Elections set for November 4, 1984
Institutionalizing The Nicaraguan Revolution

By William I. Robinson, APFA

The recent announcement that Nicaragua would hold its national elections this November 4 underscored the country's continuing move to "institutionalize the revolution," and came as a surprise to opponents of the revolutionary government.

The February 21 announcement was made before an estimated 30,000 people in Managua's Revolution Square by the coordinator of the Government of National Reconstruction, Daniel Ortega Saavedra. Speaking before the tumultuous crowd on the 50th Anniversary of the death of Augusto Cesar Sandino, Ortega addressed the elections as part of the country's revolutionary process:

"In this free land of Nicaragua, there are no roads that lead to the past," noted Ortega. "This revolution is being institutionalized as proof that it is already an irreversible process.

By advancing the date of the national elections—which had originally been planned for 1985—the Nicaraguan government was carefully outmaneuvering its most belligerent antagonist, the U.S. government. Nicaragua's November 4 election will come two days before the U.S. presidential elections, a time when the U.S. ruling class will be constrained by the demands of its own political process from strongly intervening against the Sandinista Revolution. Whoever is chosen U.S. President will thus face a Nicaraguan government confirmed by popular votes—and even the Sandinistas' most determined opponents concede that the revolutionaries are likely to win an overwhelming mandate.

International recognition of the Nicaraguan elections will further complicate plans for U.S. military intervention. Moreover, opponents of the Sandinistas within Nicaragua will not be able to use even a Reagan reelection to strengthen their electoral base—as they had planned when the elections were originally scheduled for 1985.

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The Challenge to the Left
In the 1984 U.S. Election

One way or another, most of the left has already been drawn into the powerful magnetic field thrown up by the 1984 presidential election.

The pull of the election is irresistible, in part because, at the present level of the U.S. working class' political development, it is the main mechanism through which the broad masses interact with national politics. But this year there is another factor as well: the outpouring of progressive political energy in the electoral arena—especially from the Black community—that has been galvanized by the Jesse Jackson campaign. This effort, in both its immediate and long term prospects, gives the 1984 election a significance going well beyond who wins on November 6.

That this outcome is unimportant. Ronald Reagan's reelection—for which prospects are, unfortunately, all too bright—would be seen by the administration and the ruling class more broadly as a popular mandate for pursuing even more vigorously the policies of war and racism which have characterized the President's first term in office. For this reason alone, the left, attempting to represent the interests of the working class both in the U.S. and internationally, cannot help but be concerned with doing whatever it can to thwart Reagan's bid for a second term.

MORE THAN DUMPING REAGAN

Nevertheless, desirable though ousting Reagan from office would be, the task of the left in the 1984 election cannot be reduced simply to an all-out campaign to unseat the President. We need a broader perspective, one that views the election as one key vehicle for both the immediate and long term maturation of the working class and popular movements. In this sense, we believe that the left faces three challenges in the 1984 election:

One is to interact with what is essentially a plebiscite on the Reagan presidency in a way that calls into question and helps undermine U.S. imperialism's attempts to forge a popular consensus behind the policies of nuclear escalation, military intervention and a consciously racialized attack on the working class as a whole.

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Second is to utilize the public debate engendered by the presidential election in order to pose before the masses of people the concrete political issues and to help train the masses—the working class in particular—their class interests and limitations of the electoral process.

And third is to identify and help develop the most advanced elements in the working class presently straining to make itself felt in the electoral arena.

JESSE JACKSON CANDIDACY

The unique character of the 1984 elections is reflected in it through those objectives—as well as the immediate goal of defeating Reagan and electing Mondale—that political force is the candidacy of Jesse Jackson.

The significance of the Jackson candidacy does not rest in its prospects for capturing the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, let alone the presidency. Those prospects are nil. The principal immediate significance of the Jackson candidacy is that it represents a critique from the vantage point of the most oppressed sectors of U.S. society not only of the Democratic Party but alternative to it offered by the mainstream of the Democratic Party (see "The Jackson Challenge: A Political Force in the Electoral Arena," pages 8-9).

ESSENCE OF REAGANISM

The essence of Reaganism is the attempt by U.S. capital to deal with two intersecting crises: the worldwide crisis of imperialism resulting from the consolidation of socialism and the historic advances in national liberation movements; and the structural crisis of U.S. capitalism faced with falling profitability, monopoly, recessionary cycles, growing rivalry with other capitalist countries and the steady sharpening of the fundamental contradictions that are vulnerable to the penetration of capital.

The Reagan presidency set out to reverse both these historical trends. Its formula had two parts: an international counteroffensive against revolution and socialism, at the heart of which is the attempt by the U.S. to regain the nuclear edge over the Soviet Union; and a bold attack on the working class, to finance the way to reassert the growth of the position of U.S. capital in general.

The Reagan strategy was to break the "working-class front" with a warlike, xenophobic, racist, white patriotic, consensus for this program by a massive wave of anti-communism and anti-Semitic attacks, and to maintain, at least by neutralizing the attack on the working class so that the brunt of it would be felt by minorities.

However, I think your opposition is unnecessary. The bill is nothing more than a warmed-over version of earlier bills, all of which failed. The essential support that bills come from the CAF-CIO.

Opposition comes chiefly from members of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the business lobby and supported with the status quo of government.

Nobody—no the American Civil Liberties Union—not the National Rifle Association—wants a national gun control bill.

Since the bill won't pass, why bother to oppose it?—Dick J. Austin, Asst. Editor

BOURGEOIS CONSENSUS

While一线 contrary with the "consensus" for From the Horse's Mouth column, here it is straight from the source: confirmation that consensus is a lie and not to make Central America a political or policy question in 1984. On the official "Presidential Strategy to the Cubans by the Democratic National Committee, 13 items are listed as "crucial national concerns"; respondents are asked to check off which ones the Democratic Party should "emphasize most prominently in its election effort." But Central America is not included as one of the 13 items.

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Hashim Rashid, Baltimore, Md.

The candidacy of Jesse Jackson is the catalyst for the outpouring of progressive political activity in this election season. The failure to grasp the clear-cut and immediate political differences between Jackson and the "mainstream" Democrats relegates Jackson to the role of a racialized myopia which is blind to the historical roots and trajectory of the left, the political figure produced and shaped by the dynamics of the Black liberation movement who, by the strength of a social base in the Black community, has charged into the electoral mainstrea of the Democratic Party in order to challenge its policies, its allegiances, and its function in U.S. political life.

Of course, it would not be difficult for anyone on the left determined to do a line-by-line analysis of Jackson's political program to demonstrate innumerable flaws and shortcomings in it. It would likely not be too difficult to construct a platform on which Jesse Jackson must go. But such exercises in futility miss the point: A real candidate thrust forward by the movement of the Black liberation movement, has moved into the center of the political arena; and the basic thrust of his candidacy is a challenge to the twin pillars of U.S. policy—race and war.

WHY THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY?

Is this challenge ideologically compromised because it takes place on the terrain of the Democratic Party? Such a perspective is inadequate. The left, also, misses the point. The Jesse Jackson candidacy represents an attempt by the Black community to mobilize the repressive conditions of their existence through the political mechanisms currently available to them. While this struggle is central to that process, the logic of that motion pushes this effort to embrace all of the classes and sections of the national political agenda—the setting the basis for Jackson’s "rainbow coalition of the re-