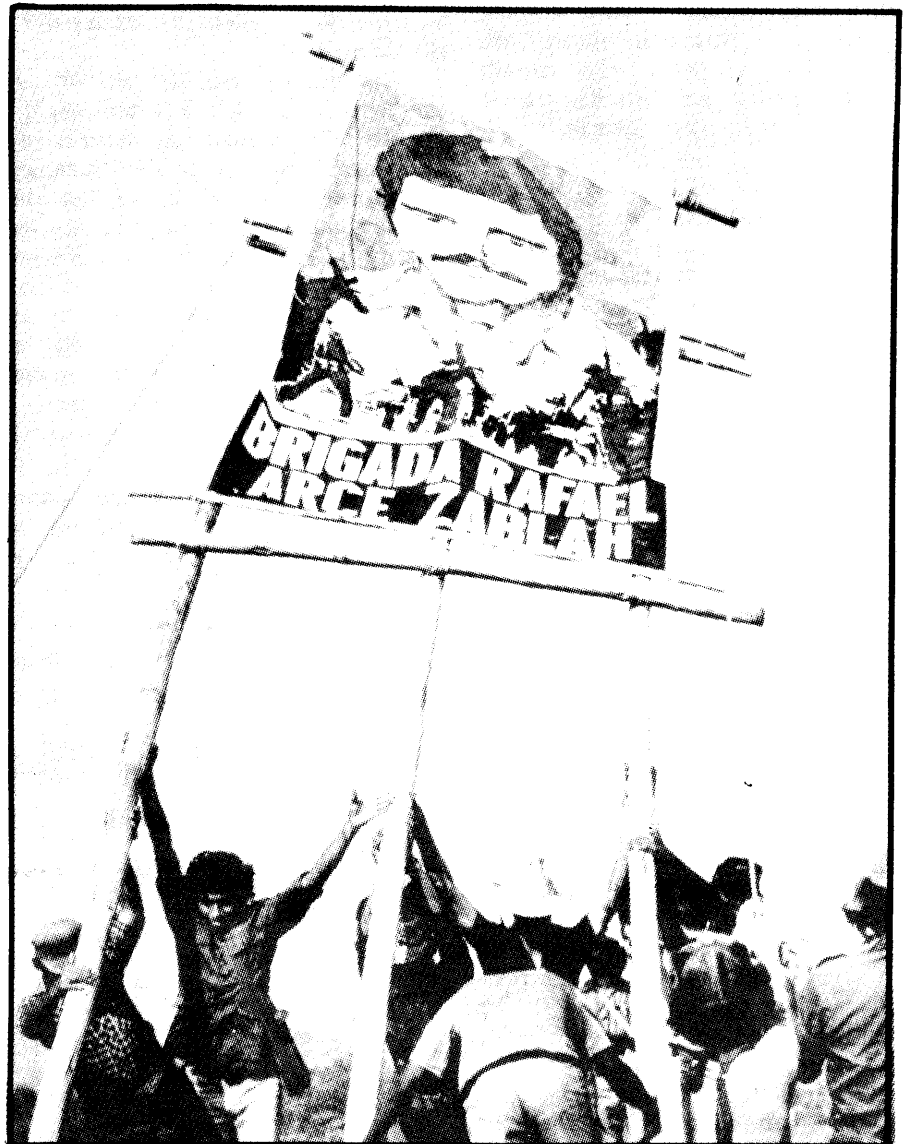
This is one of a series of rulings by the Supreme Court headed by Warren E. Burger that curtail the rights of defendants in the interest of "law and order."

One decision partly negates the Miranda rule that gives a defendant the right to remain silent while under arrest. Another declares that illegally obtained evidence may be entered in a trial under certain circumstances. A third says that juvenile suspects can be incarcerated from the time of their arrest until they go to trial. Their constitutional right to reasonable bail is taken away from them.

Barriers have been put in the way of prisoners who appeal directly to the Supreme Court for justice. They cannot raise new issues that were not heard in lower courts, and "frivolous" appeals will be penalized. In 19 cases out of 19 the Burger court has come down on the side of the government and against the rights of the individual.

In civil rights the court is striving to reverse many of the gains made in the last decades. The Black worker must now prove discrimination is "inten-

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Scene from "Time of Daring," a documentary film produced by Radio Venceremos of El Salvador.

## Antiwar conference to meet in Ohio

The U.S. government is trying to prepare American public opinion for a widening war in Central America, including the direct use of U.S. combat troops. At the same time, there has been no relief from the economic squeeze applied to working people. In response, hundreds of anti-intervention organizations have sprung up all over the country. While sharing a common commitment to peace, most of these organizations have tended to work independently of each other.

The September 14-16 Cleveland conference hopes to gather hundreds of activists to discuss a common framework for their varied activities and to educate and plan for massive national actions against U.S. military interven-

tion in Central America and the Caribbean.

Ron Weisen, president of the United Steelworkers of America Homestead local in Pittsburgh, will speak about the necessity of the peace movement and the labor movement working together. Other speakers include Dave Dyson, secretary of the widely-supported National Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador, and Eugene T. Carroll, labor coordinator of the National Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign.

Hundreds of important endorsements have been received for the conference. Among them are: United Furniture Workers of America; Women Strike for Peace; International Chemical Workers Union; Executive Board of the Ohio Education Association; Central American Task Force, National Lawyers Guild; Prof. Owen Chamberlain; Al Lannon, president of the International Longshore and Warehousemen's Union Local 6, San Francisco; Cleveland Clergy and Laity Concerned; Detroit Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador and nine other CISPES chapters; Toledo National Organization for Women; Guatemala News and Information Center; Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.; and numerous others. ■

### All out!

Emergency National Conference:  
September 14-16, 1984, Cleveland, Ohio.

To register for the conference, send name, address, and union or other affiliation to P.O. Box 21672, Cleveland, Ohio 44121, along with a \$5 or \$15 registration fee. For more information call (216) 398-0919.

# Mondale/Ferraro: "More of the same"

By SYLVIA WEINSTEIN

The following are excerpts from a speech to a July 28 rally launching Sylvia Weinstein's campaign for board of supervisors in San Francisco.

SAN FRANCISCO—We in this city have recently been witness to a circus far bigger than Barnum and Bailey. I'm talking about the Democratic Party National Convention, which cost the city's taxpayers over \$10 million.

Mayor Feinstein spent \$100,000 on a party for the big-shots at the convention, while poverty-stricken people line up for a free meal at St. Anthony's shelter. Willie Brown, Democratic speaker of the California State Assembly, spent \$400,000 for a gala convention ball, while working mothers, who cannot afford child-care, have to hang door keys around the necks of their little children.

There are parts of this city, such as the Western Addition and Hunters Point, that look like a disaster area. Why? Because the real estate interests and the banks are playing god with our communities. "Mondo Condo" is sweeping the city as apartment dwellers are thrown out of their residences to make room for condominium conversions.

Forget about the dream of owning a home. A lot of young people would be satisfied just to have their own apartments and not have to share with others. And thousands of people in this city cannot even find a bed to sleep in. They roam the streets with bedrolls on their backs looking for a doorway to huddle in. That is the background in which the Democrats held their convention in our city.

## Democrats love corporations

The Democratic convention nominated Walter Mondale for president and Geraldine Ferraro for vice president. Mondale would like us to forget that he was Carter's right-hand man for four years, as they did all they could to attack the rights of working people, Blacks, women, and others.

Carter and Mondale promised during their 1976 campaign to cut the war budget \$5 to \$7 billion. But after taking

office, Carter and Mondale asked for a \$10 billion increase in the war budget. Carter and Mondale increased funds for the dictators of Central America, while crying crocodile tears about "human rights."

Their secretary of agriculture, however, saved \$25 million a year by cutting down on the school milk program for 1.4 million needy schoolchildren.

Carter promised to support the Equal Rights Amendment during his campaign, but he gave women a glimpse of his real feeling toward their struggle for equality when he cut funds for abortions for poor women. You would have to be a little naive to think that Mondale was just an innocent bystander during the Carter years.

Geraldine Ferraro, for her part, says that she supports a woman's right to choose but that she would never have an abortion herself. But to give credence to the Moral Majority's claim that abortion is somehow immoral and un-Christian only adds fuel to the right-wing fire.

Abortion clinics are under attack. They have been fire-bombed and prayer-bombed. We've seen preachers actually walking into the middle of an abortion operation to say a prayer for the "unborn."

The anti-abortionists actually call up the parents of young women who have had abortions to tell them what their daughters have done.

What Ferraro should have said is that

she will join the escort groups to help women go to a clinic without being harassed by right-to-life fanatics. She should have said that she will prosecute the "raving-right," who harass clinics. She should have said that she will restore the funds for abortion that were wiped out by the Carter and Reagan administrations. But she didn't and she won't.

Ferraro also supports prayer in public schools. She supports the school voucher initiative that would take funds away from public schools and put them in the hands of private and religious schools.

Ferraro voted against the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill because it would give "amnesty" to some "illegal aliens."

She said that this would be an insult to people like her parents who came to this country legally.

Betty Freidan said that every woman should feel a little taller because of Ferraro's nomination as the first woman vice-presidential candidate of either major party. But let me remind you of the British miners who today are being beaten and jailed by another woman. Her name is Margaret Thatcher. The fact is that a woman candidate is only as good as her program.

Take my word for it. You are asking for more of the same if you elect Mondale and Ferraro. Their job is and will be to increase the profits of big capital at the expense of the workers. That's what we can expect.

Despite all the fighting over the platform at the Democratic convention, there was just one little thing left out—the truth. Actually there has never been a Democratic platform that really told the truth. How could it? The Democrats wouldn't get many votes if they said, "We're sorry, but we must protect the

corporate wealth of the ruling class. We are even willing, if necessary, to have a nuclear war to protect private profit."

Instead, they stage a little drama to fool the audience into believing that the platform is a bible, promising all things to all people, that cannot be violated. Meanwhile in the back room the big boys are calling the shots.

Now most of you know all this. But there are some who will say I am just a cynic. After all, there has to be a difference between Mondale and Reagan. There has to be a "lesser evil" in this election.

Well, I am not a cynic. I have enormous faith in the ability of the working class and their allies to change this society and end all the misery I've been talking about.

## On the picket line

Every day during the Democratic convention we have seen real-life heroes and heroines on the streets of San Francisco. I'm talking about the picket lines of the retail clerks of Local 1100 at Macy's and Emporium department stores.

These men and women are caught in the vise of big-business and their bootlicking judges and politicians. The mayor, the courts, and the cops have all sprung into action to carry out the employers' demand that the mass picket lines be broken up. They have imposed on the union a highly-restrictive injunction against picketing.

What these strikers need is solidarity from the entire labor movement of this city. Instead of throwing their money away on back-stabbing politicians, the unions ought to use all their Political Action Committee money to help workers on strike defend themselves. They ought to use their resources to build their own party, a labor party, instead of the Democratic Party.

I became a socialist almost 40 years ago. Far from having changed my mind, I am more convinced than ever of the rightness of socialism. I believe this economic system is bankrupt. I also believe that working people, who make this country run, have the potential to build a new society that is in the interests of all the exploited and oppressed.

As I run for the Board of Supervisors, I intend to speak the truth about this system. And I expect by the end of this campaign to have more socialists, more activists, more thinking members of the working class with us in our struggle. So join Socialist Action and work to build a better world. ■



## GOP cheers Reagan, cutbacks and war

By MARK HARRIS

Charlton Heston delivered the Pledge of Allegiance, Wayne Newton sang the National Anthem, and the Rev. Jerry Falwell gave the benediction. Welcome to the "celebration of Ronald Reagan" known as the Republican National Convention.

Everything went according to script. Reagan's nomination was a foregone conclusion. The platform was approved without debate. The delegates cheered the U.S. invasion of Grenada. They applauded the death-squad government of El Salvador. They stamped their feet for cutbacks and prayer in public schools. They got misty-eyed at the mention of advanced weaponry. And they drooled over every banality in Reagan's acceptance speech.

This crowd was clearly chipper for the Gipper. Not surprising, considering that more than half of the delegates reported incomes over \$50,000 a year. "We are older, whiter, and wealthier than the Democrats," one party official noted.

Former Representative John Buchanan, a Republican "moderate" from Alabama, complained that "pseudo-Republicans of the radical right, those of the John Birch Society mentality that we used to call the lunatic

fringe, have become a driving force within the Republican Party."

The result is a platform with no appetite for the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion rights, affirmative action, and rent control, but hungry for nuclear arms, military spending, prayer in public schools, and tax breaks for the rich. The Reagan plan for the profiteers, in short, is—let the feast begin.

The *Wall Street Journal* considers it remarkable that "over the last four years the nation has somehow become comfortable with the idea that someone of Ronald Reagan's ilk could be president of the United States."

The *Journal* is not unaware that Reagan's rise from the wilds of the right wing to the Oval Office is an indication of how far the austerity drive and military buildup has gone.

What does it mean when the Republicans accuse the Mondale campaign of being way out in left field, when in fact the Democratic platform is only slightly more restrained than Reagan's brand of country-club politics. The answer is that both major parties are in fact shifting the spectrum of mainstream politics to the right. The Mondale and Reagan campaigns are equally predicated upon taking care of the business of big-business—turning away from the poor, taking away from the workers, blowing

away the revolutions in Central America, and giving it all away to the rich.

The economy is devastated, yet Reagan heralds a "recovery" discernible only in the super bonuses of the corporate brass as proof that "America is on the road again," while redefining "full employment" to mean 7 to 8 percent unemployment. This is an administration whose only contribution to countering the growing illiteracy rate has been to introduce words such as "takeaway," "two-tier," and "new poor" into the American vernacular.

"Isn't our choice really not one of left or right but of up or down?" Reagan asked in his acceptance speech. Not quite. The two-party roller coaster is rolling again, but it stops where it starts—stuck in the quagmire of capitalist politics.

It is well known that one too many roller coaster rides can have unpleasant results on the stomach. Perhaps that is why roughly half the voting age population can be expected to say no thanks to the Democrats' and Republicans' offer to take us for another ride this election year.

The Richardson-Vicks Corp., it was reported, supplied the GOP convention delegates with 40,000 samples of a new antacid they are marketing. The company also plans to provide samples of their product to the election headquarters of both parties on election day. But they would be better advised to see that their product is available in the voting booths on November 7. ■

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# Antiwar protesters compete at Olympics

By SHERRY FRUMKIN

LOS ANGELES—The summer games of the XXIII Olympiad are over. While they were being played, they gave the world a portrait of "internationalism and sportsmanship" from the point of view of North American corporate media giants. And even though some of the big business press like the *Los Angeles Times* criticized the outrageous chauvinism of ABC Television, they, too, focused their coverage almost exclusively on U.S. athletes.

Despite the multimillion dollar opening and closing extravaganzas—staged by Hollywood fantasy makers—people around the globe got the real message: The games were between *US* and the rest of the planet.

Competing for world attention against this version of internationalism were some 10,000 antiwar and antinuclear activists who staged dozens of events during the Olympics.

A July 28 march and rally, organized largely by activists in the Chicano movement, attracted about 700 people. The event focused on the expression of solidarity between the Chicano population in the Southwest United States and the Central American people. Banners that decorated the speakers' platform in MacArthur Park were reminiscent of those of anti-Vietnam War days. They read "Raza Si, Guerra No."

The spirit of the rally was summed up by Lucia Morales, a representative of the striking Arizona copper miners: "How can we applaud the accomplishments of the world's youth when in

Central America our money is used to maim and murder young people?" she asked. "For the commitment of youth in Central America there are no medals awarded by this Olympic committee. We don't want medals. We do give, above all, our solidarity."

The Survivalfest march and rally on August 5 drew some 7000 people. It was scheduled to coincide with the exact moment 39 years ago when the United States dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. The international roster of speakers included representatives of the Hiroshima survivors; the Greenham Common Women from England; the Green Party of West Germany; the Nicaraguan Olympic Team; the FDR-FMLN of El Salvador; and Dennis Brutus, South African poet in exile and antiapartheid activist.

A colorful sea of balloons, banners, placards, and hand-lettered signs flowed into MacArthur Park. The official Survivalfest placards were inscribed with the slogans: "No more bombs. Stop Intervention. Fund Human Needs."

In addition, numerous contingents of Central Americans, a large number of Blacks, Asians, two gay contingents, opponents of the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines, a committee for Kurdistan, and others participated with their own slogans protesting U.S. military intervention around the world.

Other events during the two weeks of the Olympics included a reception for the Nicaraguan athletes that drew an overflow crowd of 600, a Deadly Connections Conference that drew close to



Marchers against U.S. intervention in Central America at July 28 demonstration in Los Angeles.

500, and countless forums, film showings, and fundraising events in solidarity with Central America.

The demonstrations show a growing understanding by anti-intervention and antinuclear forces that there is a connection between the threat of intervention in Central America and the escalation of the nuclear arms race.

A leaflet distributed by Los Angeles Casa El Salvador Farabundo Marti at

the August 5 demonstration expressed that convergence: "They're not using nuclear bombs—yet. But we of El Salvador and Central America know the names Hiroshima and Nagasaki very well. Don't let Guazapa, Chalatenango, and Morazan be remembered as the new Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Don't let El Salvador become the next Vietnam. Raise your voices to say: No more genocide in our name!"

## ...High court decisions

(continued from page 1)

tional" before he or she can win suits against racist employers, school boards, or election officials.

Benefits have been denied to retired people in 12 out of 14 Social Security cases. The court has approved the Hyde Amendment, which denies federal funds for abortions to poor people.

Every citizen's civil rights have been curtailed by rulings that enable the government to ban travel to Cuba. In addition, the State Department can now revoke a citizen's passport if it is thought he or she might harm the United States while abroad.

### The Warren court

As these reactionary decisions keep coming down from the Supreme Court, unionists, minorities, and other citizens grow more and more alarmed. They see the gains made under the Warren court being weakened or negated. Many people ascribe the reactionary rulings to the conservative judges appointed by Nixon and Reagan. They shudder to think of the nature of the court if Reagan is re-elected and can appoint several more justices. If only, they think, a new president would appoint another Earl Warren to the Court.

Earl Warren was appointed chief justice by President Eisenhower in 1953. Eisenhower thought he was appointing a safe conservative Republican to the highest judicial office in the land.

Warren had been a tough "law and order" district attorney in Alameda County in California. He had a deeply ingrained antipathy to Asians and played a key role in herding the Japanese-Americans into concentration camps in World War II. Later he served two terms as a Republican governor of California. He had all the credentials for a safe, solid, conservative Supreme Court justice.

Yet Warren led the Supreme Court in declaring school segregation unconstitutional, defending the rights of prisoners, extending voting rights, and reinforcing

freedoms of speech, assembly, and protest.

Eisenhower was appalled at the way Warren "betrayed" his conservative credentials. He regretted the appointment, while other conservatives called for his impeachment.

### Protests in the streets

Warren had betrayed nothing, but had reacted to great social movements that were to shake the American system for nearly two decades. Starting in the

could only move to contain it within the confines of bourgeois law. To do this the law had to be adapted to fit the new reality.

"Separate but equal" schools would no longer be accepted by Black people, so the Supreme Court declared school segregation unconstitutional. The Supreme Court could have made that ruling at any time since 1896, but it was never moved to do so until the masses in the streets threatened the stability of the system.

Other decisions extending rights to free speech and assembly merely put a judicial stamp on rights that thousands

Warren Burger, as chief justice of the United States. He had a mandate from Nixon to restore law and order and respect for authority.

### The Burger court

Burger could not do that single-handedly. He has eight associate justices to persuade. Few opinions are reached by unanimous vote. Many decisions are split as closely as five to four. A number of justices swing from the liberal to the conservative side as new issues and arguments are raised and as the political scene changes.

The Supreme Court does not operate in an ivory tower. The Warren court felt the pressure of the masses in the streets. The Burger court feels the pressure of the president and Congress. When congressmen took exception to a pro-abortion decision they introduced a bill to exclude that subject from the Supreme Court's jurisdiction. The court's independence is only relative to the pressure put on it to come up with the right decisions.

There is no doubt that Reagan will nominate the most conservative men or women he can find if he returns to office. Five of the justices are over 74 years old. But Mondale will not turn the Supreme Court around by nominating a couple of crusading liberals. He will appoint only middle-of-the-road conservatives like himself. They would do little more than moderate the swing to the right.

Liberals who say they must vote for Mondale because they fear the effect of more Reagan appointments are like the antiwar activists who voted for Johnson in 1964 because they feared Goldwater would expand the war in Vietnam.

The force that will turn the Supreme Court around is just over the horizon. It is a new upsurge of labor, minorities, and women who are demanding an end to repression and poverty. When they mobilize, organize, and take to the streets they will defy many of the Supreme Court's reactionary edicts. The court will then have to face a new reality, and bend to class forces that are more powerful than any group of justices sitting on a court bench.



mid-fifties with the decline of McCarthyism, and continuing with increased vigor through the 1960s, hundreds of thousands—at times millions—of Blacks, youth, and women were in the streets demanding an end to Jim Crow, an end to the Vietnam War, and an end to the oppression of women.

As an astute conservative, Warren saw that the Supreme Court could not stem this elemental drive for change. It

of protesters were taking for themselves in the streets. Without the mass movements of the 1960s the Warren court would not have achieved its liberal record.

Now that great movement has ebbed and the ruling class is trying to regain the ground it lost. Upon Earl Warren's retirement in 1969 President Nixon appointed a "strict constructionist,"

# "Lesser evil" won't work this time either

By CHARLES POST

The "Guardian Viewpoint" on the 1984 presidential elections (*Guardian*, Aug. 8, 1984) is a bundle of contradictions. The editors of the *Guardian* clearly recognize that both the Democratic and Republican parties represent a capitalist class on the offensive against both working people in the United States and revolutionary movements and governments abroad. They claim to understand that the Democratic Party has been a graveyard for the struggles of workers, Blacks, women, and gay people. They proclaim that the crucial tasks confronting the socialist left in the United States are "not in the voting booth, but in continued organization around the vital issues of the day; against nuclear war and U.S. intervention; against racism and for women's liberation; and for working people's struggles."

Yet despite all of these *correct* observations, they still tell us that "It is crucial that Reagan be removed from office... This includes voting against him—and for his Democratic opponent, Walter Mondale."

While support for Mondale is, in many ways, a logical extension of the *Guardian's* support for the Harold Washington and Jesse Jackson campaigns, we must examine the specific reasons they give to justify setting aside all the lessons of 50 years of socialist, labor, and minority support for the Democratic Party. Just why are the editors of the *Guardian* joining the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, the social-democratic DSA, and the stalinist CP in a lemming-like rush into a "Dump Reagan (Vote for Mondale)" campaign?

The *Guardian* believes that Reagan's defeat, even at the cost of supporting a Democratic spokesperson of U.S. imperialism, is necessary to preserve the living conditions and fighting capacity of working people at home and abroad. First, the *Guardian* editors claim that "the Reagan administration embodies a number of extremely reactionary forces which, if unchecked, will alter the course of U.S. politics for years to come."

In other words, a Democratic victory in November will bring some relief from the uninterrupted attacks on the historic conquests of labor, minorities, and women that we have seen over the last four years.

Second, they assert that "A defeat of the reactionaries in November can offer an important breathing space to left and progressive forces in the United States and, perhaps more importantly, to the liberation movements and anti-imperialist countries around the world."

Put simply, a Democratic administration will provide more favorable conditions for organizing against union-busting, concessions, austerity, racism, sexism, and war. The *Guardian* editors present us with a variant of the "lesser-evil" argument for socialist support for Democrats. Is there any more reason to accept this thesis today than in the past? We think not.

## The Democratic platform

Can we expect a Mondale-Ferraro administration to stop or slow up the cuts in social services, attacks on democratic rights, or increased U.S. military aggressiveness? Any critical examination of the 1984 platform (such as *Guardian* staff writer Kevin Kelly's "Dems Move Toward Middle, But Miss the Masses" also in the August 8 issue) reveals the most conservative Democratic campaign document in nearly 50 years!

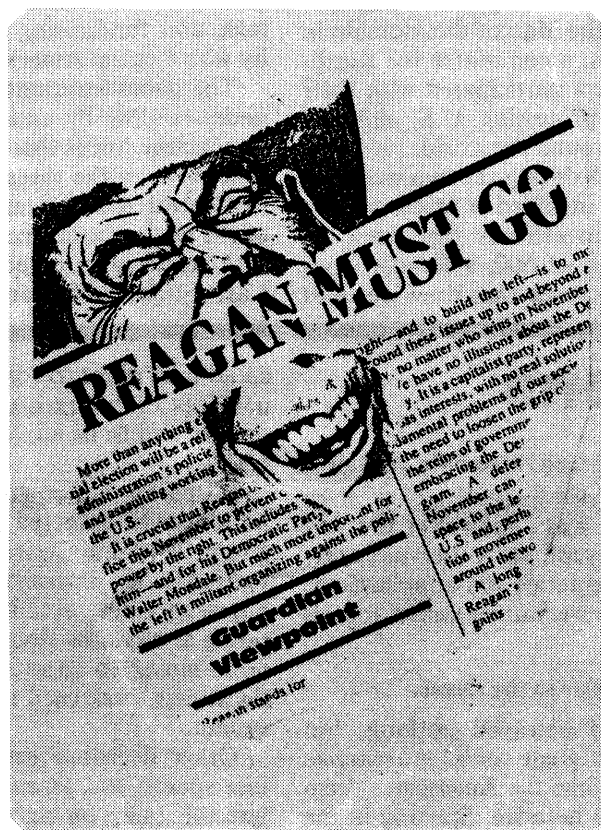
Gone are the "New Deal/Great Society" pledges of "full employment" and "affordable housing and medical care."

The usual paper commitments to affirmative

action, ERA, and voting rights have been watered down. On military and foreign policy, all the proposals to *limit* the scope of U.S. intervention in the Third World or to cut the *rate of growth* of the war budget were rejected. Mondale himself was brutally honest when he said "Look at our platform. There are no defense cuts that weaken our security; no business taxes to weaken our economy; no laundry lists that raid our treasury" (Kelly, "Dems").

This platform of "Reaganism with a human face" abandons all of the Democrats' usual lures for working-class and minority voters and codifies the Democrats' role in the *bipartisan*, capitalist class offensive to take back every gain working and oppressed people in the United States have made in the last 50 years and to reassert U.S. imperialist hegemony on a world scale.

From their support for Reagan's cuts in social services and increases in military expenditures (including continuing aid for the Salvadoran dictatorship) to their acquiescence in Reagan's military adventures in Central America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East ("opposing" them, as in the cases of the Marines in Lebanon and the *contra* attacks on



the Nicaraguan revolution, only when the U.S. ruling class suffered embarrassing set-backs and defeats), the Democrats have actively participated in the onslaught against working people at home and national and social liberation movements abroad.

This should come as no surprise to socialists. We should know that the systemic crisis of capitalism, not the policies of any particular party produced the current wholesale attacks on working people. As the crisis deepens, the range of options open to different segments of the ruling class narrows, and both wings of the capitalist class are pushed toward a policy of war and austerity.

In short, there is no reason to believe that the Democrats will be one bit less brutal than Reagan in meeting the needs of capital. The only answer to the capitalist onslaught—the only way workers, minority people, and women can defend their historical gains—is through their independent organization and mobilization.

Will, as the *Guardian* editors claim, Reagan's electoral defeat (Mondale's victory) enhance our ability to build a working people's movement in the

United States? Democratic Party campaigns (like those of all capitalist parties) are run in a strictly *top-down* manner. Full-time party officials, along with their supporters in the union officialdom, try to mobilize working and minority people as passive and individualized voters.

This sort of mobilization does nothing to build the self-confidence and grassroots organizations of working people. This is especially true when labor, minorities, and women are mobilized in support of parties, like the Democrats, who promise little and will deliver even less. The results of such electoral campaigns will only be demoralization, cynicism, and passivity.

## What kind of "independent" politics?

The Jackson campaign, despite the radicalism of its rhetoric and the racial and class character of its mass voter base, clearly fell into this pattern. The "Rainbow Coalition" as a force capable of uniting and mobilizing various sectors of the working class independently of the twin parties of capital *never existed* and certainly will not come into existence now that Jackson's bid for the presidency has ended. (The "Rainbow Coalition" may continue in the form of an electoral vehicle for Black Democrats.)

The Jackson campaign's total inability to win any of its important platform planks and Jackson's *de facto* support for Mondale will probably deepen the political despair of the Black community, very likely resulting in a *drop* in Black voter participation in 1984 as compared with 1982. Can we expect any more from a Mondale campaign, whose rhetoric is a hundred times less "progressive" and whose potential mass voter support comes from much less working-class constituencies than the Jackson campaign?

## A diversion

A "Dump Reagan (Elect Mondale)" campaign *diverts* the socialist left from the task of promoting the self-organization and struggles of working and oppressed people. Not only are our limited forces and energy expended in the dead-end of campaigning, but we often stop talking about potentially "controversial questions" (immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces and aid from Central America or the Middle East, reproductive freedom, affirmative action, restoration and expansion of social services, etc.) in order to "defeat the main enemy."

In other words, despite our best intentions, the sacrifice of our distinct "voice," our *independent politics*, is the necessary cost of socialist support for Democrats.

In a period when the working class has yet to organize an effective answer to the capitalist onslaught—in the forms of a mass movement against the U.S. intervention in Central America, militant strikes against concessions and austerity, or an independent workers' party—the left is easily frustrated with the difficult work of building the mass movements and seeks "short-cuts" like supporting Democrats.

However, to claim that Reagan's reelection will be an "historic defeat" for working people and to throw our energy into the campaign to defeat him will only result in a demoralization and dispersal of the socialist left's meager human resources when Reagan is reelected in the fall.

## The long haul

Instead we must dig in for the long haul and patiently construct mass action-oriented anti-intervention committees, rank-and-file caucuses in the unions, antiracist and antisexist organizations, etc. Only through such patient work, beginning now and continuing long after November, can we build the sort of working people's movement that can turn the political tide in this country and around the world.

A very concrete and small way we can help build such an independent working people's movement is organizing for the "Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Military Intervention in Central America/The Caribbean" to be held in Cleveland on September 14-16. This conference, already endorsed by a large number of anti-intervention /solidarity activists and trade union officials and rank and filers, is potentially an important step toward the formation of a labor-oriented, mass-action, anti-intervention movement.

All opponents of U.S. imperialism's war against the Central American revolution are encouraged to participate in the conference proceedings, which will plan a national campaign of mass actions against U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean.

Charles Post is a supporter of Socialist Action and an editorial associate of *Against the Current*. He is active in the trade union and anti-intervention movements and teaches U.S. history at the New York Marxist School.





# Strike tests Labour Party

The following is an interview with John Ross, a regular contributor to *Socialist Action*, a socialist newsweekly published by Labour Party supporters in Great Britain. The interview was conducted by Michael Schreiber and Alan Benjamin.

**Socialist Action:** What is the current status of the British coal miners' strike and how would you assess its significance?

**John Ross:** Well, the first thing you have to understand is that it's not a strike in any normal sense. It's the biggest trade union struggle in Britain since the general strike in 1926. The bourgeoisie have now spent more money on defeating the strike than they spent on the Malvinas war. From the economic point of view of the bourgeoisie, the struggle is irrational. They've now spent 10 times as much as they needed to meet all of the miners' demands. It's not a struggle they are conducting for economic reasons.

One must bear in mind that in 1972 and 1974 the miners waged struggles which decisively defeated the Heath government. In 1974 they actually brought down the government, forcing general elections which led to the defeat of the government.

The number one thing the Conservative Party did in opposition after 1974 was to prepare a very detailed plan—they set up a special subcommittee for that—on how to confront and defeat a future miners' strike. Since the party's return to the government, it has followed this strategy to the letter. The basic battle plan was to avoid a head-on confrontation with the miners until they had succeeded in defeating other sectors of the working class.

In 1981 the Conservative government made a probe to close the pits. There was an immediate spontaneous reaction from the miners, leading the government to completely reverse its decision within 24 hours. It withdrew its plan for pit closures. So this time [1984 strike] the plan was to pit other groups of workers against the miners and to prepare the relationship of forces within the miners.

Second, the government had to push through a series of anti-trade union laws. In particular it had to prevent what you might call secondary boycotts, thanks to which the miners actually won previous strikes. The miners would put picket lines across the power stations. They closed down the power stations. There would be no electrical power in the country and the government was forced to surrender.

The government therefore passed laws which make it illegal to take any action except at the place of work. It was all perfectly worked out to deal with this. The ruling class estimated when Thatcher was elected for the second time and had carried out this policy that the relationship of forces was favorable.

But the government has made two big miscalculations on the relation of forces so far. The first one was that it didn't believe that Scargill [the president of the miners' union] would succeed in getting all the miners out for the strike.

## Dockers close ports

As we go to press, British dockworkers have called their second strike in just over a month in solidarity with the miners. The walkout began August 24 when dockers paralyzed ports throughout Scotland as well as London, Liverpool, and Hull. Officials of the Transport and General Workers Union said that the action was in response to the use of scab labor to unload a shipment of coal at the Scottish port of Hunterston.



Kent miner's daughter on May 1 march in solidarity with the strikers.

Of course, he hasn't gotten them all out, but 80 percent are out.

And through press campaigns the government has tried to defeat Scargill. But despite the big press campaign there is no serious movement to return to work today. In Yorkshire there is only one worker out of 55,000 who's working. He's a national "hero."

His picture is in all the papers.

The second miscalculation is that the government thought it could use the courts against the strikers. In about the 22nd week of the strike, it moved against the South Wales National Union of Mineworkers, taking the assets of the union.

The general state of the strike is very simple. The bourgeoisie cannot get through the winter without power cuts. Everyone is agreed on this. The government claims otherwise, but nobody believes it. They must therefore do one of two things. The first is to smash the strike before winter. This is why they have now started to take court action.

Second, there is enough coal at the pitheads to keep the power stations running throughout the winter. But this would mean breaking the miners' pickets, not merely at the power stations, but actually at the place of work. The coal stocks at the power stations are already being used because the power workers' union is one of the most right-wing unions in the entire country.

The government is preparing to move the coal from the pitheads. It is building special new roads. In 1972 and 1974 the government didn't attempt to do this because it was scared of the reaction it would provoke. Now government officials are making up their minds as to whether to try to do it or not. They would prefer to break the strike first.

The other crucial question is the Trade Union Congress this coming September. The solidarity for the miners has varied from union to union, although most unions have shown very good solidarity. Some of the public sector unions have not shown a great desire

to get involved, but they have done a great deal from the point of view of collecting money. It is estimated that around five million pounds have been collected.

The situation with the lorry drivers is very bad, however. Large quantities of coal are being transported by road around the country. And the situation with the power workers and the steel workers is utterly disastrous. The leaderships of these unions are encouraging breaking the strike. They are for using coal at the steel and power plants.

**S.A.:** How about the dock workers?

**Ross:** The dock workers are solid. The British Steel Corporation attempted to import coal and this provoked a national dock strike.

Within the Trade Union Congress, therefore, there will be a very sharp fight over the question of solidarity. The fight will center around a proposal to levy all trade union members to support the strike and around a call for the boycott of all coal.

A straightforward resolution was put forward by the steel workers and the power workers, which basically proposed not supporting the miners. The power workers union's position was that it would handle any coal brought into the power stations.

It should also be understood that the police repression is incredible. In the mining villages like Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, there are police roadblocks every hundred yards. Using surveillance, they stop the pickets 250 miles away. Pickets coming from the Kent coalfields are stopped 250 miles away from the places they are going to be picketing!

**S.A.:** What is the role of the Labour Party in the strike?

**Ross:** The position of the leadership of the Labour Party is to support the strike in words and to oppose it in practice. An example of this is the question of the strike ballot. The position of the bourgeoisie is to demand an individual ballot before the strike continues,

despite the fact that 80 percent of the miners are on strike. That's also the chief demand of the right wing of the Labour Party. This demand is endorsed by Kinnock, the chief of the Labour Party. Kinnock has made many statements condemning the so-called violence by the miners.

The activists of the Labour Party overwhelmingly support the miners—by 85 or 90 percent. In fact, there has been no degree of mobilization of the Labour Party behind a struggle like this in living memory—not since the 1920s. That means that the left wing of the leadership of the Labour Party—people like Tony Benn who is the closest Labour Party ally of Scargill—are totally identified with the strike. They march at the head of its demonstrations. They appeal for money.

This also means that the strike has acquired the character of a tremendous test of strength inside the Labour Party between the right wing and Kinnock, on the one hand, and Scargill and Benn, on the other. It has completely transformed the position of Kinnock. When Kinnock was elected last year, he was elected with an overwhelming vote, probably 80 percent. His credibility has fallen tremendously as a result of the strike, and the position of Benn has obviously been advanced and strengthened.

**S.A.:** What have the supporters of *Socialist Action* newspaper been doing to help the strikers?

**Ross:** We at *Socialist Action* are totally involved in supporting the strike. In the last 15 issues, the strike has been on the front page 14 times. We are mainly participating in the many solidarity committees in various towns. These have the job of practical support and raising money.

To give some examples: In Bristol, the miners' support committee raised 40,000 pounds for the miners. In Oxford, the support committee raised 20,000 pounds. There are also food collections at supermarkets, street collections of money, and levies in certain factories. There have also been regional demonstrations and work stoppages in solidarity with the miners.

We have campaigned for three slogans. First, there is the demand that the Labour Party should call national demonstrations in support of the miners. These could be very big. It would break through what the bourgeoisie is trying to do—politically isolate the miners. And of course it would throw the labor movement solidly behind the miners.

Second, we demand a national day of action, that is, a 24-hour general strike in solidarity with the miners. This has been taking place area by area, but it has been spread out over a six-week period. We think that these actions should be unified in a 24-hour day of action.

The third thing we demand—if the government either seizes the assets of the union or attempts to move coal from the pitheads—is a call to a general strike and a country-wide work stoppage.

If the miners' strike is successful, the backbone of the Thatcher government is smashed. I don't think it would fall immediately, but it would be a helpless instrument. But if the miners are defeated, it would not be just a conjunctural setback. The entire British working class has acted on the assumption since the 1970s that the National Union of Mineworkers cannot be defeated. Obviously the stakes in this strike are very high.

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# Israel in electoral deadlock; economic crisis worsens

By RALPH SCHOENMAN

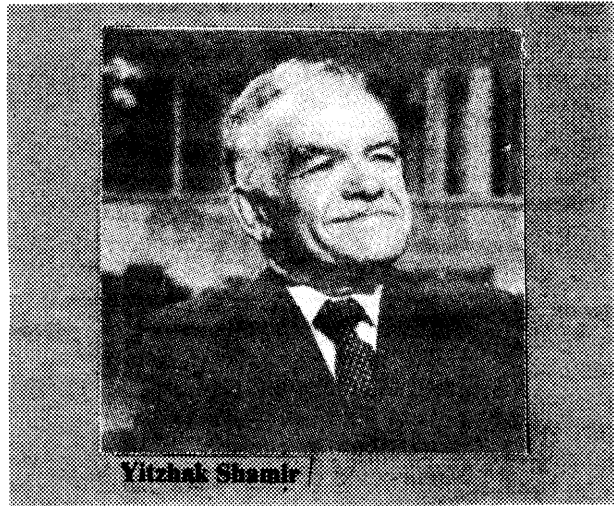
The 1984 elections in Israel produced a virtual stand-off between the two principal Zionist parties, the governing Likud of Yitzhak Shamir and the opposition Labor Alignment led by former Minister of Defense Shimon Peres.

These elections took place in a period when the Israeli army of occupation was under increasing attack from the population of the Lebanese South. They occurred as well at a time when the official rate of inflation was 400 percent, turning the shekel into a photocopy of the German mark of 1931, when a wheelbarrow was needed to carry enough currency to buy a loaf of bread.

Under these conditions most pundits predicted a major victory for the opposition Labor Alignment. Instead, the Alignment won 34.9 percent of the votes and 44 seats in the Knesset, in comparison with 31.9 percent and 41 Knesset seats for the governing Likud. Labor won three less seats than it had in 1981.

Labor, however, had run a campaign that was considerably to the right of Likud. Campaigning in Efrata, part of the militant and right-wing West Bank settlement complex of Gush Etzion, Peres pledged his support: "It is important that you know and people in other parts of Israel know that we regard Gush Etzion as part of the State of Israel" (*Jerusalem Post*, July 15-21).

Peres elaborated his pledge to annex the West Bank to other settler audiences. He also attacked Likud for not maintaining Zionist settlements in the Sinai. "The Likud... gave back all of Sinai, uprooted settlements, burned Yamit—all for what Shamir calls 'non-belligerency.' Now we had talks



Yitzhak Shamir

with Hussein and reached a state where hardly any terrorists cross the border. All this was done... without giving back an inch."

## Labor takes off mask

Pandering to the right is not a new tactic for Labor. Part of the reason lies in the fact that past Labor policies have been no less ruthless or extreme. Placing a reasonable face upon Labor brutality may serve to deceive people abroad, but Labor is quick to shed this mask when it comes to proving its credentials at home.

"We have to kill all the Palestinians unless they are resigned to remaining here as slaves."

This statement was made by Chairman Heilbrun of the Committee for Re-election of General Lahat when he was the Labor mayor of Tel Aviv. There is scant difference between such rhetoric and that of Rabbi Kahane of the Kach movement.

In the television debate preceding the election, Peres cited "the strengthening of the Israeli defense forces as the Alignment's primary task," claiming credit for the development of Israel's armament industries. The July 15-21 *Jerusalem Post* quotes him: "We pushed Jordan out of the West Bank and we will never permit a single Arab soldier to enter. We pushed the Syrians out of the Golan and they will not be allowed to return."

In *Ha'aretz* of June 22, a full-page Labor ad reads as follows: "Labor says NO. NO to a return to the 1967 borders. NO to the uprooting of any settlements. NO to negotiations with the PLO. NO to a Palestinian State."

## A collapsing economy

It was within this climate that the debate about the economy took place. Labor's nominee for the position of finance minister, Gad Yacobi, put the cost of the Lebanese war at \$2.5 billion to date. Over \$2 billion were being invested in West Bank settlements. The unfavorable balance of payments had cost a further \$3 billion.

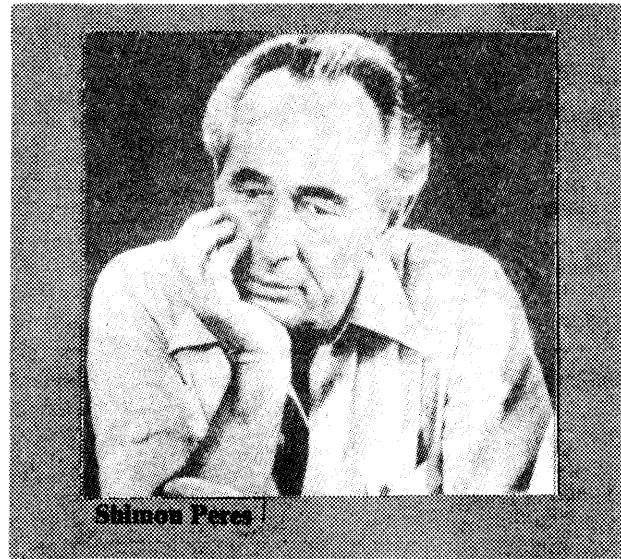
In an emergency meeting called by the president of the Federation of Israeli Industrialists, Eli Horowitz,

the director of one of Israel's largest banks, declared that "the present government is wrecking the country in its attempts to run an election economy" (*Ha'aretz*, June 21).

His attack on the government, however, centered on rumors of a wage agreement said to be planned between the government and the Histadrut, the Israeli labor federation, which would give workers wage increases of up to 15 percent. This, said Horowitz, would "push up inflation to 1000 percent per annum."

The Shamir government's Ministerial Economic Committee froze all hiring in the public sector for three months and halted all governmental purchases except for food, fuel, and medicine. It was an absolute halt for 75 percent of the budget of the government for an outlay period of three months.

Histadrut denounced the freeze on government contracts. Histadrut Secretary-General Yisrael Kessar called foul: "It is immoral for any government to



Shimon Peres

heal the economy by taking jobs away from people and causing them to lose their self-respect" (*Jerusalem Post*, August 5-11).

But if the Histadrut leaders were posturing publicly, they were winking as they wailed. Kessar informed the government that the Histadrut was ready to talk to any government and proposed "a social contract or package deal, as long as it was not an excuse for putting the whole burden of economic recovery on the workers." (emphasis added)

The potential significance of this economic crisis cannot be overemphasized. Both major parties are now tying the continued expansion of Israel, the sustaining of its military-industrial complex, to a major assault upon the living standards of Israeli workers. The continued subjugation of the Palestinian people is being explicitly linked to the willingness of Histadrut functionaries to impose both dramatic cuts in living standards and draconian measures to enforce them on the most exploited sectors of the Jewish work force.

## On the American dole

One measure of the seriousness of the situation is the abandon with which the role of the United States in Israeli politics is discussed. Wolf Blitzer, writing in the August 5-11 *Jerusalem Post*, reveals that for two years Secretary of State George Schultz has told Israeli officials in many meetings that their "basic structural problems" must be "addressed urgently."

American officials told their Israeli counterparts that they see Israel "as a country living, in large measure, on the American dole."

They instructed Israel "that it should drastically cut back its standard of living before seeking more U.S. aid."

This order to cut drastically into the living standards of its citizens is not a recommendation or a request. It is a marching order. Israel has received \$48 billion in the past 30 years from the United States. The Israeli state has thus been put directly under the command of its U.S. patrons. According to Blitzer, "The measures envisaged by the Americans will be very painful in Israel. But, according to informed U.S. officials, avoiding the issue is going to make matters even worse in the long run."

U.S. capitalism would impose upon Israel what it has inflicted on American workers during recent years. But the capital base in the United States and the place of its economy in the world market cushioned considerably the blow, severe as it was, to the working and ethnic poor in America. There was no inflation rate of 400 percent when unemployment soared. Nor was there a Vietnam-scale war at that juncture, the equivalent in Israeli terms of the occupation of Lebanon in cost and attrition. Israeli officials are unsure whether the "class peace" can be maintained under such blows.

Labor proposes an austerity budget that will freeze wages at a time of runaway inflation, while expanding settlements, maintaining the occupation of Lebanon, and building up the armed forces.

At the same time, Shimon Peres repeated on television his pledge to include the religious parties in a governing coalition. The program of the religious parties is unaltered. The National Religious Party, which lost votes to even more right-wing political formations and whose strength fell from 12 to four seats, insists on holding the Ministries of Interior, Education, and Religious Affairs. But the ultraorthodox Shas (Sephardi Guardians of the Torah) also won four seats and demands the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

In its program, Shas calls for ruling out all non-orthodox conversions to Judaism, amending the Law of Return to impose orthodox criteria on the definition of a Jew, eliminating abortions, ending military service for women, instituting a legal prohibition ending archaeological research, and banning all public transport on Saturdays.

Shas, like Rabbi Kahane of the openly fascist Kach Party, calls for the release of all Jewish underground terrorists who carry out armed attacks on Palestinians. The *Jerusalem Post* confirmed that the power of the religious parties "will be enhanced in the forming of any ruling coalition."

On August 23 the *New York Times* reported Shimon Peres had signed an agreement with Ezer Weizman, former defense minister of Menachem Begin, an aspiring leader of the Likud, whose Yahad Party had won three seats.

Other small parties were "moving to Labor's side."

Weizman, meanwhile, urged Shamir to "do his best to form a national unity government under the

## "Both major parties tie the expansion of Israel to an assault on Israeli workers."

Labor Alignment. Shamir was competing with Peres "to form a government with the help of small right-wing parties and with the religious parties that have always served in Israeli governments."

All the left parties that won Knesset seats have entered into the coalition bargaining. The Israeli Communist Party, Rakah, polled 60,000 votes through its Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE), losing 5 percent of its 1981 vote. The Progressive List for Peace (PLP) won 30,000 votes and two seats.

Programmatic differences between the two were small. Both call for an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank. Both call for an international conference including the Soviet Union, Israel, the United States, and the PLO. Emile Touma of the political bureau of Rakah accused the PLP of being "anti-Soviet" and a rival of the DFPE. Both groups stated that they would support a Labor Alignment coalition under specified conditions.

## Elections and Zionism

Although Palestinian reaction to the elections varied, *Al Fajr*, the Jerusalem Palestinian weekly, on July 27 expressed widely felt Palestinian mass sentiment in summing up the election results as follows:

"Labor and even Likud are losing votes to parties and movements which move even faster to the extreme right... The elections have proven again that the Zionist ideology can only lead its followers in one direction: a good lesson for all those who believed in and counted on a Labor Party victory, whether they be among the Israelis or among the Arabs... The latest Israeli elections have brought Israel several more steps to the right, but along the path to a precipice—the brink of economic and political disaster for Zionism."

As the economic crisis deepens and military expansion unfolds, the authoritarian rule and daily repression visited upon the Palestinian people will be generalized within Israeli society."

No coalition with Zionist parties will retard the process. Only a program which offers an alternative to Zionism and the capitalist economy on which it absolutely depends, can provide a way out for masses of Jews who will be adjoined by harsh suffering to their Palestinian co-victims. ■

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By PIERRE GERBOUIN,  
CHRISTOPHE MALDIDIER, and  
PASCALE REIOLLE

The authors of the following account are French agronomists who spent a year in Nicaragua working in the agrarian reform zones. They tell about the daily life of the rural population in the face of the provocations of the pro-imperialist forces. The article is reprinted from *Rouge* (July 20, 1984), the newspaper of the French section of the Fourth International, and has been edited and abridged. The translation is by Socialist Action.

PUEBLO NUEVO, Nicaragua—Friday, April 24: Two thousand peasants walk slowly in a long procession through the village of Pueblo Nuevo. They come from all the neighboring hamlets—for some a two-hour walk—to follow the stations of the Cross during Holy Week. It is one of the religious traditions still very much alive in Nicaragua.

One month earlier, this procession would have been difficult: A group of *contras* made an incursion into the township. Few peasants would have been willing to travel at that time.

Pueblo Nuevo is a township of 15,000 inhabitants situated in the mountainous zone in the Northwest some 20 kilometers from the Honduran border. On Friday, March 16, a group of 500 armed *contras* invaded one of its villages, Los Hatillos. They came with several hostages who had been kidnapped from a neighboring hamlet. They had rounded up the defenseless villagers and selected a few dozen young men from among them, forcing them to carry their armaments and provisions and ultimately to join their ranks.

Three peasants were able to escape and to alert the village of Pueblo Nuevo. Alarmed by the arrival of the *popular militias* of the township, the *contras* fled to take refuge in the hills—but only after killing four hostages: a schoolteacher, a leader of the cooperative, and two health brigade workers.

After the battle of Los Hatillos, the *contras* divided into two groups. One went toward the border. The other, seeking to settle in the area, tried to reach the Morro mountain as quickly as possible. On reaching the highlands, they were surprised by the militias of the neighboring village of Limay, and they decided to turn back.

### A general offensive

The presence of the *contras* in the region corresponded to a general offensive, carried out simultaneously in the North and the South beginning in the first week of March. The announcement on February 21 by Daniel Ortega of elections in Nicaragua on Nov. 4, 1984, and the discussion in the U.S. Congress of \$21 million in new credits to support the armed struggle of the Somozaists were doubtlessly not unrelated to the date of this offensive.

The *contras'* objectives, short of lib-

## Nicaragua militias turn back contras



erating a small piece of territory, are to take a village (with the national and international repercussions that would have); to destroy the achievements of the revolution (schools, cooperatives, etc.); to distribute anti-Sandinista propaganda; to kill the leaders of the mass organizations and the State institutions; or simply to sow terror in the countryside.

The group of *contras* who penetrated the township of Pueblo Nuevo did not achieve their goals. They were repulsed by the *popular militias* and army battalions.

These *territorial popular militias* are the units of popular defense put into place after August 1983 in the rural towns of Nicaragua. They are formed by peasants, workers, students, and

functionaries. These men and women of all ages receive a short military training in defending their homes and workplaces.

In each township, these militias consist of groups based either at the village level or in the adjacent rural areas. The function of the first is to defend the village itself and to lend reinforcement to those groups situated outside of the village that are in charge of a definite geographic area.

In Pueblo Nuevo, there are 600 people in the militia—250 in the village and 350 in the countryside. They are divided into 16 groups of peasants who provide daily vigilance. Six groups are linked to the production cooperatives (CAS) and 10 to the hamlets.

The cooperatives include peasants who work in common the confiscated lands. These are generally situated outside of the hamlets. They are the principal targets of the *contras*, who see in them the symbol of the revolution in the countryside.

### The main targets: the cooperatives

The workers in the cooperatives are therefore obliged to organize their own defense. They must prepare militarily; work their plots arms-in-hand; build shelters and trenches; and, at night,

guard the buildings and materials of the cooperative. All of this is done voluntarily and without pay. Much of this work is done at the expense of production.

In the hamlets, the militia must prevent the *contras* from entering and occupying any portion of territory. They must ensure the protection of the CDS (Sandinista Defense Committee), the credit and service cooperatives, the health and education facilities... and the lives of the peasants themselves, who are sometimes forcibly recruited by the *contras*.

The strategy of the Sandinistas is to erect a close-knit system of *popular militias*, dispersed throughout the territory, that can prevent the groups of *contras* from carrying out their deadly activities. Only one year ago, there were no hamlets where this popular defense was present. Today, since the *contras* began to circulate in the region in August 1983, 10 brigades have been organized.

In certain hamlets, the peasants still hesitate to arm themselves. They believe that it would only attract the *contras* in search of militia members. They prefer to escape from the fighting. They see the attacks of the *contras* as a war whose function and goals they do not understand. It makes them afraid.

For them the revolution has meant the national literacy campaign (1980) and access to agricultural credits and to free health and education services. They do not yet see the necessity for organizing their own defense. They count on the *compas* (companeros) for that. They are mainly concerned with the production of the basic grains (corn and beans) indispensable to their survival.

Nevertheless, for those who are conscious that the lives of their children are at stake, or that it is their children who would benefit from what the revolution and its agrarian reform offers, or even better, that they have the opportunity to become real actors in social and economic change—to those, the need to organize their own defense becomes more apparent.

### A good political and military choice

The defeat of the *contras* at Pueblo Nuevo forms part of a generalized defeat of their last offensive, the largest since the victory [over Somoza]. Of the 8000 men who returned to Nicaragua, 600 were killed and 300 were wounded. The remaining groups were dislodged and some of them were pushed back to Honduras. The local popular defense strongly contributed to this success. That is why the slogan "Todas las armas al pueblo" ('All arms to the people') has such significance.

The strategy of the Sandinistas, who dismantled the National Guard of Somoza following the victory of July 19, 1979, and created a popular structure parallel to the small regular army (20,000 to 25,000 men) has been confirmed as a good political and military choice.

With more than 200,000 armed men and women and around 750,000 participants in the mass organizations ready to defend the revolution, the experience of Guatemala in 1954 or of Chile in 1973 has little chance of being reproduced in Nicaragua. The *territorial popular militias* are constituting little by little an impenetrable web against the *contras* in the North as in the South.

A peasant of Pueblo Nuevo concluded: "We will never let them come back... the revolution will continue to advance." ■

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# Guatemalan workers organize despite government repression

By DAN LABOTZ

GUATEMALA CITY — Ronald Reagan praised Guatemala's elections to a Constituent Assembly in July as a step toward democracy in Central America. But to become a labor union official is still "to sign one's death warrant," according to a leader of STICAVSA, the union at the CAVISA glass factory. Fernando Garcia, a member of that union's executive board "disappeared" in February and can be presumed murdered by the military.

"You should understand that there's no real change in the level of repression," said a member of the executive board of STUSC, the union at the University of San Carlos. "In 1970 they were killing 509 people per month—in 1984 they're killing 485 per month.

"But what has changed is the form. Now they don't murder us on the street in broad daylight—instead they kidnap whole families from their homes at night."

## Liberal laws, repressive reality

The Guatemalan labor movement exists in strange and frightening circumstances. On the one hand its labor laws are liberal, a legacy of the period of the "Democratic Revolution" of 1944 and the 10 years thereafter. On the other hand the reality of labor relations is determined by the bloody military counterrevolution which has gone on now for 30 years since the CIA coup in 1954.

Union organizing and collective bargaining go on, and even strikes take place. But at the same time there is close surveillance over union leaders and activists and their friends and families, and at any time one of them may be snatched away from home or job and disappear.

Yet, though the kidnapping, torture, and murder continue, incredibly workers in private industry and the public sector are trying to take some small steps forward.

Recently food and metal workers have occupied factories to stop plant closings. The university workers' union is going to seek a wage increase in the contract which expires soon. A union reform movement has taken power in the country's largest union, the municipal workers in Guatemala City. And a militant labor coalition is being rebuilt—though only four years ago 25 leaders of a similar coalition were arrested by the national police, disappeared, and are presumed murdered.

## Coke workers inspire others

Leading and inspiring other Guatemalan workers are the members of STEGAC, the labor union at the Coca-Cola bottling plant. Since the union was organized in 1975 the workers have



faced every conceivable kind of terror. At various times the plant was occupied by the army. Special counterinsurgency forces, the Kaibiles, were stationed in the plant to intimidate the workers, and between 1978 and 1980 eight union activists disappeared or were murdered outright.

But despite the terror, the union survived, and when on February 17 of this year the owners of the franchise announced that they had gone bankrupt and would close the plant, the 460 workers immediately occupied it. Workers were assigned to guard duty. Soccer, volleyball, and track teams were organized. Literacy and labor education classes were set up. And union meetings were held twice a week to keep the members informed of latest developments and to read letters of support from every corner of the world. May Day was celebrated with a march and a mass in the plant.

## International solidarity

With help from other Guatemalan unions and from the International Union of Food and Allied Workers Associations (IUF), the workers held out in the plant for three months, and on May 26, Coca-Cola Interamerican Corporation agreed to keep the plant open. The agreement specified that the workers would be paid 252,150 quetzales for maintaining the plant from the day production stopped until a new owner was found. (Q1 = \$1 official rate; Q1 = \$1.40 black market)

"This was the most important part of the pact," according to Rodolfo Robles, general secretary of the union, because Coca-Cola was recognizing that the workers were still employees, still had a union and a contract, and that the company still had an obligation to them.

In addition, Coca-Cola agreed to pay 12,000 quetzales as a "humanitarian gesture" to the widows and orphans of the Coca-Cola workers murdered before June of 1980.

And, finally, Coca-Cola agreed to find new owners for the franchise. "The only thing that hasn't been established," said Robles, "is when they're going to buy the plant. But we're sure they're moving on this issue."

He said that he had been informed by J. Alberto Quintana, regional director of Coca-Cola for Central America and Panama, that there would be a meeting very soon in San Jose, Costa Rica, with three potential buyers from Central America, Europe, and the United States.

## Metal workers occupy plant

The victory of the Coca-Cola workers has inspired others.

Two months ago ALINSA (Aluminios Industriales, Sociedad Anonima), an aluminum fabricating plant, laid off 17 workers, including five union executive board members, and threatened to close the plant which employs a total of

36 workers. The union occupied the plant, imitating the Coke workers.

Other Guatemalan unions gave economic aid and sent statements to the press in support of the ALINSA workers, and about 25 unions sent telegrams to both management and the Ministry of Labor. There was also support from the IUF.

The result of the occupation was a qualified victory or a limited defeat, depending on your point of view. The company agreed not to close the plant—but refused to rehire the 17 laid-off workers, thus destroying the union since

attorney, and rank-and-file members have been disappeared or killed. In 1982, for example, Graciela de Samayoa, a worker in the economics department, and her two children disappeared. Trucks pulled up in front of her house, emptied all of her belongings, and the mother and her two children were kidnapped.

"No one knows what happened to this day," says one of the union officers. "It can happen to anyone who speaks up."

Yet, in spite of the repression, the union executive committee wants not only to preserve the union, but to try to move ahead. One of the issues is wages, which range between a minimum of 240 quetzales per month for a cleaning worker and a maximum of 454 quetzales per month for a foreman.

To win a wage increase will mean a fight with management—immediately with the University Superior Council and the rector, but ultimately with the military government, which controls the national budget. The union is ready to make that fight.

"Our union was once a very important part of the Guatemalan labor movement," says the woman on the executive board. "We think it should play that role again."

But if the union is to play that role it will mean danger. "To be a union

**"Leading and inspiring other Guatemalan workers are the members of STEGAC, the labor union at the Coca-Cola plant."**

a work place must have 20 workers to have a union, according to Guatemalan labor law. Twenty jobs were saved, but the union was destroyed. In any case, the Coca-Cola victory had given the workers the courage to fight back.

The Coca-Cola victory seems also to have had its effect on the public sector—or perhaps both private and public sector workers are responding to the same deepening crisis in Latin America.

## "A step forward"

In January, a new executive committee assumed office in STUSC, the labor union of some 1800 nonacademic workers at the University of San Carlos in Guatemala City.

"The old union leadership had been attempting simply to preserve the union in the repressive conditions," said a woman member of the executive committee, "but we thought it was time to attempt a step forward."

This union too has its martyrs: In the last several years a total of eight people, including several union officers, a union

leader," she says, "is a life and death issue."

There is also a new more militant leadership in another public employees' union, and the largest union in the country, the SCMT, the municipal workers' union.

"The previous leadership had held office for about 10 years. Every two years, when there was a union election, they would just rotate offices," says Silverio Pineda Ramirez, general secretary of the union. "We defeated them on February 7 and took office on June 29 after our credentials were approved by the Ministry of Labor."

For Pineda Ramirez it is the culmination of a 14-year-long fight to rebuild the union. A small, thin, older man who dresses in neat work clothes and whose deeply lined face is shaded by his cowboy hat, he explains the history of the union.

The SCMT was founded in 1947 during the years of the "Democratic

(continued on page 9)

## GLOSSARY

STICAVSA—Sindicato de Trabajadores de Industria Centroamericana de Vidrio, Sociedad Anonima (Union of Workers of the Central American Glass Industry)

STUSC—Sindicato de Trabajadores Universidad de San Carlos (Union of Workers of San Carlos University)

STEGAC—Sindicato de Trabajadores de Embotelladora Guatemalteca, Sociedad Anonima, Anexos y Conexos (Union of Workers of the Guatemalan Bottling Plant and its Subsidiaries)

SCMT—Sindicato Central Municipal de Trabajadores (Central Union of Municipal Workers)

CONUS—Coordinadora Nacional de Unidad Sindical (National Steering Committee of Labor Unity)

## International VIEWPOINT

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Revolution" of Dr. Juan Jose Arevalo Bermejo and Col. Jacobo Arbenz. But after the 1954 CIA coup which overthrew them and put the army in power, "they took away all of our union rights," Pineda Ramirez says.

There was an attempt to rebuild the union again in 1957, he adds, but "there was so much repression and persecution that it was given up."

Then in 1970 Pineda Ramirez made another attempt to rebuild the union and was one of the founders of the Committee for the Socio-Economic Betterment of the Municipal Workers. It took four years of hard work, but by May 1, 1974, that committee had reorganized the union and sought recognition from the Ministry of Labor, and, after various delays, they were finally given the charter of the original 1947 SCMT.

But then, says Angel Alfonso Loareas, president of the Conflict Commission of the SCMT, the union fell into the hands of "opportunists."

"I was a member of that previous executive board," says Alfonso Loareas, "and they didn't negotiate for the benefit of the workers. They negotiated for themselves and the company, so we decided to get rid of that opportunist group."

**"Work, honor, dignity"**

Three members of the old executive board broke away, joined with Pineda and another worker who had run as opposition candidates in the last election, and formed an opposition slate. The group called itself the Unity Committee of Municipal and Waterworks Workers and designed a symbol—a water faucet, a pick, a broom, and a wheelbarrow on a shield under the slogan "Work, Honor, Dignity."

The platform of the group called for a big wage increase. Wages average about 150 quetzales per month, which is just bare subsistence. The Unity Committee called for a raise to 240 quetzales per month. Other demands included weekly rather than biweekly paydays, transportation to work in the city from the suburbs where 80 percent of the workers live, a decent retirement plan, rehiring of those unfairly fired, and adherence to the city's personnel policy.

"It was a year-and-a-half job to win the election," says Alfonso Loareas. Knowing they would have to overcome the skepticism of the members, who tended not to vote after 10 years of the officers playing musical chairs, and that they would have to deal with the cynicism of the incumbents, who they believed were not above stuffing the ballot box, they created a broad representative committee to get out the vote. Shortly before the election, the mayor gave a five-cent-an-hour raise to help the incumbents. But when the election day came in February, the reform slate won by a vote of 663 to 338, out of 3000 dues-paying members.

The group took office in June and has begun to work to straighten out the union. They are settling unresolved grievances and taking on the job of organizing "the ties"—the white collar workers in the civic center buildings. Right now the union represents less than half of the 7000 city workers. "The problem with the workers who wear ties," says Leonardo Marroquin Mendez, the secretary of organization, propaganda, and culture, "is that they think of themselves as professionals rather than as workers."

The union hopes to be able to win them over.

**Facing a frightening future**

This new slate of union officers may face problems of repression in the future. Even the former union leadership, which had a close working relationship with the previous mayors of Guatemala and was considered opportunist by the new leadership, had its martyrs. The general secretary, Neco

Carrillo; the secretary of the interior, Rafael Sepeda Bernal; and union member Alejandro Hernandez Gonzalez were all either disappeared or murdered in the last six years. A more militant leadership can be expected to face even harsher repression. So far, the mayor refuses to meet with them.

**Clandestine organizing**

Perhaps the most impressive recent development in the Guatemalan labor movement is the creation of CONUS, a militant labor unity coalition. It was only four years ago that another such coalition had virtually its entire leadership—25 union officers—taken from a board meeting by the national police.



**Rodolfo Robles, general secretary of STEGAC.**

# Union Leader Speaks

By DAN LABOTZ

The general secretary and spokesperson for the members of STEGAC, the Coca-Cola bottling plant union, is Rodolfo Robles, a 35-year-old driver-salesman who has worked at the factory for five years.

Before coming to the Coca-Cola plant, Robles had worked as a salesman in a print shop and a bakery and had no union experience. But since coming to the factory, he has become the chief union officer and one of the leaders of the most important labor movement to have arisen in his country for many years. In a country where union leaders are frequently murdered by the military government, that is a big responsibility and a frightening task. Several officials of his union have been murdered.

The intimidation is constant. "We're always getting threatening telephone calls," says Robles. It caused his wife to suffer a breakdown. "She had to quit working and she was sick for three months."

They have three children, girls ages eight and 14 and a boy age 12. "They're very *concientizados*," says Robles, very conscious, very politically aware.

"Fridays my boy usually comes and spends the weekends with me," says Robles, in the plant which has been occupied by the workers since the company threatened to close it last February.

Though he is the top officer in the union today, Robles has no intention of running for office again when elections take place in February of 1985. "We're of the idea here," he said, "that you have to change union leadership frequently. We have labor education classes so that we'll have people who are prepared to be union leaders in the future. We need new people with new ideas so that we don't become stagnant."

And Robles has other ambitions. While working at Coca-Cola he has also been studying law at the University of San Carlos, although, he says, "this year I haven't been able to attend."

"But I still want to become a lawyer; there really are no labor lawyers here."

The reason there are no labor lawyers

They were never seen again and are presumed murdered.

Yet today, because of the work of a couple of dedicated individuals, about 30 unions in the Guatemala City area have been brought together to form CONUS and are now reaching out to other areas in the country.

Some of these unions came together in support of the Coca-Cola workers. "That was, perhaps, our greatest showing of solidarity," says one of the union leaders. The various unions gave food, helped with printing costs, offered advice and moral support. Today CONUS is helping other workers having problems, like the women workers at a textile plant, Tejidos Universales, and the militant union at the Cervezeria Nacional in Quetzaltenango.

"The main problem," says one of the union leaders, "is that we lack money. For example, we want to get in touch with workers in some other towns, but we don't have the money to make the trips."

Asked if the situation of the labor movement has improved, one of the CONUS leaders says, "The situation is the same, but we have to get ourselves organized."

It's not an easy job. Everything has to be done in a semi-clandestine fashion and through personal contact. "What progress we've made has been very

small," he adds. Still, it's remarkable that the unions are once again pulling together after the massacre of 1980.

**Fallen comrade**

Sitting around the table in the cafeteria in the CAVISA glass factory, the young men who make up the union executive committee mention the name of their fallen comrade, Fernando Garcia, and turn their heads away, look down, wipe their eyes. It's only five months since *companero* Garcia fell in the struggle.

"We've had constant persecution since we were founded," says one of the men. "We have had many martyrs to defend the working class. Our first general secretary, Martin Lopez Chacon, was kidnapped and disappeared in 1969."

Since then several others have been kidnapped, killed, or driven into exile, the most recent being Garcia.

"The biggest problem is the repression. It's hardest on our wives. They're the ones who must suffer the consequences. We tell our children that if we should disappear, they should not be afraid, and they should bear it with maturity," he says.

"We go on because the situation here is always critical. We don't work for luxuries—we're poor, we have no luxuries. We fight in order to survive. Because we have to."

is that they are assassinated by the military government.

"When you go back," Robles says, "tell them that we thank the North American labor unions, the foreign *companeros*, and the journalists who

have helped us.

"The union movement of Guatemala is united, and we are sure that with the creation of CONUS, labor unionism will have the same force that it had in former years."

## ...Central America confrontation

(continued from page 1)

demobilization of the opposition forces.

The strategy of supporting the Democratic Party is counterproductive. It not only fails to stop U.S. aid to El Salvador, but cannot even stop the dramatic increase in the level of that aid. The defection of Clarence Long, a liberal opponent of Reagan's Central America policy, to Reagan's side during the vote on additional aid to the Salvadoran government, demonstrates the shallowness of the convictions of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party.

The opposition of these Democrats is based on fear of the consequences of a U.S. invasion of Central America. They have no attachment to the right of the Salvadoran people to self-determination, nor do they support the social and economic objectives of the revolution. Neither lobbying nor electing these Democrats will change the course of the government's policies.

One hopeful sign of a change in strategy among antiwar forces is the Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Intervention in Central America to be held in Cleveland on September 14-16. Its initial sponsors, mostly from the labor movement, have ship from labor, peace, and solidarity continued to attract broader sponsor-

activists. The conference represents an opportunity for antiwar activists to link up with unionists to help forge a more powerful anti-intervention movement. Socialist Action urges all antiwar, labor, and civil rights activists and organizations to support and attend this conference.

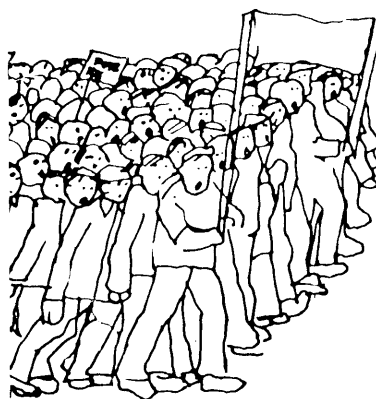
### Solidarity with Chilean people

September 11 marks the 11th anniversary of the coup that brought the bloody dictatorship of Pinochet to power in Chile.

Today the Chilean masses are rising up against the ruthless regime, demanding an end to the disappearances of over 2500 people, to the death and torture of over 50,000 people, and to the devastation of the nation's resources at the hands of the capitalists and the International Monetary Fund. "Down with Pinochet," and "Bread, Jobs, Justice, and Democracy" are the slogans expressing the hopes of millions of Chilean working people.

To commemorate the struggle of the Chilean masses under Pinochet and to demand "Democracy Now," a number of Chilean solidarity committees in the United States are organizing activities on September 11.

In San Francisco, a number of Chilean and Central America solidarity committees, local unions, and church groups have organized one such event to be held September 11 at the Mission Cultural Center, 2868 Mission St., at 5 p.m. The event will include food, music, and a political rally.



# Mexico reels under foreign debt burden

By MANUEL AGUILAR

MEXICO CITY—Luis Echeverria [president of Mexico from 1970 to 1976] handed down to Jose Lopez Portillo a debt of approximately \$25 billion in 1976. In 1982 Miguel de la Madrid inherited a debt of \$81 billion from Lopez Portillo. In the year-and-a-half of the current president's administration, the debt has risen by more than \$5 billion.

With every half-point rise in the interest rates, there is a \$400 million to \$500 million rise in the payment on the debt. At the current stage, this means that Miguel de la Madrid will complete his term with a debt, even using conservative figures, of around \$105 billion.

With this hellish dynamic, the foreign debt, which began over two decades ago, has plunged the country into total financial dependence on the imperialist countries. From the capitalist point of view, the foreign debt represents a fundamental obstacle to economic development. Mexican capitalism is carrying an insufferable load which is destroying its economic foundations.

Secretary of Commerce and Industrial Development Hector Hernandez recognized last June 22 that the \$13 billion surplus from the balance of trade in 1984 will have to be entirely dedicated to interest payments on the debt. At the same time, he noted that the level of imports from the United States had fallen by the sum of \$18 billion in the last two years.

With these figures, a dramatic view of the country is laid bare. The debt is serviced with the foreign currency from exports, while the productive apparatus is condemned to stagnation for lack of foreign currency to pay for the key imports necessary for economic development.

This drastic situation is compounded by the effects of the immense *decapitalization* of the country. Thus, it is not enough that the income from exports has to be dedicated to paying the debt. On top of this, the flight of domestic capital represents a sum greater than the inflow of foreign capital through loans and new foreign investment.

It is not possible—even from the "pure" capitalist point of view—to justify this level of indebtedness. The texts on economic theory consider 20 percent of export earnings to be a reasonable rate for repayment of the foreign debt. Yet Mexico today has a rate that is climbing to more than 60 percent.

In practice, this situation means an intolerable waste of the resources of a country like Mexico, which needs as much of its resources as possible. The deformations produced by imperialism have led to a new reality of a small number of superbankers who, like emperors, demand tribute from the whole world. In effect, it is financial feudalism.

## A blind alley

The recovery from the 1981-83 recession has resulted in a predicament for the international credit apparatus. Capital is not led into productive channels, but rather is attracted by the high interest rates prevailing in the imperialist countries, especially the United States. This irrational policy—exemplified by President Reagan, the master of pretense—is planting financial time bombs on the world economic scene.

The Mexican government increasingly finds itself in a blind alley as it faithfully carries out the role assigned to it by the imperialist structures. The capital we will need for recovery is fleeing the country or has to be used to service

the debt. How can the economy get out of this quagmire? From where can more resources be scraped out? How long can the working population tolerate a degree of austerity that leaves it with nothing but scraps from the table?

The current government is becoming more and more a government whose principal mission is to safeguard the imperialist bankers. This function of debtor is completely detrimental to its other functions as a moderator of social conflicts, promoter of a domestic capitalist development, etc.

## "Rationality" and discontent

The question of the foreign debt has erupted as a key problem facing the present regime. It will increasingly become a factor that will catalyze popular discontent. The question of the "rationality" of a system that allows its people to go without eating in order to pay increasing sums of money to insatiable bankers will lead to a higher mass consciousness.

*The debt is not payable*, including from a capitalist point of view, at least insofar as it condemns the Mexican economy to devastation and generalized decadence. Moreover, these statistics reveal that the country is being mortgaged not only economically, but politically as well. The workers' movement must therefore put forward a line that provides the political ammunition necessary to overcome the crisis through a revolutionary alternative.

A moratorium on the debt is only a step toward its nonrecognition. Imperialism has already been paid abundantly. The political ties which link the dependent semicolonial and colonial countries to imperialism are strengthened by the gold chains of the debt.

The bourgeoisies of Latin America and the so-called Third World as a whole find themselves faced with a terrible dilemma. They cannot fail to protest the heavy weight of the tribute upon their economies imposed by the imperialists. But, at the same time, they cannot break with them completely.

The masses will be on the frontline of this vital anti-imperialist struggle that seeks a moratorium, a breaking of the accords with the International Monetary Fund, and the refusal of imperialist-originated austerity. This is the first step in the path toward nonrecognition of the debt. The health of a nation like Mexico, in reality, will only be attained through the breaking of the ties that bind it like tentacles to imperialism. And here, the breaking of the chain of gold will be a key battle on the road to national liberation. ■



## Bolivian art mirrors struggle

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

*"Artesania Sorata," cloth wall hangings from the Andes. An exhibition, organized by Diane Bellomy, at the Galeria de la Raza, San Francisco, July 21 through August 18, 1984. (Tentatively scheduled to tour to other U.S. cities.)*

Weaving is an ancient art in Bolivia. For centuries, the people of the harsh slopes of the Andes have produced fabrics of pure colors and incredibly intricate patterns.

Seven years ago, when Diane Bellomy came to the Bolivian village of Sorata, textile art had long fallen into disuse. Bellomy, an artist who was born in the United States, was able to work with the people of the region to find an artistic use for the scraps of cloth left over from clothes-making. The pieces were sewn into applied wall hangings

and dolls. About 100 men and women—artists, weavers, and dyers—are now associated with Bellomy's workshop.

"These were families of miners, but they needed more money to pay for food and kerosene," Bellomy told me. "By using their inherited abilities in weaving and sewing, the people were able to gain additional economic and personal stability."

Bellomy pointed out that the people of Bolivia have been further impoverished recently as a result of the disastrous combination of the worldwide recession and the austerity decisions made by the International Monetary Fund. Bolivia's international debt is \$3.8 billion. The peso, which was valued at 25 to the dollar less than three years ago, today stands at 7000 to the dollar.

Increased economic hardship has had an impact on the textiles. "Formerly, the work showed charming country scenes with animals and mountains," Bellomy said. "But about six months ago, when we were planning our exhibition in San Francisco, I looked at the works and didn't feel good about them. They were no longer inspired. And I didn't feel the artists were happy with their work. They were just trying to make something that might sell."

"We began to realize together the possibility of showing their actual life—which is one of daily struggle. We have hopes of making people aware through art of the problems of people whose babies are dying because they can't afford to feed them."

The more recent wall hangings reflect the increased political concerns of the artists. Joyously colored landscapes are now peopled with groups of striking miners raising their picket signs, women with baskets waiting for bread, or protesters halting traffic at a roadblock. The ancient art of the Andes has been restored to speak to the modern world. ■





*The Fight Against Shutdowns: Youngstown's Steel Mill Closings*, by Staughton Lynd, Singlejack Books (San Pedro, Calif.), 1982, 244 pp., \$9.00

As long as anyone in Youngstown, Ohio, can remember, steel has played a vital role in the life of the city. Young men and women worked in the area mills as their fathers and grandfathers had done before. Much of the other industry in the city was built to serve the steel industry.

Oldtimers proudly recall the struggles necessary to organize the United Steelworkers of America (USWA). They talk about the company murders and the feeling of accomplishment when the initial collective bargaining agreements were signed.

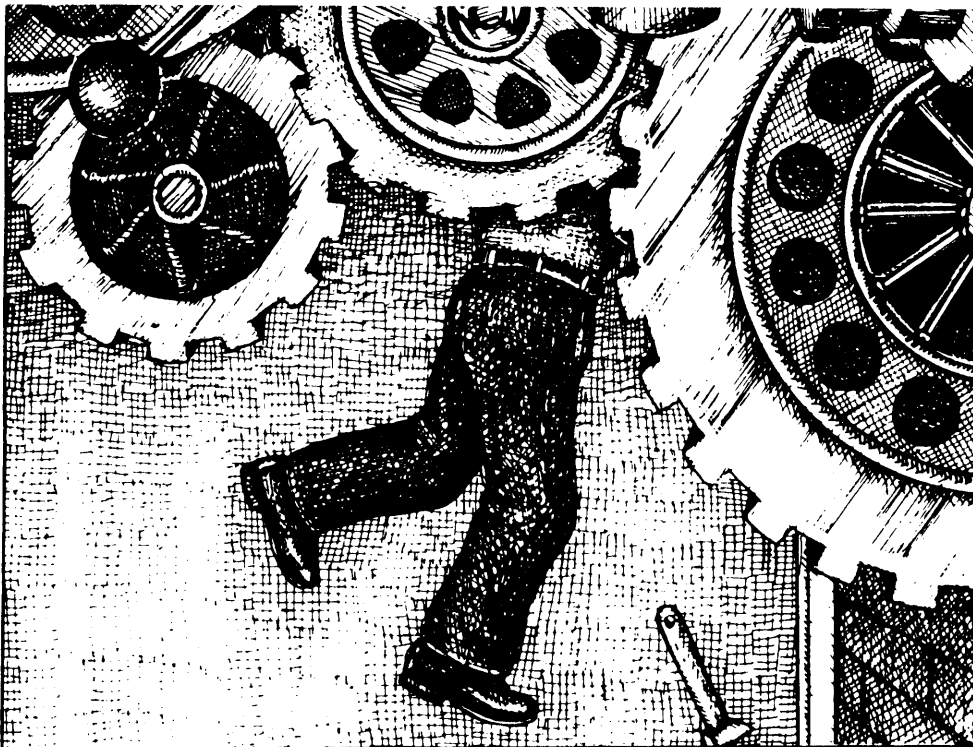
Not long ago, Youngstown was one of the centers for the dues protest movement in the USWA. A dissident group called Rank and File Team (RAFT) promoted rank-and-file ratification of contracts, supported civil rights gains, and opposed productivity clauses and no-strike clauses in the basic-steel agreement. Members of this group were elected as officers of area basic-steel locals. The sign at the entrance to the Local 1462 hall proudly proclaims: "Home of the Rank and File."

As Staughton Lynd explains in his book, *The Fight Against Shutdowns: Youngstown's Steel Mill Closings*, because steelworkers felt their jobs would always be there, "they put up with boredom, and danger, and humiliating harassment from supervisors every day, trading off these indignities for the fringe benefits which would come to them from long service at a particular plant."

But for 10,000 Youngstown workers and their families, any hopes for a secure future were shattered during three consecutive years when three large steel plant closings were announced. In September 1977, Youngstown Sheet &



## 'Buy-outs': No cure for steel shutdowns



the many efforts Youngstown workers made to save their jobs. He describes their initial faith in the companies, the government, and the union, as they became convinced that all they had to do was explain the justice of their cause.

Lynd also describes their increasing disillusionment as these forces seemed to conspire against their efforts. He tells of various tactics employed: petitions, attempts to join with the religious community in purchasing the mills, demonstrations, occupations of corporate headquarters, pressure on the USWA leadership, National Labor Relations Board complaints, and court suits.

On Sept. 25, 1977, the proposal which has been identified with the fight against plant closings in Youngstown—worker-community ownership—was first raised. Although many steelworkers questioned the possibility of establishing what was to be called Community Steel Inc., this proposal gained favor since no one had any other suggestions as to how to keep the plants operating.

As one steelworker later explained, "Of course we knew it wouldn't work, but you can't criticize people for trying something they think might help save their job—the only alternative is for them to give up without a struggle. You have to keep fighting."

Steelworkers studied other examples of worker buyouts and concluded that plans that exchanged ESOP's (Employee Stock Ownership Plans) for pensions—or didn't provide for a strong union—had to be avoided. Yet, they realized that for the plan to work, serious cost-cutting measures were necessary.

On March 12, 1979, a meeting of several hundred steelworkers voted to approve an approach to labor costs which included support of the Basic Steel Contract, but allowed for incentives and manning to be locally negotiated. It also drastically reduced vacation time during the first years of the contract, and offered the workers the option of taking part of their pay in stock.

The plan promised real wage cuts, job combination, hiring without regard to seniority, and reduced benefits. It recognized that the new company would be competing in a capitalist economy, and proposed steps to make it competitive.

The steelworkers at this meeting also recognized that the worker "owners" would have little say over production decisions or working conditions. The company would go on much as before, only now the workers would be expected to assume the cost of the previous owner's bad management and

failure to modernize.

Yet, while expressing serious reservations, most workers went along, feeling the only alternative was unemployment or a minimum wage job.

### USWA leadership defaults

A recurrent theme throughout Lynd's book is the total default of the International and district leaderships of the USWA. International President Lloyd McBride compared the closing of a steel mill to that of a corner grocery store, saying that both are regrettable, but there is nothing that can be done about them.

In fact, the International officers tried to direct discussion away from means of preventing the mills from closing (or restarting the ones that had already closed), into accepting the closures and discussing early retirements and other shutdown benefits.

During the two contract negotiations since the Youngstown shutdowns, many locals have urged the International to incorporate language preventing plant closings. Instead, language was added to the contract which explicitly recognizes the right of the company to unilaterally close departments or entire plants.

In 1978 and 1980, Youngstown steelworkers tried unsuccessfully to take their case to the USWA International convention. The final response of the International was to abolish District 26—dividing the former Youngstown district among the three adjacent ones.

Although the International claimed this was done because the number of steelworkers in District 26 was no longer sufficient to maintain a separate district, it was widely felt that this was done to remove an embarrassing reminder to the International. The number was technically under the required minimum for a district, but other districts with similar numbers were not threatened.

Workers also felt betrayed by the Carter administration, which repeatedly reneged on promises of federal grants without which they could not purchase and modernize the steel mills. The federal grants and loan guarantees were finally turned down on March 30, 1979.

### Nationalization under workers' control

Lynd states that the purpose of his book is to allow other workers to learn from the experiences of the Youngstown steelworkers, so that they won't repeat the same mistakes. But it is precisely in his attempt to draw conclusions from the Youngstown experience that Lynd's book falls down.

Although he argues that investment decisions must take human factors into

account, Lynd asserts that such a policy is possible within the capitalist system. Nowhere does he challenge the basic assumptions of the private profit system. He suggests a Swedish model of plant-closing legislation as more humane than what happened in Youngstown.

Lynd continues to view the buyout option as a viable one, arguing that the problem was with the government policies that denied the necessary loans. However, if the loans had been approved and the mills sold to the workers, this would not have solved the problem. The reopened mills would have been forced to compete in a capitalist economy. As such, they would either go bankrupt or make the necessary modernizations at the expense of the workers involved. Workers would have had no choice but to submit to this blackmail.

Some of the workers drew more far-reaching conclusions. One of the leaders of Local 1462 said, "We don't want your old obsolete junk that you can't use anymore. We want your most modern mills and we don't want to be bothered by concerns over their profitability—let the government nationalize them. However, we do want a say in how they're run and what their products are used for."

Lynd is right in arguing that investment decisions must take human needs into account, but he is wrong in thinking that such a policy can be followed short of nationalization under workers' control.

The Youngstown buyout plan also called for modernization with resultant job elimination and combination. If jobs in the steel industry are to be saved, the union movement must begin the fight for a shorter work week with no cut in pay.

The Youngstown steelworkers put up a heroic fight to save their jobs. They tried to obtain solidarity from other unions. However, their struggle remained largely isolated to the point that the workers became demoralized over the possibility of saving their jobs, and decided that the only course was to negotiate the best individual benefits possible.

The Youngstown experience also points to the futility of relying on "friends" in the Democratic or Republican parties. In 1980, some Youngstown steelworkers discussed running Local 1462 President Ed Mann for Congress as an independent.

As long as the steel industry remains in private hands there will be more Youngtowns. Steel bosses will continue to take the profits from the Youngtowns and invest them in other areas—often outside the steel industry—which provide a higher rate of return. Whatever partial gains can be won will only be achieved through mobilizations independent of the companies, their courts, and their parties.

## BOOK REVIEW

Tube closed its Campbell Works, throwing 5000 out of work. A year later, J & L announced the closing of its Brier Hill Works, permanently laying off 1500 workers. Then, in November 1979, US Steel stated its intention to shut down two facilities: Ohio Works and McDonald Works at a cost of 3500 jobs.

No one questioned that the steel mills of the Mahoning Valley were old, technologically obsolete, and in need of modernization. Most still used open hearths rather than basic oxygen or electric furnaces. A 1976 study of the American steel industry described these facilities as among the least economically viable in the United States.

For years, Youngstown steelworkers had watched the area mills deteriorate, as needed funds were diverted elsewhere. They had listened to repeated company threats to close the mills if they didn't cut costs and increase their productivity in order to make the mills profitable. Yet, steel was such a vital part of their community that no one in Youngstown really believed that the mills would ever shut down.

On Sept. 19, 1977, a tersely worded company statement from Youngstown Sheet & Tube announcing 5000 layoffs ended this belief. The announcement came without a warning. A short time before, the company had assured the union that there were no grounds for shutdown rumors.

### Worker-community ownership

Lynd's book is a sympathetic account of how Youngstown steelworkers responded to this shocking news. He writes as a participant in many of the discussions on possible means of defending jobs and as one of the lawyers who represented the local unions in court.

Lynd provides a valuable history of

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# Democrats, cops, and courts gang up to end retail clerks' strike

By FRANCES SHAW and BEN WIESE

SAN FRANCISCO—On August 19 the members of Department Store Employees Union Local 1100 in San Francisco voted three to one to accept the latest joint offer from Macy's and Emporium department stores and end their 44-day strike.

On July 7, under the slogan of "Not less, but more in '84" 2100 members of Local 1100 struck Macy's department store and two Macy's warehouses. Three days later Emporium-Capwell, displaying employer solidarity, locked out 1200 employees.

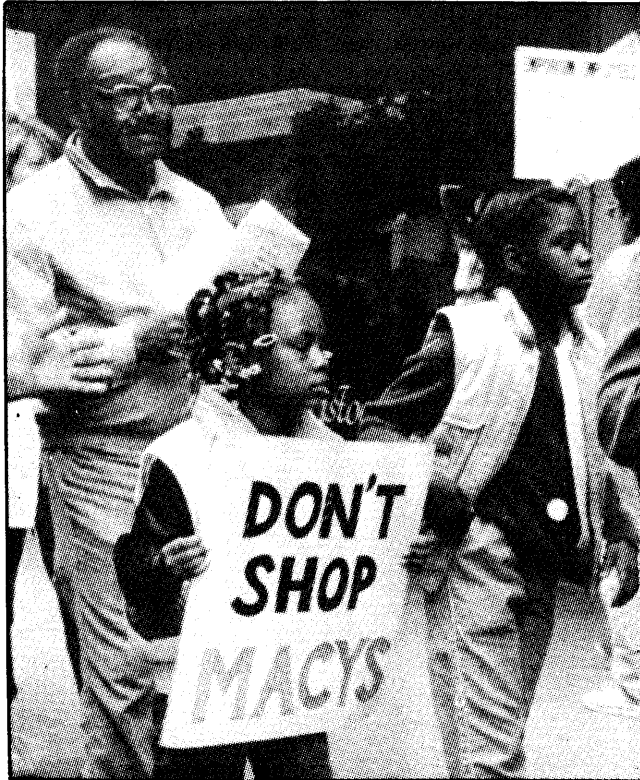
The new contract includes several takeaways and is a setback for Local 1100. The agreement includes a two-tier package that gives new employees time-and-a-half pay for Sunday and holiday work and no night premium pay. All other employees get double time for Sunday and holiday work and 10 percent extra for night premium pay.

The stores also introduced a three-hour shift for part-time workers. This will, in effect, deny health benefits to these employees because they don't work 80 hours per month. The new health plan is company-controlled and provides less coverage than the old plan. Also, employees will now have to pay as much as \$30 per month for their health plan, whereas before they paid no more than \$3 per month.

The wage increase is 40 cents for the first year and 30 cents for the second and third years. This amounts to only a 12 percent wage increase over three years for the average Local 1100 member. Without a cost-of-living clause, wages will not keep pace with inflation.

Despite large and spirited picket lines and several mass rallies, the members voted for the takeaway contract because of the misleadership of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (the parent union of Local 1100), Bay Area union leaders, and the Local 1100 elected officers.

During negotiations and throughout the strike, the international union played a treacherous role. They tried to get the members to accept the original two-tier offer and the wage package increase of 20



Socialist Action/Asher Harer

cents, 15 cents, and 15 cents yearly over three years. The members would not go for this. After six days on strike, the international union reluctantly gave sanction to the strike. International union officers consistently fostered defeatism and pessimism among the members and to the press.

Local 1100's leadership, with Walter Johnson as president, has an outstanding record of solidarity with other unions on strike, but they didn't meet the test of the employers' challenge. Within the first week of the strike, Local 1100 was slapped with a prohibitive injunction, banning all picketing in front of the doors and banning all noisemakers except voices.

Johnson and other Bay Area union leaders organized a Labor Committee for the First Amendment to fight the injunction. But this committee remained

a paper committee that never organized an effective defiance of the injunction or defense of the First Amendment. The rank and file were ready to do battle (there were 27 arrests during the strike) but ended up waiting for leadership that never came.

The Bay Area union leadership, grandiose speeches of solidarity notwithstanding, also failed to come to the aid of Local 1100. They did not mobilize their members to come to the picket line. Instead, they emphasized a Bay Area and national boycott that never got off the ground.

The misleadership of all these union leaders can be summarized in their policy of total reliance on the Democratic Party. These bureaucrats place their confidence in the Democratic Party officials like the anti-union Mayor Dianne Feinstein, rather than in the rank-and-file members of Local 1100. It was Mayor Feinstein who urged members to delay any strike action until after the Democratic convention.

The message the union misleaders give to the rank and file is "Don't fight now. You can't win while Reagan is president. You can't swim against the tide. We need a Democratic president."

That is their tailor-made excuse to do nothing!

Despite all of these problems, the strikers exerted a lot of pressure on Macy's and Emporium. The companies' August 19 proposal was noticeably better than the original offer of July 7 because of the overall strength of the picket lines.

Due to the fighting spirit of the Local 1100 rank and file, the two-tier plan was modified to the union's favor and the wage offer was doubled. The extra wages won on the picket line will mean more than \$2100 extra for a full-time employee over the next three years.

More important, the members put up a fight that should serve them well when a new contract is negotiated in 1987. The bosses will remember the millions of dollars in sales they lost during the 44 days of the strike.

Scores of members have pledged themselves to be more active in the union because of the valuable lessons they have learned. If these lessons are absorbed by the whole union, the setback of 1984 could be turned into a victory in 1987. ■

## Danley workers fight takebacks

By VINNIE LONGO

CHICAGO—Over 600 workers rallied in Cicero, Ill., a suburb of Chicago, on July 22 to express their solidarity with United Steelworkers Local 15271, which has been on strike since May 1 against the Danly Machine Corp. In the sweltering heat, the crowd heard USWA President Lynn Williams pledge, "When you fight the Steelworkers, you fight all of us."

Williams called on each USWA local in District 31 to pick a day every week to send picketers out to the Danly line. Other speakers included Jacqueline Vaughn, president of the Chicago Teachers Federation; author Studs Terkel; Rep. Charles Hayes (D-Ill.); Jack Parton, director of USWA District 31; and representatives from the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees and the United Auto Workers.

The Danly Machine Corp. has demanded a series of far-ranging takebacks that include a two-tier wage structure that will pay new-hires as much as \$5 an hour less than other employees. The company also proposes major job combinations, gutting all seniority rights, a three-year wage freeze, eliminating the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), and massive increases in employee pay-ins for health and pension premiums. The Danly workers voted on April 30, by a 97 percent majority, to answer these demands by going on strike.

When the strike began, there were 425 working members of Local 15271.

Vinnie Longo was formerly employed at Danly Machine Co. and was a member of USWA Local 15271.

There are also about 600 members who have been laid off over the last several years. The membership has held firm and successfully resisted company attempts at a divide-and-rule policy.

Danly Machine Corp. is one of the main producers of auto stamping presses in the United States. The Danly family had always been known for the paternalistic way in which they ran the plant. For instance, at Christmas every employee would be given a canned ham, a tin of maple syrup, and a box of pancake mix.

In 1982 the Danly family sold the company to the Ogden Corp., which is listed as 187th on the Fortune 500 list of the largest corporations in the United States. Ogden Corp. had sales of close to \$2 billion last year. The president of Ogden Corp. pays himself a salary of \$1 million a year.

Danly has hired the union-busting law firm of Seyfarth, Shaw, Fairweather and Geraldson, and the public relations outfit Hill and Knowlton in its efforts to crush the strikers. Off-duty Chicago cops have been hired to intimidate picketers. While wearing their badges and service revolvers they serve as "professional strikebreakers and hired gun thugs," according to Local 15271 President Joe Romano. The company has secured a court injunction to eliminate the mass picketing that had included as many as 400 people on occasion. Strikers have been harassed and arrested by Cicero cops throughout the strike.

Local 15271 has filed suit against the Chicago police and the city of Chicago, seeking to restrict the activities of the off-duty Chicago cops operating at the company's behest. The USWA has also hired the Camber Group, a Washington, D.C., consulting firm, to initiate a campaign against the Danly-Ogden conglomerate similar to the campaign against J.P. Stevens Co.

Danly threatened to fire all workers

who did not return to work by July 18. On that day, the company declared that it would begin hiring "permanent replacements."

Over 200 strikers massed to greet the scabs, who were primarily new-hires. The union has also been organizing picketing of scabs' homes—letting people on the block know just what kind of neighbors they have.

Messages of support or other aid may be sent to USWA 15271, 1617 S. Laramie, Cicero, IL 60650. ■

## Toledo worker faces jail term

By SHIRLEY PASHOLK

TOLEDO, Ohio—On August 22, Tom Joseph, co-chairman of the Toledo Area Solidarity Committee and member of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 50, was found guilty of aggravated battery. Sentencing is expected in a few weeks. Joseph faces a possible jail term of six to 18 months.

This conviction arises out of a May 21 rally by 3000 workers demonstrating support for the AP Parts strike in Toledo. When the police attacked, the workers defended themselves.

The Lucas County grand jury issued indictments against 37 workers on July 3, including 14 on felony charges. More trials are anticipated as the courts retaliate against the strong show of support that the strike has received.

Meanwhile, there is no progress in the strike. Scabs continue to work and the bargaining talks remain stalled. Unfortunately, the UAW leadership has made no effort to reschedule the march they had called off when the company went back to negotiations.

The May 21 rally made a national impact as millions viewed the police attack on TV. The employers and their police and courts would like to outlaw

actions of solidarity with striking unions and punish all workers who stand up for their rights. A strong defense of Tom Joseph and the other victims will raise the idea the bosses fear most—an injury to one is an injury to all. ■

## Sunoco strikers return to work

TOLEDO, Ohio.—Members of OCAW Local 7-912 ended their 20-week strike at the Sun Oil refinery here when they returned to work on August 11. Despite a favorable recommendation by their local officers, the strikers accepted the company's last offer by only a 30-vote margin. The settlement enabled Sun Oil to effectively break the national oil industry wage pattern.

Although Sunoco workers will receive a lump sum payment equal to the national wage increase, the agreement allows the company to base pensions, overtime, and other benefits on the old hourly wage scale. New temporary hires will be paid \$6 an hour, but after 90 days they will be paid the normal \$10.07 an hour. The company was also able to obtain more flexibility in hiring maintenance personnel from outside the plant. This will reduce the number of jobs available for bidding by current employees.

Sun Oil backed down on most of the local work rule changes. Members of OCAW Local 7-912 feel they put up a good fight that prevented the company from imposing its original concessionary contract. They believe that their strike set an example of union solidarity. Boycott activities caused a real decline in Sunoco's business in the Toledo area. Strikers were upset, however, by the refusal of the international union to promote an active boycott in other parts of the country.—S.P. ■





*Predicting after-tax profit gains in the second quarter of 25 to 30 percent higher than last year, corporations are confidently pressing for more concessions from American workers.*

*These increases have been bought and paid for by working people. Higher tariffs, import quotas, and lower corporation taxes have contributed to the corporate recovery, but labor contract concessions are the most important factor.*

*More goods and services are being produced with fewer, lower-paid workers. Speed-up, unemployment, benefit reductions, wage freezes, and the two-tier wage structure have fueled the economic upswing for the bosses. A serious deterioration in living and working conditions has accompanied this one-sided recovery for the rich. The latest figures indicate that an additional 6 million people have fallen below the government-calculated poverty level since 1980.*

*The American labor movement has failed to mobilize its full power against the employer attacks. Hoping for liberal Democrats to bail them out of the crisis, some labor leaders even argue that strike actions should be discouraged to avoid embarrassing Walter Mondale.*

*With stiff challenges facing American workers in September, it's hard to say how long the inherent power of the organized labor movement can be held back.*

## Mine workers...

MORGANTOWN, W. Va.—September 30 is the contract deadline for 160,000 active United Mine Workers (UMW) and the coal operators represented by the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA).

Miners struck during the last two contract negotiations when faced with serious takeaway demands. In fact, the UMW has engaged in national strike actions for a total of 207 days since 1974. Nonetheless, the operators have succeeded in imposing harsh discipline and working conditions upon a traditionally militant rank and file.

With one third of the UMW miners out of work, the operators are using the fear of layoffs to pressure miners to work faster, ignoring safety and other contract protections. Consequently, productivity has increased by 57 percent since 1978. This speed-up accounts for a statistically higher accident rate, despite the reduction in the number of working miners. A major rewrite of Federal Inspection laws has lowered many safety fines from \$1000 to \$20. There has been a complete failure of the government to enforce the Federal Mine and Safety Act.

New techniques in mining, like the Long Wall, are most profitably operated around the clock, seven days a week. To avoid possible damage from geological pressure, this machine has to keep running as it moves across a mine face 500 to 1000 feet wide.

Therefore, coal operators are pushing for a seven-day continuous production schedule. Miners are being asked to give up their free Sundays. Eliminating current restrictions on Saturday work is also being pushed.

The BCOA also wants to limit job-bidding rights even more severely than the last contract did. This will prevent new women and minority workers from gaining experience acquired by periodically shifting jobs. In addition, many miners use their bidding rights to rotate away from the more dangerous jobs.

Calling laid-off miners back to work in order to stockpile coal, the operators are hoping that a weekly paycheck after long months of unemployment will soften the militancy of the UMW members. But, in fact, the overtime and job openings have lifted morale. Miners

seem determined to enforce their convention theme of "No Backward Step."

UMW President Trumka has kept to a minimum any discussion of the selective-strike strategy and the key bargaining objectives of the union in the belief that secrecy will give the union the upper hand in negotiations. However, some miners see this as hindering the involvement of the membership in strike preparations.

Like the British miners, the traditions and militancy of the UMW puts the miners in a good position to lead a large-scale fight against concessions.

KATE CURRY

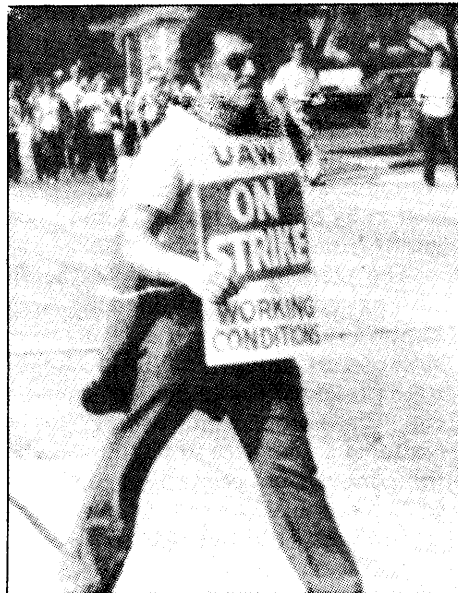
## Auto workers...

CLEVELAND—On September 15, 450,000 Ford and General Motors production workers are hoping to regain some of the \$3.5 billion in concessions extracted from them since the precedent-setting 1979 Chrysler agreement.

There are many signs of anger against concession-bargaining. Along with the July 23 United Auto Workers rally of 3000 people held in Detroit to launch the first session of negotiations, there was an unusually large protest vote against incumbents in the last elections. Even some militant local officials were dumped as the ranks sought ways to express their frustration.

The popular slogan "Restore and More in '84" symbolizes the basic sentiment of auto workers that enough is enough.

Unlike previous years, no one today believes that concessions are justified in



Socialist Action/Marc Rich

**U.A.W. striker at McDonnell Douglas in Los Angeles last February.**

an industry that has registered record profits and a productivity increase of 25 percent. In the third year of a contract that offers no real wage gains, auto workers were infuriated to discover that GM paid out \$180 million in executive bonuses. Ford wasn't far behind in this respect.

The fat bonuses and bulging profits make it difficult for the companies to reject a modest wage increase. Nonetheless, management plans to "contain labor costs per hour" by "expanding profit sharing" instead of annual wage and COLA (Cost-of-Living-Allowance) raises.

The 1982 contract profit-sharing scam paid an average of \$640 to GM workers and slightly more than \$400 to Ford workers in exchange for \$3000 given up in wages and benefits. Meanwhile, the industry is predicting that 70,000 jobs will be phased out in the next three years.

Unfortunately, top UAW leaders have accepted the projection of massive layoffs as inevitable. UAW President Owen Bieber has repeated the automakers' lies that wage gains threaten the health of the industry. His primary

emphasis on negotiating larger pension plans signals an attempt to convince the companies to reduce the workforce through retirement and attrition rather than layoffs. It appears that the companies may actually agree to early retirement incentives in order to get rid of older workers.

With a record high strike fund and with the auto inventory well below its normal 60-day level, auto workers will be watching negotiations very closely. If the union leadership settles for an inferior contract, the deep dissatisfaction in the ranks may lead to the emergence of a powerful new movement against concessions.

DEAN COHEN

As we go to press, the Ford and GM bargaining councils have authorized UAW President Owen Bieber to call a strike against *both companies* unless the automakers back off their latest takeaway proposals. There are indications that UAW members are overwhelmingly in favor of an industry-wide shutdown if Ford and GM persist in their demands. The companies want to reduce health care benefits and institute a five-year delay in the normal 18-month pay progression for new hires.

## Health workers...

NEW YORK—The 52,000 striking orderlies, technicians, and aides from 30 hospitals and 15 nursing homes in New York City on August 28 accepted by a 19,332-to-98 vote a new contract ending their 47-day old strike. Members of Local 1199 of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), AFL-CIO, conducted one of the largest and longest strikes of health care workers ever in the United States.

The settlement provides a 5 percent wage increase in each year of a two-year contract. There are no benefit reductions as the hospitals demanded, but the union did concede a freeze in the starting minimum for new members in the second year of the contract. The contract guarantees employees every other weekend off.

Local 1199 members are predominantly Black, Latino, and women. Most were receiving wages below the poverty line when the union held its first strike 25 years ago. As a result of the union's struggles, salaries today range from \$15,247 to \$33,962.

Strikers used militant tactics to block scabs but they did not receive the broad labor support necessary to force the employers to back down. The police, courts, injunctions, and the National Labor Relations Board were used to demoralize the strikers and weaken the picket lines.

While the "friends-of-labor" politicians stood aside, Local 1199 members fought with a determination and militancy that should inspire the entire labor movement.

PETER CARLSSON

## Postal workers...

CHICAGO—The National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), and two smaller unions, representing 600,000 workers, have been without a contract since July 20. Although the four postal unions and the U.S. Postal Service had begun negotiations for a new contract on April 24, the Postal Service had been completely intransigent at the bargaining table.

Management demands call for a 50 percent cut in sick leave, a wage-freeze, a cap on the Cost-of-Living Allowance (COLA), and a two-tier wage system

that would slash wages of new hires by 23 percent. Claiming that postal workers are overpaid, the Postal Service hopes to cut wages by up to \$5000 a year.

The Postal Service has been operating in the black for the last two years, with a surplus of over \$600 million in 1983.

The August conventions of the APWU and the NALC authorized strike action if the Postal Service refuses to accept the results of binding arbitration, or if there is another attempt to unilaterally implement the takeaway contract proposals. Congress recently prevented the Postal Service from imposing the two-tier system right in the middle of bargaining.

Hampered by the unconstitutional prohibition on their right to strike and conscious of the terrible defeat suffered by PATCO (air traffic controllers), both conventions in Las Vegas decided to submit the issues to binding arbitration. The two other options would have been to strike or accept the last management offer.

All four unions have fact-finding panels scheduled to give non-binding recommendations on September 13. The unions can then decide to resume bargaining during a 45-day period before arbitration would begin.

VINNIE LONGO

## Copper miners...

PHOENIX, Ariz.—A coalition of 13 unions led by the United Steel Workers of America (USWA) struck Phelps-Dodge Corp. on July 1, 1983, after the company refused to sign a pattern agreement negotiated with the rest of the copper industry.

Since that time, the huge corporation has used injunctions, state police, goons and scabs against the 1000 strikers. The miners have been threatened with eviction from company housing while the company doctor, Dr. Jorge O'Leary, was fired for providing health care to the union members.

Unable to completely break the year-long strike, 100 riot-equipped police attacked a strike anniversary rally held in Clifton, Ariz. The union received another blow the following day when the scab miners filed for a decertification election on July 1. Since only scabs will be allowed to vote, the union is protesting this phony election.

The will to fight among the miners and their wives, who remain on the picket lines, has not been matched with a commitment by the international union officials to mobilize the full strength of the 13 unions involved against the union busting of Phelps-Dodge.

J.S.

## Teachers...

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) held its annual convention in Washington D.C. on August 20-24. Ex-AFT member Geraldine Ferraro spoke to the 3000 delegates, followed by a remote-control address by Walter Mondale that turned the 1984 convention into a cheering section for the Democratic Party.

Unfortunately, none of the important issues facing teachers were brought to the attention of the delegates. One of only six unions to show a membership gain in the recent period, the AFT could be a powerful force capable of resisting the cutbacks in education.

While the membership did vote to boycott Continental Airlines and New York Air, President Albert Shanker's conservative leadership kept tight control of the deliberations. Even the two progressive caucuses in the AFT failed to go beyond the "Support Mondale/Ferraro" theme that dominated the convention.

NANCY ELNOR

# Socialist veteran tours Sweden

By JAKE COOPER

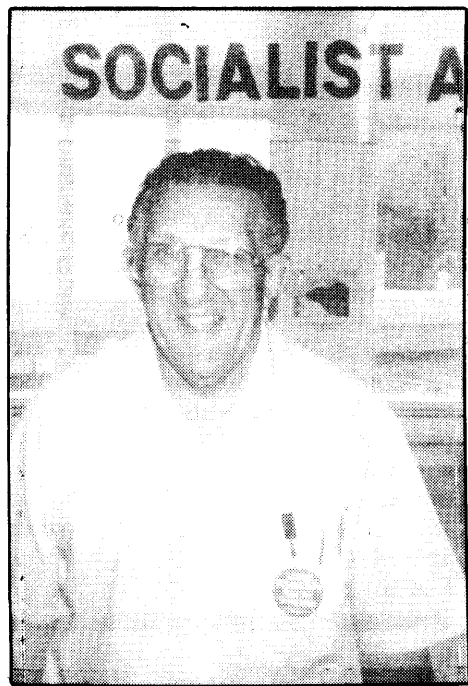
The following is based on remarks by Jake Cooper to the National Committee plenum of Socialist Action, which took place in San Francisco on August 17-19, 1984. Cooper was a leader of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters' strikes.

I recently visited Sweden for two reasons. First, I came to help celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of that great leader of the socialist movement, Karl Skoglund. I also went with the idea of talking with our cothinkers in the Swedish Socialist Party (Swedish section of the Fourth International) about the American labor movement.

Karl Skoglund was one of many workers from Scandinavia who landed on our shores with a wealth of socialist ideas. His name is engraved in the history of the American labor movement. Skoglund and the Communist League of America—later known as the Socialist Workers Party—led the Teamsters Union to a great victory in Minneapolis in 1934. Karl was constantly teaching and writing. He and the American Trotskyists showed how to build an internationally-minded revolutionary socialist party.

My trip included a visit to Bengtfors, where Karl was born. He lived in the wooded area of western Sweden, which is very much like northern Minnesota. I was able to meet with town officials and members of Skoglund's family. I tried to outline to them the role that Karl played in the U.S. labor movement.

The Socialist Party comrades gave me the king's welcome—or rather, the revolutionary welcome. I was taken to the summer camp that the Socialist Party operates. From eight in the morning to one the following morning there was constant political discussion. One



Jake Cooper

Socialist Action/Asher Harer

of the questions that they asked me was "How come you don't have a labor party in the United States? We have one in Sweden."

I replied first of all that Sweden has a lot more history than we do. Europe has gone through the history of the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution and other revolutionary situations. "You've learned earlier than we have," I told them. "Now we're learning from you."

I told them to have confidence in the U.S. labor movement. It is the most vol-

atile labor movement in the world. The American capitalist class is carrying out the same kind of policy toward their own working class as they do in foreign policy. They are trying to crush the labor movement. They are trying to drive the standard of living of the U.S. worker down to the level of workers in Korea, Taiwan, or Mexico.

I pointed out that although it's taken a few nosebleeds, the labor movement in this country has never really been defeated. American workers feel that

they are the toughest people around, that they've got all kinds of rights, and that no one is going to take away those rights. Basically, they don't have leadership. We in Socialist Action are proposing a revolutionary movement that can give leadership to the working class.

I thanked the Swedish comrades for providing us people like Karl Skoglund, who gave us all kinds of ideas of how to organize a socialist movement. The hand of solidarity is still solid in what we have to give to each other now. ■

## SWP rubber-stamps new course

By ALAN BENJAMIN

The Socialist Workers Party held its 32nd national convention on August 4-9, one full year after the regularly scheduled convention was undemocratically cancelled by the party leadership.

Since the 1981 convention, the SWP leadership has publicly repudiated key aspects of the party's traditional program. (See *Socialist Action Information Bulletins*.) All of these fundamental changes, however, were decided and put forward as the party's line without any discussion or vote by the party membership.

Given the significant resistance within the party to this course, and due to the leadership's fear of a debate within the party, the SWP leadership decided to do two things: First, it cancelled the 1983 convention. Then a few months later it proceeded to expel the entire opposition.

Having been undemocratically expelled from the party, over 100 party members constituted themselves as a public faction of the SWP. The purpose in founding Socialist Action was to defend the program and traditions of the SWP against the party leadership, both by demonstrating the validity of that program in the antiwar, trade union, women's, and Black movements, and by pursuing the political and theoretical debate with the SWP from outside the party.

For the SWP leadership, the purpose of the 1984 convention was to codify the programmatic changes undertaken in a step-by-step manner over the past three years and to ratify the "split" which they imposed on the party. And this they did—but not without more undemocratic methods and more resistance from the party's membership.

Ilona Gersh, writing in the July 6, 1984, issue of *The Militant*, states that "In preparation for the convention, the SWP has organized three months of thorough oral and written pre-convention discussion."

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Not only was the entire opposition expelled before this convention, the

party leadership did not even present the resolution it was submitting for a vote until three weeks before the convention and one week before the deadline for submitting articles for the written discussion. Moreover, the leadership informed the new oppositionists that they could not form any tendency or faction within the party, even during the pre-convention discussion period. Not surprisingly, all votes were approved unanimously by the convention's delegates.

The convention was another indication that the SWP leadership is intent on deepening its break with its Trotskyist program and traditions. In so doing, the SWP is slowly being converted from a once proud and serious party representing the best class-struggle traditions

of U.S. workers and their allies, to a rapidly declining organization with minimal influence in the struggles of the day.

Still, the SWP maintains decisive components of its revolutionary program, including its clear opposition to any support to capitalist parties and their candidates in this country. The SWP's presidential campaign of Mel Mason and Andrea Gonzalez deserves the support of all workers.

Socialist Action pledges its support to the SWP presidential ticket. At the same time we will relentlessly seek to defend the party against the political course being imposed by the party leadership; a course which threatens the very existence of the SWP as a revolutionary party. ■

## Socialist Action sets fall goals

The National Committee of Socialist Action held its second plenum on August 17-19 in San Francisco to discuss and evaluate its activity and political orientation over the past six months. The plenum was attended by the full National Committee of 23 members, as well as by branch organizers and invited guests from around the world.

The plenum voted to hold the first national convention of Socialist Action in San Francisco over the Thanksgiving weekend of November 22-25. Reports were presented to the plenum opening a full discussion and debate in the National Committee to be followed by a three-month pre-convention discussion in all units of Socialist Action. During this period the membership of the organization will be engaged in a wide-ranging discussion of strategy and tactics necessary to build the revolutionary socialist party in the United States and across the globe.

The plenum marked the considerable progress made in building Socialist Action in the brief months of its existence. Reports were presented on the expansion of *Socialist Action* newspa-

per and on the organization's increased involvement in the antiwar and trade union movements. Progress was also made in deepening collaboration with the Fourth International, the world organization of revolutionary socialists. Representatives and leaders of the Fourth International from several countries addressed the plenum.

Socialist Action now has members in 19 cities, including over 50 new members who have joined since its founding conference last October. The goal of winning 500 new subscribers to the newspaper set at the February plenum was surpassed. The current press run of *Socialist Action* is 3000.

In February a goal was set of raising \$16,000 from members and supporters to continue the expansion process. Over \$11,000 has been collected to date. The plenum voted to reach the \$16,000 goal and to obtain another 500 new subscriptions by November.

You can help Socialist Action continue the significant progress made thus far. Send a subscription to a friend. Send a contribution to the fund drive. And join Socialist Action. ■

### Special offer on Information Bulletins

The first six numbers of the *Socialist Action Information Bulletin* can be purchased this month only for the special price of \$12.00 (includes mailing costs.) The *Information Bulletin* contains the founding documents of Socialist Action, a public faction of the Socialist Workers Party, as well as other theoretical contributions seeking to clarify and defend the program and heritage of the SWP and Fourth International against the attacks by the current SWP leadership. The six numbers of the *Information Bulletin*—each with a complete introduction presenting the material—contain the following articles:

Vol. 1, No. 1: "A Platform to Overcome the Crisis in the Party"; "28 Theses on the American Socialist Revolution and the Building of the Revolutionary Party"; "New Norms vs. Old: The Erosion of Proletarian Democracy"; and "Sound the Alarm."

Vol. 1, No. 2: "The Party's Default in the Struggle Against Imperialist War," by Lynn Henderson and Nat Weinstein; "Socialist Strategy for Class Struggle Transformation of the Unions," by Frank Lovell and Steve Bloom; "Trade Union Resolution," by Lynn Henderson and Nat Weinstein; and "If Ever You Surrender Your Right to Criticism, You're Dead!" by Tom Kerry.

Vol. 1, No. 3 (Part I): "Resolving the International Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership"; "The Iranian Revolution Four Years After"; and "The Iranian Revolution and the Dangers that Threaten It."

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## DuBois knew the score

By KWAME M.A. SOMBURU

Southern Black leaders swallowed their frustration with Walter Mondale's campaign as they met during the weekend of August 25 to discuss how to get out the Democratic Party vote. Jesse Jackson has also hopped onto Mondale's bandwagon. He stated in the August special issue of *Ebony* magazine, "We must go all out to fight the oppressive Reagan regime and at the same time fight to expand the Democratic Party."

Jackson's statement may be contrasted with another view that was put forward in a meeting of over 1500 Black activists in Philadelphia in 1980. The participants gathered to organize themselves for Black liberation in program and action. Their decisions resulted in the formation of the National Black Independent Political Party and the action-oriented NBIPP charter, which totally rejects both major parties and the capitalist system that created, owns, and operates them.

People of African ancestry have suffered in America during 208 years in which slavemasters and capitalists ruled through their political parties, now called the Republicans and Democrats. We have endured vicious discrimination, police beatings, and lynchings—along with slavery.

Today our oppression continues. According to recent official statistics, 46.7 percent of Blacks live in poverty. Suicide is the leading cause of death among young Blacks. Unemployment and underemployment exist among approximately half of all Black males. More than half of U.S. prisoners in both the armed forces and the civilian population are Black. The highest infant mortality rates in the nation are in the Black communities of Oakland, Calif., and Washington D.C.

After two centuries of oppression, it really is about time that Black Americans broke with the two capitalist parties and organized independently. The National Black Independent Political Party should be reorganized under new leadership to put its founding charter into practice. And Jesse Jackson and the other Black leaders to whom millions look for leadership might listen to the warning given in the early years of this century by Black historian and sociologist W.E.B. DuBois: "May God write us down as asses if we are ever found supporting either the Democratic or Republican parties again." ■

## Inside out...

### Are you hearing voices?

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

"I will not steal" is a subliminal message that is now piped into about 50 stores around the country, a congressional subcommittee was told. The message is played on a barely-audible sound tape, and is designed to gently keep shoppers honest. Personally we prefer Muzak, but now that it's business as usual, Macy's in San Francisco would have great success with the "don't steal" theme. Especially, if they beam it upstairs to management...

Remember all those movies about teenagers with nothing to do but hang around the local diner and worry about their future? Well, now they've been given something to do in Hollywood's latest moneymaker "Red Dawn."

It's the story of eight enterprising Horatio Algiers who wage warfare contra-style when the Russians and Cubans invade their neighborhood drive-in. We'll stay home and wash the dishes, thank you...

Folks who think "Red Dawn" is their cup of borsch should clip the coupon in last month's bulletin of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front. You, too, can now sponsor a right-wing terrorist in the war against the Kampuchean government! What will you get in return for the money you kick in? The bulletin responds, "A letter of thanks and a photograph of the sponsored KPNLF combatant with the personal gear you have provided."

In his latest papal "bull," Pope John Paul has banned class struggle for Catholics. His Holiness gave the word to a conference of bishops that met on August 22 in Zimbabwe.

"Postal workers are overpaid!" Postmaster General William Bolger screams to the press. He concedes, however, that his own salary of \$82,900 is below "a proper level" for the job. But there's no truth to rumors that Bolger will go on strike for more money. Instead, he plans to retire on December 31 in return for a \$62,000 bonus heaped on top of his regular pension...

Worry not, mail fans. Our dauntless General may be leaving, but the U.S. Postal Service will remain secure. According to the *Manchester Guardian*, the Postal Service has prepared a recorded message to be broadcast as soon as possible after a nuclear attack. The message specifies that patrons must be furnished an emergency change of address card...

And lest we give up the holy ghost in post-war America, the Pentagon runs a military chaplain's nuclear training course. Participants are cautioned that while giving the last rites it would be prudent to "wear gloves if possible, preferably rubber."

Nonetheless, chaplains are reassured by the Pentagon that "since nuclear science is a gift from God, it is inherently good." ■

## Letters to the editor

### Che and Vietnam

Dear Editor,

In his letter in the July issue, Ralph Schoenman argues that activists must recover the legacy of Che "who did not shrink from the prospect of U.S. intervention..."

Vietnam was able to eventually defeat American imperialism in large part because of the strength of the antiwar movement both here and abroad. Of course the courage, tenacity and numerical strength of the Vietnamese people was the decisive factor.

El Salvador, in particular, and Central America, in general, have much smaller populations than Indochina and are much closer geographically. This makes it easier for the militarists to argue that the revolutions are occurring in "our own back yard" and must be stopped.

The possibility of intervention is very real. Whatever contradictions this may cause in the United States would be far outweighed by the annihilation of millions of our comrades to the south. Steve Ashby is correct (July

*Socialist Action*). Our greatest struggle is to get and keep the United States out of Central America. A full-fledged invasion would be a disaster for the entire international revolutionary movement.

Che Guevara was a selfless hero who will live forever in the hearts of the oppressed. However, his tactics were not always correct. Revolutionary will, alone, cannot overcome objective conditions. Unfortunately for all of us, Che paid for that lesson with his life.

Jim Hurd  
Lawrenceburg, Ind.

### GM attacks

Dear Editor:

In late June General Motors announced to its employees at the axle plant here in Buffalo that by 1989 the plant would be shut down because of the fall in demand for their axles. This announcement sent shock waves through the membership of the United Auto Workers here, especially since the foundry plant was just shut down. Since June, however, General Motors has said nothing more.

### In defense of Cochran

To the editor:

Milton Alvin's obituary of Bert Cochran (*Socialist Action*, July 1984) included a number of inaccuracies, of which the most unfortunate was in the statement: "The dispute was over the question of whether or not to build a party. Cochran favored giving up the party and just publishing a magazine."

The real issue was what was the best way to build the party under the conditions of reaction and witchhunt that prevailed in the '50s. The following are excerpts from Cochran's speech before the New York membership on April 19, 1953:

"We have heard the pronouncement... that our strategic aim is to build an independent mass revolutionary party... We are all for it. That is why we are members of the Socialist Workers Party. But when you have stated this proposition, you haven't disposed of the question... the question inevitably arises... what to do next... to advance you toward your objective..."

"Our strategic orientation is toward the mass trade union movement... But... today this movement is quiescent. Today we are unable to

recruit these workers, except for isolated individuals. We cannot, we do not approach the general mass... in the unions. We approach individuals... All [these] factors cry out aloud for a thorough-going propagandistic approach to build in this period a significant cadre in the mass movement."

In his outline of party tasks included in his rebuttal speech, Cochran spelled this out even more clearly: "(1) We propose that we act as an independent party to the degree that we can, that it is practically possible. We propose to engage in general party activities commensurate with our resources, and our over-all tasks. (2) We propose to continue to pursue propagandistic aims in the mass movement, and to make a determined and special effort to supply our comrades with the most effective possible propaganda material to enrich and fructify their work in the unions."

That's what Cochran really "favored." Milton Alvin is confusing what Cochran favored with what was falsely attributed to him. And Alvin's account of the events which led to the 1953 split in the SWP is also far from the truth—not because of what he said, but because of what he left unsaid.

Milt Zaslow  
Solana Beach, Calif.

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By HAYDEN PERRY

We hear a lot nowadays about the misery index and the happiness index. Government bureaucrats like to measure things, to quantify things, and to publish reams of statistics. Recently they decided to take a vast survey to determine what factors impinge on happiness and misery.

So they had sociologists prepare probing questionnaires. And researchers went all over the country interviewing all sorts of people—thousands of people.

They fed all the answers into a powerful computer. The computer digested this mass of data. Eagerly the bureaucrats awaited the printout that would give us new insights into the happiness/misery index.

The printout appeared and presented to the world the conclusion gained from this multimillion dollar survey of the happiness factor. It was expressed in a single sentence. "It is better to be young, rich, and healthy—than old, poor, and sick."

Now that the government knows the disadvantages of being old, poor, and sick, we must ask what it is doing for this group of Americans who number in the millions and are increasing every day.

The answer is that they are keeping us alive—but little else.

### The aged in capitalist America

Under the capitalist work ethic people are supposed to provide for their retirement years by savings and private pension plans. Social Security was intended only to supplement the retirees' other income. But the majority of those who reach 65 have no other income.

They must live on an average social security income of less than \$500 a month. Women, as usual, wind up with less income than men. Their earnings have usually been less. So their pensions are less.

Statistics say women outlive their husbands for an average of seven years. These are years often spent in abject poverty. Their social security income may be as low as \$125 a month. Then they qualify for a sort of welfare: Supplementary Security Income—SSI—the safety net. It is supposed to guarantee the aged enough money to live on. Bureaucrats have decided that \$439 a month is enough for a single person. If she gets a gift of a few dollars from a son or daughter, the amount is deducted from her next SSI check.

This is the famous fixed income you have heard about. Only it is not fixed, as rising prices shrink its purchasing power. Life for the elderly poor becomes a process of constantly diminishing living standards.

In San Francisco \$477 a month will scarcely rent a studio apartment. The elderly have to double-up and still pay over 50 percent of their income for rent.



Leonard Freed

There are some low-rent housing units. But there are so few that thousands apply for every vacancy.

### Lack of health care

Health is an inevitable concern of the aged. There is a federal system called Medicare that the retired pay \$17 a month for. But it pays only 80 percent of most costs. The rest comes out of the patient's pocket. In case of an operation and hospital stay, the patient can count on paying a minimum of \$350 herself.

Worry over medical bills may break down the patient's health still further. So she winds up in a nursing home for long-term care.

Here is the ultimate financial disaster. Medicare does not pay for long-term nursing services. Now the patient is stripped of all her assets—her savings account, her home, and any other property she plans to leave to her children. All these must be liquidated to pay the voracious nursing home operators, who are often large conglomerates.

When nothing is left and the patient is reduced to pauper status, she qualifies for MediCal, a California program. This will pay for a minimum level of nursing home care. Often the home that has been taking \$2000 a month from the patient as long as her money lasted, refuses to accept lower MediCal payments. Then the old, frail woman must be moved to an inferior home, often far from friends or relatives. The trauma of making this move further breaks down her health and often leads to an earlier death.

You might think that death would bring an end to this litany of capitalist exploitation of the old. But I have a further horror story to report. Many elderly make arrangements for their funerals while they are still alive. Often they stipulate that they be cremated and their ashes scattered high above the Sierra mountains. There are a number of mortuaries who are contracted with pilots to carry out this final rite.

For 10 years one pilot collected ashes and scattered them as requested. Or so everyone thought—until someone in the Sierras found mounds of ashes piled up in a field. Pieces of bone indicated they were human remains. It had transpired that the pilot had encountered difficulties in dropping them from his plane. So he had loaded them into a pickup truck and dumped them onto a field that he

owned. We can only guess how many aged have suffered this final insult to their dignity by an uncaring system that sees people only as objects for exploitation.

### Old and young united

I have painted a very gloomy picture of the plight of the aged. But actually the elderly are better off than younger victims of poverty. The elderly may have lived a good life—up to the point when they grow old. But a child who is deprived and even malnourished because of poverty will bear the scars for the rest of his or her life.

The elderly can at least claim the benefits they get as a right, not a charity.

## Sports Illustrated spurs lesbian witch hunt

By MEL REICHARD

COLUMBIA, S.C.—When Pam Parsons resigned in 1982 as women's basketball coach at the University of South Carolina, she expected to find a similar job at another university. But antilebian prejudice, fanned by an article in *Sports Illustrated* magazine, has closed the doors of every college to this promising athletic director.

The *Sports Illustrated* article, published three months after her resignation, reported that Parsons had had sexual relations with Tina Buck, a member of her basketball team. It also charged that the coach had recruited players "with sex in mind."

This libelous charge, broadcast by the most important national sports magazine, destroyed Pam Parson's career. She decided to sue for libel. Tina Buck filed a similar, but independent, suit. The women did not base their suits on their right to be lesbians, but denied that they were. This disappointed many of their supporters, who felt that lesbian and gay rights were the main issue.

When Parson's suit came to trial in Columbia, S.C., last June, the local press made the event a lurid media circus calculated to stir antilebian prejudice. Lawyers for *Sports Illustrated* brought in witnesses to prove that the

They are not told to take a low-paid job or harassed as the welfare mother is.

Most important, medical science has given us many more years of reasonable health. People in their sixties and seventies still have the energy to be aware, to be dissatisfied, and to do something about it. Thousands of retired people have joined the Gray Panthers, the Retired Peoples Congress, and other organizations that fight for the aged and disabled.

They don't fight only for the retired, but for all working people. A bus-load of retired longshoremen joined the picket line at Macy's here in San Francisco one day. I am sure the old longshoremen were rejuvenated as they walked the picket line and recalled their great battles 50 years ago.

The bosses want to put a wedge between the young and the old workers. Reagan tells young workers, "You are paying for old people's pensions—but you won't collect any yourselves."

He hopes to build sentiment for ending the Social Security system.

But he won't get away with this ploy. He won't be able to divide the young and the old. We all want the same things: affordable housing, a national health care system, nuclear disarmament, an end to war.

Today you will see many people in their sixties and seventies in antiwar marches. Recently an 80-year-old woman was put in jail for standing her ground in the face of a police assault.

The elderly today are a tough generation. A person who is 70 has lived through World War I, survived the worldwide influenza epidemic of 1919, made it through the Great Depression, endured World War II, and come up fighting through the years of McCarthyism.

Thousands of these people are ready to march beside their sons and daughters and grandchildren in the new battles for justice today. These new battles will culminate, I am confident, in a just, humane, socialist society. ■

**IN DEFENSE OF  
REVOLUTIONARY  
CONTINUITY**  
by Dianne Feeley & Paul Le Blanc

The pamphlet may be obtained  
through Socialist Action for \$4 plus  
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