

STACKS OVERSIZE
LACK OVERSIZE

TORCH



NEWSPAPER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST LEAGUE

November 15-December 14, 1983/25¢

U.S. OUT OF GRENADA NOW!

PER REC'D
FEB 24 1984
NYPL

By PAUL BENJAMIN

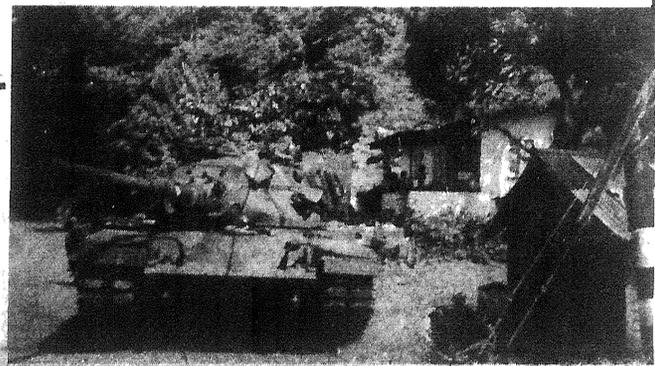
U.S. paratroopers and Marines invaded Grenada early on the morning of October 25. Within a few days over 6,000 U.S. troops — plus some 300 police from Jamaica, Dominica, Barbados and other U.S. allies in the eastern Caribbean — had landed on the island. U.S. military spokespersons have announced U.S. casualties of 18 killed and 89 wounded. Because of the strict censorship imposed by the U.S. military in the first days of the invasion, the number of Grenadian dead, wounded and missing soldiers and civilians is unknown.

As we go to press, it is clear that the invading troops have established control over most of Grenada. Their success is hardly surprising, given the awesome military superiority U.S. imperialism holds over the Grenadian people. The entire population of Grenada is only about 110,000 people. Nearly half the population is under 15 years of age. The Grenadian military consists of only about 1,500 lightly equipped troops,

backed up by about 2,000 people in the popular militia, with no air force or navy.

To hold off the supposed threat Grenada represented to U.S. national security, the Reagan administration massed an invasion force including the aircraft carrier Independence, the assault ship Guam, eight other warships, and approximately 15,000 soldiers and sailors.

Reagan and other administration spokespersons invented a series of fairy tales about the situation in Grenada to justify U.S. intervention. First, they claimed the invasion was really a "rescue mission" to save the approximately 1,000 U.S. citizens on Grenada — mostly medical students at St. George's University School of Medicine — from the "gang of thugs" that had taken over the government. They insisted that dramatic action was needed to prevent a repetition of the Iranian hostage crisis. And they maintained that the Grenadian military shut down Pearls Airport, cutting off the only way to evacuate the students—and



U.S. tanks helped invaders overwhelm lightly-armed Grenadian army.

leaving the U.S. with no choice but to resort to force.

But all available evidence suggests that the students were never in any real danger. Before the invasion, U.S. authorities conceded they had no proof of any threat to the students. No one in Grenada made any attempt to take the students prisoner once the invasion began.

When U.S. reporters finally reached Grenada, they were told by Dr. Geoffrey

Bourne, a university official who supported the invasion, that "From the point of view of saving our students, the invasion was unnecessary." Indeed, Bourne noted that after the coup the Grenadian military took special pains to reassure students and faculty, and to provide the university complex with essential services. Moreover, it turned out that the U.S. was lying when it claimed that the Grenadian military pre-

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THE CENTRAL					
AMERICAN					
REVOLUTION AND					
THE U.S.					
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MOVEMENT					
SPECIAL 8-PAGE SUPPLEMENT					
INSIDE					

Jamaican Revolutionaries Denounce Invasion of Grenada

Following is the text of a statement on the invasion of Grenada issued by the Revolutionary Marxist League of Jamaica, West Indies, sister organization of the RSL, on October 25, 1983.

The Revolutionary Marxist League totally and vehemently condemns today's invasion of Grenada by U.S. military forces in concert with a window-dressing force of military contingents from Jamaica, Barbados and other right-wing regimes of the Eastern Caribbean. This event represents a naked act of imperialist aggression against a tiny Caribbean state. The outcome of this criminal act of intervention in Grenada will undoubtedly be the reimposition of total U.S. neo-colonial rule over Grenada. In addition, it sets an extremely dangerous precedent for future imperialist intervention in occurrences of radicalism or genuine popular revolution in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The Revolutionary Marxist League also condemns the totally undemocratic and dishonest approach of the JLP government in committing Jamaica and Jamaican troops to an act of war against a neighboring country behind the back of the Jamaican people. This speaks loudly of the gross hypocrisy of the JLP which is pushing its fake democratic credentials over the Grenada situation while denying the Jamaican people the democratic right of even simply being informed before the grave step of intervention was taken.

We say—U.S. imperialism and its lackeys out of Grenada!

We maintain that it is the Grenadian people—with the solidarity of their class allies in the Caribbean and elsewhere—that must remove the yoke of military dictatorship, that has so recently been laid on them, through their struggles.

RML Executive Committee
October 25, 1983
Kingston, Jamaica

SECCION EN ESPANOL

On the BLA/ Weather Underground

Dear Torch:

I would like to briefly express my views concerning an article that appeared in the September 15-November 14 edition of the **Torch**. This particular article was titled "Two Brink's Trials End," and it somehow struck an odd note.

One reason I enjoy reading **Torch** is because of views often expressed by writers who are concerned with the oppressed and the worldwide struggle against imperialism. As a prisoner, the **Torch** is often a relief from the right-wing rags which must be deciphered and debugged. However, the aforementioned article triggered my instincts and caused me to reflect how any periodical can and often is used for clandestine imperialist purposes.

Naturally we all don't always agree and should be able to "disagree" without being "disagreeable." Nevertheless, it struck me as odd because the article appeared to be a contradiction within itself. Or, a very good lesson in paradox!

I took special note that the writer, after advocating RSL support for the BLA/Weather Underground, in the same breath sought to retract such support, specifically with the following words: "At the same time we believe that BLA/Weather Underground strategy and tactics do more harm than good to the struggle for freedom." (Emphasis mine.)

Would any intelligent and dedicated group or individual support persons who do more harm than good to their cause??? Could anyone that says so be trusted???

Maybe this article was designed as a condescension??? Or was it a forked tongue???

**Unity in Struggle,
Mujahid Farid
Atica**

TORCH REPLY:

We believe the BLA/Weather Underground does more harm than good to the struggle for freedom because their strategy and tactics do nothing to prepare and organize the working class to take power. They at the same time reinforce the idea that revolutionaries are power-hungry elitists just as alien and distant from ordinary working people as the elitists in power now.

But the U.S. government prosecution of the BLA/Weather Underground does not undo any of the damage they do to the movement. In the eyes of the ruling class and the government, the crime of the BLA/Weather Underground is not their misleadership of the fight of the oppressed or their distortion of socialist ideals, but that they rebelled against the system at all. The U.S. government—which has trained and paid for secret police torturers around the world, from Iran to Chile,

from South Korea to El Salvador, from Lebanon to Walla Walla prison—has no right to label anybody as a "terrorist." The U.S. government—which dropped tons of bombs on the people of Vietnam in the 1960s and today stockpiles nerve gas to use in the next major war—has no right to accuse anybody of "inhumanity." We defend the BLA/Weather Underground against the government—against the capitalist state—but at the same time say that the movement must reject their methods and politics, and we stand firm on our belief that socialism can only be achieved by the working class itself.

Threat of war growing

Dear Torch,

I am writing to you about the editorial you wrote on KAL flight 007 in your Sept. 15-Nov. 14 paper.

There are some people in this world that die or get put in prison for just trying to make it in a place we call home. Commanders of the government call it Peace Loving U.S. Imperialism. Because of this, 269 out in the open for all to see are assassinated.

The threat of war is growing not only in Central America, Africa and the Middle East. Here at home, people all over are tired of U.S. capitalism and what it stands for. I ask this: How do you tell your kids that their big brother or sister was killed over a superpower rivalry for world power? How do you tell the child so that he or she can understand?

**Bobby D. Lawson
Wynne Unit
Huntsville, TX**

TDC hunger strike

Dear Torch,

A most catastrophic episode is now occurring at the Texas Department of Corrections prison facility. Mainly: Eastham prison (concentration camp), located in Lovelady, Texas. On the 25th of July 1983, eight vigorous inmates proceeded on a political hunger strike that was peaceful and serene. Their incentive for indulging in this overly severe demonstration was to protest the prison administration's utter failure to implicate

and wholeheartedly implement a federal mandate and/or stipulation handed down to this administration after the inmates were victorious in the Ruiz vs. Estelle et al. (Estelle being the prison director) case.

The changes which should have taken place are not conspicuous and the changes that did occur are so superficial till one will be moved to utilize a magnifying glass to witness any changes at all! The brutality toward inmates has not changed, the poor food has not, unessential harassment has not, the futile work in the fields has not, and the cold-blooded massacres of one "pet" inmate being used by the officials to inflict agony and pain on another inmate has not changed! It is for these incentives and more that these eight majestic inmates have stood out in an effort to coerce this diabolical administration into respecting and practicing the federal law, and, ultimately, refraining from their evil and subhumanitarian ways.

Many times I'm moved to wonder who the real culprits are? Also, there's 50 other inmates that are prepared and anxious to accompany those eight individuals already on the hunger strike. That is, of course, if those people already on the hunger strike are not dead! Which was the bloody tragedy that occurred in Belfast, Ireland, when Bobby Sands and 10 other prisoners failed to survive their political hunger strike—via death!

My intentions are to expose this administration's wrongdoings to the public, and what better newspaper publication is competent and very well staffed than the **Torch**? Please print this message in your unique newspaper and alarm those concerned people so that we together might struggle in solidarity and break these chains of ignorance.

And keep that revolutionary fire burning!

Respectfully,
Rev. Vance Dillon

Workers blamed for system's problems

Dear Torch,

I recently read a newspaper article in which Coleman Young, Detroit's Democratic mayor, discussed the problems of the city's bus system. I agree the bus system is in bad shape. We have very long waits for old buses—even though we pay \$1 each way (one of the highest fares in the country).

In the article, Coleman Young did not blame the lack of funds available for services needed by poor and working people. He did not blame the amount of tax revenue that finds its way back to the large corporations who need it least (nor did he blame the huge tax break he himself gave to GM). He blamed the workers: specifically, the drivers, the mechanics, and the safety regulations designed to protect the drivers, passengers, and public. Here are a few samples from the article:

Coleman Young on the drivers:

"Some drivers are using coat hangers to fish for dollars, sticking them in other cases with gum on the end of them."

Coleman Young on the mechanics:

"There's a failure of the mechanics to repair the buses, and nobody can deny that is true."

Coleman Young on safety:

"Some bureaucrats in Washington had some concept that a bus had to stop on a dime. You cannot have a bus that will stop on a dime without quick brake burnouts, two or three thousand miles."

This article made me wonder whether Young would also blame the workers for the sad state of the schools, roads,

health care and other essential services in Detroit (or most other cities, for that matter). I think these quotes reveal a lot about where Coleman Young's sympathies lie. Next November, when he is telling us to support the Democratic candidate for president as a "friend of the working people," I'll remember this article, and I'll remember his attacks on working people (like his union-busting tactics against AFSCME and his destruction of the Poletown neighborhood to build a plant for GM), and I won't believe a word of it.

Paul Carson
Detroit

EVENTS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

November 12—U.S. Marines Out of Grenada! Stop the Attacks on Nicaragua! No U.S. War in Central America and the Caribbean! National march, Saturday, 10 a.m. Organized by November 12 Coalition. To participate with the RSL, call (212) 695-6802.

LOS ANGELES

November 12—No More Vietnam Wars in Central America & the Caribbean! Stop U.S. Intervention! Jobs, Peace and Justice: Stop the Military Buildup! March and rally, Shatto Park to MacArthur Park. Assemble 12 noon. To participate with the RSL, call (213) 385-6029.

DETROIT

November 20—Forum: The Threat of War. Sunday, 7:00 p.m., First Unitarian Church (corner of Cass & Forest—Cass entrance). Speakers: Brent Davis and Lisa Gashen of the RSL. For more information, call (313) 331-7757. Childcare provided.

NEW YORK

November 16—Forum: Crossing the Borders: The Autonomous Movement for Peace—East and West. Speakers: British peace activist Lynne Jones, exiled members of Independent Moscow Peace Group Sergei Batorin and Mikhail Ostrovsky, and Helsinki Watch director Cathy Fitzpatrick. Wednesday, 7 p.m., P.S. 41, 116 W. 11th St. at 6th Ave. Suggested donation: \$2.50. Sponsored by Brooklyn Anti-Nuclear Group, Libertarian Workers Group, War Resisters League, Revolutionary Socialist League and others.

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To Our Readers

This issue of the **Torch/La Antarcha** has been published one week early to make it available for the **November 12 national protests against U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean.** We will return to our normal 15th of the month publication schedule with the **December** issue.

—The Editors

U.S. Out of Grenada!

(Continued from page 1)

vented an evacuation by shutting down the airport: It was U.S. imperialism's allies in the Caribbean Community — a regional economic federation — that broke air links with Grenada in an effort to isolate the military government.

U.S. tries to hide behind international law

The Reagan administration also claimed that it invaded Grenada to "restore law and order" at the request of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Governor General of Grenada. It provided Eugenia Charles, the conservative Prime Minister of Dominica, with a platform to denounce the "chaos" in Grenada as a threat to neighboring states, and to demonstrate support in the region for U.S. intervention.

These stories are simply an effort to provide a veneer of legality for a flagrantly criminal invasion. None of these "legalisms" hold water—the OECS, which the U.S. does not even belong to, has no authority to invade member states; the Organization of American States (OAS), which the U.S. and most eastern Caribbean states do belong to, specifically forbids such intervention for any reason; and the Grenadian Governor General is a purely ceremonial official without the right or authority to ask anyone in or out of Grenada to do anything.

Given the political crisis in Grenada that preceded the invasion, some may be tempted to take the administration's claims about chaos more seriously. But whatever one might think about the military coup, there is little doubt that the military was effectively in power. The military council was able to enforce a 24-hour curfew. U.S. reporters who managed to slip into Grenada a few hours after the invasion began found that the situation in St. George's was peaceful, and customs officials were at work as usual.

Cuban/Soviet takeover?

Reagan appears to have finally settled on the argument that U.S. troops arrived in Grenada "just in time" to head off a Cuban/Soviet takeover. In a nationally televised speech given two days after U.S. troops landed on the island, Reagan called Grenada "a Soviet/Cuban colony being readied as a major military bastion to export terror and undermine democracy."

The administration's supposed proof of Cuban/Soviet intervention in Grenada is the Grenadian government's effort to construct a modern airport at Point Salines with the assistance of Cuban workers. The U.S. has repeatedly insisted that the airport would become a major "Soviet base" threatening U.S. national security.

But even many pro-U.S. governments have refused to buy this argument — and, in fact, were helping the Grenadian government to complete the airport. The Common Market nations of Western Europe, for example, contributed fully \$7.5 million to the project. And the Plessey Company, a British construction firm that is a major contractor for the airport, insisted before and after the invasion that it was being built according to "purely civilian specifications," and that it lacked the underground fuel dumps, sheltered control tower, and protection for aircraft typical of military airbases.

The U.S. military also engineered a



U.S. paratroopers seek out last remnants of Grenadian army.

propaganda barrage against the "Cuban hordes" they supposedly discovered on Grenada. Censored news reports have portrayed all those resisting the invaders as "Cubans." The U.S. also claimed that there were "at least 1,000 Cubans" on Grenada, all armed to the teeth, both to magnify the Cuban threat and to explain the stout resistance Cuban forces put up against the invaders. But on November 1, the administration admitted that there were less than 800 Cubans on Grenada — and only about 50 of them were combat troops.

It should also be noted that Reagan's claim about arriving "just in time" to head off a Cuban takeover of Grenada makes nonsense of earlier administration accusations that Grenadian Prime Minister Maurice Bishop — killed in the political crisis that preceded the invasion — was a Cuban puppet and had been one for years. To get around this problem, various "experts" on Grenada friendly to the administration have suddenly discovered that Bishop was a "humane socialist," or at least an "independent Marxist," while his opponents in the New Jewel Movement (NJM) and Grenadian army who took power in the mid-October coup were the headline "pro-Cuban" bad guys, who acted with the connivance of Fidel Castro and his Russian allies.

While such analyses contain a kernel of truth about factional line-ups within the NJM, they fail to explain the Cuban government's open dismay at Bishop's death, or its distinctly cool relations with the military council that replaced him in power. Moreover, Bishop's efforts to reach an accommodation with U.S. imperialism during his June visit to the U.S. tally precisely with the Cuban regime's own diplomatic approaches to the Reagan administration, including its July 1983 offer to negotiate a mutual freeze with the U.S. on arms shipments to Central America. Consequently, it is unlikely that the Cuban government engineered or approved of the coup.

The U.S. invasion of Grenada culminates a long campaign by U.S. imperialism to destabilize and ultimately overthrow the radical NJM regime.

U.S. rulers opposed the Maurice Bishop government from the day it took power in a virtually bloodless coup against former Prime Minister Eric Gairy's corrupt, authoritarian regime on March 13, 1979. The Carter administration responded to the coup by setting up a Caribbean "rapid deployment force" in October 1979. It also pressured U.S. companies and U.S. allies in Latin America and Western Europe to apply

military pressure on the new government.

The Reagan administration greatly expanded this campaign against Grenadian independence after it took office in 1981. The U.S. sought to strangle the Grenadian economy by blocking loans or grants to the NJM regime from the International Monetary Fund, the Caribbean Development Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

The administration also began developing plans for the invasion of Grenada. In 1981, U.S. troops and naval units took part in "Operation Ocean Venture '81" — the simulated invasion of an island called "Amber on the Amberdines" to

replace its government with one friendly to the U.S. On February 27, 1983, the *Washington Post* revealed that a CIA proposal to "destabilize Grenada" had been turned down by the Senate Intelligence Committee in 1981. Then, a month later, the NJM government ordered a full alert in response to U.S. naval maneuvers in the Caribbean.

Conflicting accounts of internal crisis

The political crisis that broke out into the open within the NJM in October gave the U.S. rulers a pretext — and an opportunity — to carry out their invasion plan.

Accounts of what transpired in Grenada just prior to the U.S. invasion have been the subject of conflicting reports from Bishop's supporters and opponents. According to "official" Grenadian government reports (i.e., reports from the military council that deposed Bishop) and interviews with Grenadian diplomats in Cuba or at the United Nations who generally support the government's account, Bishop provoked the crisis by refusing to accept the decisions of the NJM's Central Committee.

These sources say open conflict within the NJM leadership began at a September 14-16 meeting of the Central Committee called to discuss "the stagnation of the Grenadian revolution." At this meeting, it was proposed that Bishop give up a share of political leadership to Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard. Bishop would continue as nominal head of the government and popular spokesperson for the NJM, but Coard was to take control over economic policy and party affairs. It was also proposed that this power-sharing arrangement — which actually stripped Bishop of most

(Continued on page 8)

Grenada and the Tasks of Socialists

The U.S. invasion of Grenada should serve to remind revolutionaries in the United States that our number one task is to fight U.S. imperialism. Through its vast military

EDITORIAL

machine, its system of alliances (such as NATO) and its client states, the capitalist class of the United States rules over most of the world, brutally oppressing millions of people, distorting local economies and pre-



Maurice Bishop.

venting oppressed peoples from exercising their national rights. Although the U.S.'s global power has declined significantly from its height after World War II, the U.S. is still the dominant imperialist power in the world. Indeed, it is precisely its decline that has provoked the U.S. ruling class, led by some of its most reactionary elements, to embark on a desperate offensive to regain its lost power.

Thus, the Reagan administration intervened in Grenada not only to overthrow the New Jewel Movement (NJM), but also to "send a message" to the people of Nicaragua and Cuba, to the insurgents fighting U.S. imperialism in El Salvador, and, in fact, to all the oppressed peoples of the Caribbean, Latin America and the world. This message reads: "Whenever and wherever you seek to rise up to exercise your right to self-determination, to run your country as you see fit, to organize your economy the way you want, and to take any significant measures against the powerful U.S. corporations and banks that exploit your labor, rob your natural resources, skim off your surplus and turn your economies into appendages of the U.S., we will crush you, with overwhelming military force if necessary."

Reeling from the bombing of Marine headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, and frustrated with its impotence there, the Reagan administration wanted a war it could win—an easy victory to restore the prestige of the U.S. military at home and abroad. It found that war in Grenada. As the world economy disintegrates, and world tensions rise, there will

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King Day a holiday!

On November 2, a bill making the third Monday in January a national holiday honoring the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was signed by President Reagan and became law. The first time the federal holiday honoring the Rev. Dr. King will be observed is in January 1986.

In the past few years, the call to make Martin Luther King's birthday a national holiday has become a key demand of the Black movement. The passage of the bill therefore represents a victory for that movement and for Black and other oppressed people generally.

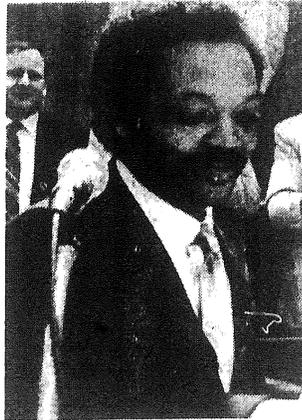
The establishment of the MLK holiday, however, does not mean the U.S. politicians have become less racist. With an election year approaching, large majorities in Congress jumped at the chance to court Black votes by supporting the bill. Likewise, Reagan — who had previously opposed the measure — calculated that it was to his political advantage to sign the bill, rather than risk having it passed over his veto.

In the Senate, opposition to the bill was led by arch-racist Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.). Helms tried to get the Senate to order the opening of sealed FBI files on Dr. King that, Helms claimed, would prove that King was a "communist sympathizer" and that his organization was "heavily laden at the top with leaders of proven records of communism, socialism and sex perversion." The files were sealed at the request of the King family in 1977 as part of the settlement of a lawsuit they filed against the FBI.

The fight against Helms was led by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.). In the debate, Helms pointed out that Sen. Kennedy's argument was not with Helms but "with his own dead brother who was president [John] and with his own dead brother who was the attorney general [Robert]." This was a reference to several facts, later admitted by Kennedy, including: 1) that JFK and Robert Kennedy had authorized FBI wiretaps against King; 2) that president John F. Kennedy had told King to get rid of an adviser the FBI thought was friendly to the Communist Party; and 3) that JFK had warned King of the importance of controlling the left wing of the civil rights movement and keeping Marxists out.

As the Helms/Kennedy exchange suggests, the civil rights movement was not only hindered by the outright racists of the Helms variety, but also by President Kennedy and the liberals, who sought to control the civil rights movement and to weaken its attacks on the racist U.S. economic and political system.

Jesse Jackson announced on November 3 that he will run for president in next year's Democratic Party primaries. Future Torch coverage will assess Jackson's candidacy.



Simpson-Mazzoli bill shelved

The anti-immigrant Simpson-Mazzoli Bill has failed to pass the U.S. House of Representatives for the second time in a year. House Speaker Thomas O'Neill announced October 4 that the bill, which was passed by the Senate in May, will not be brought up for a House vote this year. While it could be raised again in 1984, this seems unlikely since most legislators will be reluctant to vote on such a controversial and unpopular bill during an election year.

O'Neill's decision to put the bill on ice was based on rumors leaked from the Reagan administration indicating that the president was planning a surprise veto of the bill, after letting it pass through the Democratic-controlled House. Such a veto was certain to win favor from Latino voters, thus boosting Reagan's chances in next year's presidential election. O'Neill, a Democrat, moved quickly to deny Reagan such an opportunity.

As it turned out, very few people were sorry to see the bill die. Over the course of the past year, support for the Simpson-Mazzoli approach to immigration control had narrowed down to a collection of right-wing nativist groups and the bureaucracy of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) itself.

Latinos have all along denounced the bill as racist and discriminatory. Agribusiness capitalists in the Southwest feared that the bill would deny them low-paid Mexican field-workers. Small business owners complained that the ID requirements and employer penalties for hiring undocumented immigrants would drown them in paperwork. Local governments claimed that the cost of even the very limited amnesty program of the bill would drive them to bankruptcy. Finally, even Reagan's own aides began to hint that the costs and com-

plexity of the proposal were getting out of hand.

But while the threat of a stricter immigration law is now off the agenda until at least 1985, the INS is moving in other directions to accomplish many of the same things the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill had promised. Over one million Latinos have been arrested by the INS at the Mexican border during the past year, a 40 percent increase from the year before. Convictions of people charged with smuggling immigrants are also up — by 300 percent! But even this isn't enough for the INS.

Two days after the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill died, INS chief Alan Nelson requested that \$93 million be added to the INS budget. The money would be used to pay for 1,000 more border patrol officers on the U.S.-Mexican border, 500 other INS personnel, and sophisticated equipment, including more helicopters and infrared scopes for night detection.

At the same time, U.S. government officials announced a decrease (from 90,000 to 72,000) in the number of refugees who will be allowed to enter the U.S. in the coming year. Of these, only 1,000 will be admitted from Latin America and the Caribbean. Yet at the present moment, the INS has pending 170,000 requests for political asylum/refugee status. Fifteen thousand of them are from one Latin American country alone — El Salvador. Simpson-Mazzoli may be gone for now, but the U.S. government and its INS watchdogs continue their cruel work.

—Albert Lary

Provocation at Harlem meeting?

AS WE GO TO PRESS—A publicly advertised meeting of the Harlem-based Mobilization Committee Against Police Brutality was disrupted on November 4 when a man wearing a mask burst into the room waving a gun. After a brief struggle, the man fled without firing a shot. The

disruption, which brought the meeting to an end, took place during a discussion of the case of Michael Stewart, a young Black man who died September 27 while in Transit Police custody after having been arrested for writing graffiti. The police originally claimed that Stewart died of cardiac arrest; however, a subsequent autopsy showed that Stewart's death resulted from spinal injuries indicative of strangulation. Evidence has also come to light of an extensive cover-up that included removing Stewart's eyes from his corpse and bleaching them to hide signs of strangulation.

The meeting at the Harlem Fightback office at 125th and 5th Avenue was attended by about 35 people, including friends and family of Michael Stewart, people from the Harlem community, several Black nationalist organizations and left groups, including the RSL. Those attending the meeting have questioned whether the armed provocation was a robbery attempt, and have speculated that it may in fact have been a planned provocation by the New York City police. The committee will be holding a follow-up meeting on November 11, 7:30 p.m., at the Harlem Fightback office to further discuss cover-ups of police brutality and to map out plans to bring the true facts of the Stewart case and similar cases to light.

—SR/RM

Chicago teachers' strike ends

CHICAGO—Teachers returned to work October 25 after a three-week strike, the longest in history here. In a one-year contract, teachers won a five percent pay rate increase effective January 1, which means only three percent more money this year. They beat back major giveback demands, making only small concessions on medical expenses and absenteeism.

Teachers returned to work angry and expecting another strike next year. And even this year's contract, though accepted by the School Board, could still be rejected by the banker-dominated Chicago School Finance Authority over the prospect of a \$100 million deficit in 1984-85.

In a new spirit of unity, the Chicago Teachers Union united with the 18 other unions representing school workers (maintenance, clerical, etc.). The unions struck together and settled together. This is an advance on past years when they often crossed each other's picket lines.

There was much misdirected anger during the strike. Teachers focused most of their hostility on Black Superintendent Ruth Love and her bloated \$120,000 salary, and didn't go enough after the School Board and the Finance Authority that enforces capitalist austerity. On

the other hand — and worse — Black groups like Operation PUSH helped spread rumors that the strike was somehow a plot to embarrass Mayor Harold Washington. PUSH filed a suit to try to force the opening of the schools.

Washington broke with tradition by not intervening in the strike. Mayors Daley, Bilandic and Byrne had all leaned on the Board to give the teachers a little more than they otherwise would have; Washington said the mayor should "keep his cotton-picking hands off" the schools.

The settlement was approved by a 73 percent yes-vote, with less than half the teachers voting. This was way down from the usual overwhelming yes-votes in the past.

Teachers are right to expect another battle next year. As long as they are trapped within the rules of decaying capitalism, they will have to fight harder and harder to try to hold on to what they have.

—Darryl Clark

Marcos regime under seige

On October 20, 2,000 workers from the Philippines Long Distance Co. in Manila barricaded the telephone center and disrupted international and domestic telephone services. This was in response to a sellout contract negotiated by their union leaders. They shouted, "We have no leaders. We are the leaders." This is but one example of what is going on today in the Philippines.

Ever since last August — when the regime of "dictator-for-life" Ferdinand Marcos assassinated opposition leader Benigno Aquino — political stability has disappeared in the Philippines. There have been calls for the resignation of Marcos. And there have been some calls for revolution.

Benigno Aquino was a very mild, although very well known, opposition leader. It is Aquino's layer of the opposition, the out-of-power bourgeoisie, that seems to have the leadership of the resistance movement. In some cases, management has let the blue collar and office workers have time off to demonstrate against Marcos. Some capitalists themselves have demonstrated.

The international bankers, for their part, have expressed dissatisfaction with the Marcos clique by allowing the Philippine peso to devalue more than 20 percent. In addition, those segments of the labor movement that have not been bought off by Marcos have opted to follow the lead of the out-of-power bourgeoisie. Unions have participated in the demonstrations, but very little strike action has been reported.

A majority of the Muslim leaders have gone over to the leadership of the out-capitalists. Their armed groups have been

armed groups have been fighting vigorously against the Marcos' regime. And the urban poor—especially the inhabitants of the slum area of Tondo—have carried out huge demonstrations against Marcos. In addition, the university students have been very active—in fact, they have been the bravest. They have thrown Molotov cocktails against the repressive forces. Some students have been killed by the police.

One of the key factors in propping up the Marcos regime has been the armed forces and the other repressive forces. There have not been indications thus far that any military units have been sympathetic to the resistance movement or even neutralized.

The opposition has been able to rally a lot of people, even though it is led by a section of the capitalist class. The biggest victory of the opposition so far has been to force the cancellation of Ronald Reagan's visit to dictator-murderer Marcos. If we have the power to make the leader of the biggest capitalist-imperialist power cancel his trip, we the workers and the oppressed have the power to make Marcos go out of office. And why only go a little way, when we can overthrow the capitalist system too?

—Alberto Suarez

Michigan protesters confront fascists

DETROIT—A coalition of fascists was given a permit to rally on the state capitol steps in Lansing, Michigan, on October 8. The coalition calls itself the "White Peoples Alliance" and consists of the SS Action Group of Westland, Michigan, different Ku Klux Klan groups from Indiana and southern Michigan, and a group of racists from Dearborn, a suburb outside of Detroit. The racist demonstration was to be held from 1 to 3 p.m. to demand jobs for white people and an end to affirmative action programs.

The fascist rally was not publicized until posters sprang up in Lansing calling for people to counter-demonstrate against the Nazis at the capitol. Members of the community met the night before the rally, many wanting to meet inside a church instead of demonstrating against them same-time/same-place. The group split between those who wanted to be at the church and those who felt the need to show more opposition. The need for long-term organizing and education was discussed and plans for further meetings set up.

Members of various left groups were the first to arrive at the counter-demonstration site. Progressive Labor Party/International Committee Against



Worldwide protests took place in late October against planned installation of U.S. Pershing missiles in Western Europe. Demonstrators formed human chain on road outside Dornstadt, West Germany, on October 22.

Racism (PL/InCAR) had the largest contingent there and had assembled on the capitol steps. By noon, more people had arrived to counter-demonstrate and cops began patrolling the area. A Klansman in fatigues was chased off by counter-demonstrators and three members of PL/InCAR were arrested when the KKKer ran into the police station and they followed after him.

A number of demonstrators, including RSL supporters, began circling around the capitol building to see if anything was going on and spotted a U Haul van. It had stopped on the road in back of the capitol to ask a passerby for directions. About 20 people ran after the van, knowing the fascists were likely inside and chased after it for about six blocks where it finally stopped. About 20 fascists got out of the van and both groups faced off, shouting insults at one another. The Nazis were in full uniform with helmets and carrying large planks with nails sticking out of them. Others were dressed in fatigues and one in traditional KKK robes.

When a contingent of cops arrived on the scene to separate the fascists from the counter-demonstrators, people began throwing rocks at the KKKers and Nazis. A Klansman came into the crowd swinging a stick but was injured in the melee and the American flag the Nazis carried was taken away from them. More rock throwing on both sides developed and one counter-demonstrator was arrested. The cops didn't blink an eye when the fascists threw rocks or threatened people with sticks.

Many people in the neighborhood came out to see what all the noise was about, and while the Nazis and KKK were deciding what to do next, one of the youths in the neighborhood took the keys from the U Haul van. Two tow trucks arrived about 10 minutes later — courtesy of the state? — and the fascists were escorted away under a hail of rocks.

—Maggie Sands

Detroit hospital turns away poor

On September 29, Detroit Receiving Hospital started turning away ambulances and closed its emergency room to all "indigent cases," "except those where life or limb are threatened." Detroit Receiving is the largest of the six hospitals in the Detroit area which handle "indigent cases" — those people who have neither medical insurance nor the \$75 cash it takes to check into emergency rooms here. It handles 40 percent of all such cases in the Detroit area.

Receiving's refusal to take indigent cases is the latest in a series of cutbacks that began in July when Wayne County officials cut off all hospital payments for uninsured patients. Two-thirds of Receiving's emergency patients are uninsured. Also, as a result of the cutbacks, Detroit Receiving has closed 100 of 327 beds, laid off 260 of 1,700 employees and closed the outpatient pharmacies and the prisoner care unit.

The county's action touched off a battle among Receiving, the county and the state over who will pay the bill. Wayne County Circuit Judge Claudia Morcum issued a temporary restraining order forcing Wayne County officials to authorize medical payments for indigent county patients. But this order is about to run out and nothing has been settled about who will pay.

There have been rumors that Detroit Receiving Hospital may be forced to close altogether. If Receiving closed it would mean another 1,440 people out of work — and it would leave the state of Michigan without its "most comprehensive

emergency and trauma center," the Detroit area's only adult burn center, a major psychiatric crisis service and the largest emergency services available to most of Detroit's unemployed people.

What all this means is that health care will be available to fewer people in Detroit, since so many people are currently out of work or working minimum wage jobs with no "benefits" such as health insurance. At the same time, Medicaid and the major insurance businesses are not willing to pay. It all points out that in this capitalist system health care is a commodity available only to those who can pay the outrageous fees. The bargaining over who will pay the bill — while people's lives are in the balance — is barbaric. For example, the Emergency Medical Service recently brought a man who had been stabbed to Receiving's emergency room. There he was evaluated as having "too good" vital signs to be considered a "life-threatening case" and was referred somewhere else. By the time he arrived at the other hospital, he was admitted in serious condition from loss of blood.

We believe that health care is a right. All people have the right to the best health care available simply because they are human. And any government which doesn't provide that has no right to exist.

—Marji D.

Pickers condemn Depo Provera

DETROIT—On October 28, the Coalition to Stop Depo Provera held an informational picket at Detroit Receiving Hospital. Depo provera is a birth control injection which has not been approved for use in birth control by the FDA. It is being dumped in Third World countries and is being used on working and poor women here in the U.S. for population control.

The coalition was organized by the Detroit Reproductive Rights Committee and Black Women for a Better Society. Twenty-five people attended and distributed an educational leaflet to women visiting the Family Planning Clinic and to employees of the hospital. The leaflet discussed the health hazards of depo provera and the social, political and economic reasons for its use. Around 400 leaflets were distributed; many people were quite interested in the issue and showed support of our picket. Spirited and chanting picketers carried signs demanding: "Retain Medicaid Funding for Abortion," "Quality Health Care for the Poor," and "Stop U.S. Racist Domination." A follow-up meeting to organize further activities against the three month birth control injection was called for November 2.

Libel suit threatens union rights

As we go to press, an important labor dispute is occurring at the American Motors plant in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Three union stewards of UAW Local 72, who printed a rank and file paper, have been slapped with a \$4.2 million libel suit. They are Jon Melrod, John Drew, and Tod Ohnstad. The libel suit against the stewards was made by four company foremen on September 12, 1980. The suit is now being heard by a jury trial.

The stewards, who edited *Fighting Times*, reported on the unfair treatment of workers and bad safety conditions. They have ample sources for every assertion, including: One foreman refused a medical pass for a sick worker who then collapsed and was left under an assembly line for 30 minutes before help was summoned. It was also reported a supervisor called a Black union brother "a lazy m-----f----- n-----."

When the foremen's suit was first brought against the trio they went to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). In April 1983 the acting regional director of the NLRB in Milwaukee found the suit "suspect," especially since it was known that AMC was the secret financial backer of the suit.

Also, the Board recommended that American Motors "stop interrogating employees under the guise of depositions, concerning their union or [their] protected activities."

And, lastly, the Board recommended payment by the company to the union stewards for their legal fees.

But when the regional NLRB requested authority from their superiors in Washington to halt the libel proceedings until reviewed by the top officials of the NLRB, a new Supreme Court ruling intervened, much to the delight of AMC and the foremen.

The Washington NLRB office told its Milwaukee office to wait and let the libel suit run its course. The NLRB has been told by the Supreme Court that the Board cannot enjoin a state court suit unless the action is frivolous and retaliatory.

With the new Supreme Court ruling, management has now been given a license — through the law of libel — to punish labor organizers and free speech of workers. AMC, with millions of dollars, wants to smash rank and file free speech with their libel suit. They want to silence criticism they don't like. It will cost at least \$30,000 to fight AMC. The enormous cost to fight a libel suit gives the companies and bosses tremendous advantage and only proves, once again, that the capitalist legal system works for its rulers.

—Darryl Clark

Movie Review: Heart Like A Wheel

By SUE EDMUNDS

Popular American culture is generally male-oriented and male-dominated, perhaps nowhere more so than in sports. So when a woman breaks into and rises to the top of a previously all-male sport, that is news. Except when it's a working class sport like drag racing, it's news only in some circles. And when a movie based on the woman's life is made, it has two strikes against it from the start.

Heart Like a Wheel stars Bonnie Bedelia as Shirley Muldowney, the first woman to compete in National Hot Rod Association meets, and the only person to win three NHRA world championship titles (the latest in 1982). First released last April, the movie was billed as an action flick for the drive-in audience, with ads portraying Bedelia as a hard, plastic, female Darth Vader. It bombed.

Bombed, but did not die. A shake-up at 20th Century-Fox resulted in a review of all recently canned films. **Heart Like a Wheel** was taken off the shelf, given a limited (and successful) test run in several cities, and entered into the prestigious New York Film Festival, where it played to enthusiastic audi-

ences and raving critics. One week later, **Heart Like a Wheel** opened in New York City, targeted for the arty crowd (though placed in one theater on the glitzy Upper East Side), with newspaper ads so bland that you would have to be looking for one to find it.

The critical acclaim and good word-of-mouth seem to be prevailing, however, which is fortunate. For **Heart Like a Wheel**, as directed by Jonathan Kaplan, is a Hollywood rarity: an enjoyable, accessible movie that centers on a woman, projects positive, non-sexist values, but does not preach or romanticize. **Heart Like a Wheel** looks, sounds and feels like life.

Shirley Roque, daughter of a honky-tonk country singer (Hoyt Axton), at 16 marries her Schenectady, NY, high school sweetheart, whose love for working on cars is matched only by Shirley's passion for racing them. Jack Muldowney (Leo Rossi) starts out a loving and supportive husband, but both his ambitions (to own his own garage) and his values (he eventually demands that Shirley choose between her marriage and her career) are far more prosaic than Shirley's. It's not that Bedelia's Shirley is discon-

tented with her life as a housewife, mother and waitress. But she wants to race and, more than anything else, she wants to win.

Screenwriter Ken Friedman and director Kaplan scrupulously avoid stereotyping either character or making them representatives, symbols, of a type. Jack is no more a male chauvinist pig than Shirley is Superwoman. Both are victimized, in different ways, by society's crazy standards of what a man

is supposed to be and what a woman is supposed to be. Leo Rossi gives a haunting performance as a basically decent man, trapped by his small-town outlook and his inability to cope with his increasingly untraditional wife and marriage. For her part, Bedelia is marvelously understated as a woman who, although not fundamentally a rebel, must fight at every turn for the right to realize her enormous talent.

It's one of the ironies of Shirley Muldowney's life that she becomes a winner not only because of her own drive and talent, but also because of the support of men. Her doting father, shown as a major influence on Shirley, brings her up to be an independent, self-reliant person. Her husband gives Shirley her first chance to compete, and is her crew chief on the small-town upstate racing circuit. He also builds her first seriously competitive car. Later, after the inevitable split with Jack, Shirley teams up with Connie (the Bounty Hunter) Kalitta, a fast-driving, fast-talking married womanizer who helps catapult Muldowney to the very top of the drag racing world.

Kalitta, played by a convincingly scruffy Beau Bridges, is a mass of typical and not-so-typical male contradictions: He's charming, he loves Shirley, he even respects the hell out of her, but he's simply incapable of not lying to and cheating on every woman in his life. It's a testament to the subtlety of **Heart Like a Wheel** that, even in his worst moments, Connie is neither vilified nor in any way excused. He's a real person: capable of very good, very bad, and a lot in between.

Heart Like a Wheel works so well precisely because it steers

clear of becoming a propaganda tract for women's liberation or trying to read more into Muldowney's life and actions than is there. It's a movie without pretense, an upbeat movie that never strays far from the cars or the track that are Muldowney's life. Jumps in time are marked by the interludes between major races, and highlighted by popular songs from the year each scene takes place. Shirley Muldowney is no hero, but she endures and wins, without sacrificing her basic integrity. And when she wins, you feel good, and maybe even feel that someday, somehow, people will find a way to get past all the shit.

If **Heart Like a Wheel** avoids sermonizing, however, one would nevertheless have to be blind not to see in it a tribute to women's endurance, an affirmation of the equality of women, and the need for breaking down all the barriers that hold women back. What makes **Heart Like a Wheel** even more unusual is that it succeeds in showing sexism as something that hurts men as well as women. When Shirley leaves Jack (for her career) and later Connie (for her self-respect), you know without being told that the men are the real losers. In **Heart Like a Wheel** failure is not knowing how to say you're sorry.

Finally, **Heart Like a Wheel** is a funny movie. The humor is not of the belly-laugh variety. It's the warm kind that comes from a familiar gesture, conversation, or look that makes you want to say, yeah, that's the way it really happens. That's the way it's happened with me.

Both men and women will find themselves smiling at many such moments in **Heart Like a Wheel**. □



Heart like a wheel

RSL Holds 10th Anniversary Convention

Over the weekend of September 30-October 2, 1983, the Revolutionary Socialist League held its 10th Anniversary Convention at the Hudson Guild Farm in Andover, New Jersey. The convention was attended by members, sympathizers and friends of the RSL from the East Coast, Midwest and West Coast.

Much of the convention's attention focused on developments in Central America and the Caribbean. Friday evening's opening session heard a presentation from a representative of the RSL's sister organization, the Revolutionary Marxist League (RML) of Jamaica, West Indies, on the political situation in Jamaica. Following the presentation, the delegation from the RML led a discussion on the deepening economic and political crisis in the Caribbean and the role of U.S. imperialism in the region.

The convention also discussed and adopted a resolution on the nature of the current national liberation struggles in Central America and the tasks of the solidarity movement in the U.S. (The resolution has been published as a special eight-page supplement to this month's **Torch** and will appear in next month's **La Antorcha**.)

In addition to these sessions, the convention discussed and adopted a set of these outlining the main political views contained in a forthcoming book by the RSL on the Russian Revolution, Trotskyism and state capitalism. Convention delegates also adopted a resolution outlining the RSL's tasks and perspectives for the coming year. The resolution discussed the overall U.S. economic and political scene, and outlined three fundamental tasks: Tighten up the organization and improve discipline, increase the

RSL's activity in the Central America solidarity movement; and deepen our implantation in the U.S. working class.

The convention also adopted an amendment to the RSL's Program in Brief that underlines our opposition to U.S. imperialism and our support for struggles for national liberation and self-determination both within and outside U.S. territory.

The convention concluded with an educational talk on the nature of anarchism as a political trend. The talk stressed that the anarchist movement—like the Marxist—has historically contained within it both a libertarian and authoritarian strand and urged the RSL to study anarchist practice and writings in order to use the libertarian/anti-statist aspects of anarchism to help combat the authoritarian/statist tendencies in Marxism and today's world Marxist movement. □

Haitian Marchers Demand End to AIDS-Related Discrimination

By TERRY WALSH
and WILLIAM FALK

A three mile march through Brooklyn to protest AIDS-related discrimination against Haitians attracted over 800 people this September 24. It was the largest Haitian demonstration in New York since January 2, 1981. The protest, which concluded with a rally outside Downstate Medical Center/Kings County Hospital, was called by a coalition (KAPAIDS—Haitian Committee Against AIDS Propaganda) whose driving forces were people connected to the radio show L'Heure Haitien and members of the Association des Travailleurs Haitiens.

The protest came three days after Firmin Joseph, a writer and editor who worked with several anti-Duvalier newspapers in New York, was assassinated outside his home. Joseph was an endorser of the September 24 march and was scheduled to speak at it. Firmin Joseph's death fueled the demonstrators' anger and increased the desire to close ranks in a show of solidarity.

The march was quite militant and spirited. It doubled in size along its route, drawing support not only from Haitians, but from English-speaking Caribbeans and U.S. Black people from the community as well. A favorite chant was "La seule solution — révolution" (the only solution — revolution). When marchers arrived at the rally site by the hospitals, they pushed aside the cops



The Duvalier government cares nothing about the Haitian people. It denies that Haitians are a high-risk AIDS group only to protect Haiti's tourist industry.



and successfully refused to go into a tiny barricaded area, taking the street instead.

Hysteria over AIDS has been keenly felt in the Haitian community in New York City. People have been fired from food service and health care jobs because they are Haitian. Some people get up and leave their seat on the subway if a Haitian sits next to them. Haitian children have been separated out from

others at school for special blood tests.

Because no one knows the exact cause of AIDS (a disease that breaks down the body's natural immune system), it has become a useful excuse to attack the two groups in the U.S. who seem to contract it at higher rates than others: gay men and recent Haitian immigrants. Haitians—Blacks in a society based on racism, immigrants at a time when "foreigners" are being blamed for unemployment, and exiles from a regime the U.S. government supports—are quite vulnerable to these attacks. Years of racist and chauvinist distortions about Haitian voodoo add to the atmosphere in which AIDS can be identified as the "just reward" meted out to two "evil and bizarre" groups who go out and "do strange things in the night."

In the view of the RSL, an effective fight against the AIDS hysteria and propaganda requires three central thrusts. First, we must point to the underlying reasons—the racism and sexism of capitalist society—that are responsible for discrimination against Haitians and gays (discrimination that existed long before AIDS appeared). Related to this, we must build solidarity between Haitian and gay working people and all other working people by fighting together against our common enemies.

Second, all victims of the AIDS hysteria must unite and fight the prejudice that surrounds AIDS. We must explain that AIDS is a disease; it is not the fault of the victims. AIDS may be caused by a virus, by a fungus or by something else—but it is not caused by a moral defect in the high-risk groups. Moreover, available medical evidence has shown that AIDS is not spread by casual contact or by a gay or Haitian person (even one with AIDS) handling food.

Finally, we must pressure the government and the medical establishment to take the threat of AIDS more seriously. We must demand that the CIA and Army—which are rumored to have possibly created an AIDS-causing virus as a by-product of attempts to spread disease among pigs in Cuba—open up their research labs and records for inspection. And we must demand that funding for AIDS research be immediately doubled or tripled, with regular reports on the latest results in Creole, French and English.

Unfortunately, the September 24 march in Brooklyn ignored these points

and raised none of these demands. Instead, the organizers of the demonstration mostly argued against anti-Haitian discrimination by saying that Haitians don't belong to a high-risk group—that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is being racist simply by putting Haitian immigrants on the list of those more likely to get AIDS. The central demand of the demonstration was that the CDC take Haitians off the list. This argument implicitly accepts the premise that those in the high-risk groups—gay men, most prominently—deserve the AIDS-related discrimination they are suffering and suggests that the only problem is that Haitians are being mistakenly included among those who should be condemned. It also sets up the Haitian community for a fall as the evidence mounts, as it is now doing, that an AIDS epidemic does indeed exist in Haiti.

The second main demand of the September 24 protest was that medical research on AIDS at Kings County Hospital and elsewhere should stop. "No more blood tests," was one of the demands of the protest and one of its chants. This was changed into "No more doctors" by marchers. Another popular chant was "Hey, hey, ho, ho—CDC has got to go."

Unfortunately, "no more blood tests, no more doctors" is a demand that the ruling class is all too ready to grant for most of the people of the world—and has already "granted" to a large extent to the people of Haiti. While we must demand safeguards so that the people involved can monitor what doctors and health care workers do to us, we must call for more and better health care—not less.

It is revealing that the most prominent supporter of the demand that Haitians be removed from the CDC's high-risk group list is the Duvalier government itself — which is concerned about Haiti's image to tourists, not about fighting diseases which afflict Haitian people.

During the demonstration on September 24, a small incident highlighted the problems with the approach of the march organizers: A Black nurse left Kings County Hospital while demonstrators were chanting "No more blood tests." She then refused to buy a protest button from a Haitian schoolgirl who was selling them as part of the demonstration. "Honey," she explained, "some Black people are sick and dying and we've got to find out why." □

Firmin Joseph 1931 — 1983

By WILLIAM FALK

On September 21, Firmin Joseph, 52, a prominent activist in the Haitian exile community in New York, was shot and killed in front of his Brooklyn home. A witness to the shooting told Joseph's family that two men came up behind him and, speaking Creole, shouted through the rain, "Is this Firmin?" When Firmin Joseph turned around, he was shot in the stomach and chest.

Most members of the exile Haitian political community believe that the killing was a political assassination. There is little other explanation: Firmin was not robbed, he was not known to gamble, etc. In addition, two weeks before his murder, Joseph received a death threat regarding a series of articles in the *Tribune D'Haiti*, the newspaper he published. He was told to stop running the series ("157 Days in Haitian Jails," based on Joseph's experience before he was forced to leave Haiti in 1956) because it was embarrassing Ernest Bennet, who is both the father-in-law of President-for-Life Jean-Claude Duvalier and a leader of one of the rival groupings inside the Haitian ruling class. Haiti has recently seen a renewal of intense infighting in ruling circles, mainly over who will succeed a reportedly ill Jean-Claude, a factor that may have contributed to sensitivity about the *Tribune D'Haiti* articles.

Prior to founding *Tribune D'Haiti* in July, Joseph was editor-in-



chief of the newspaper *Nouvelle Haiti Tribune* and was on the editorial board of the newspaper *Haiti Progrès*. He also had a radio show.

Joseph was the chairman of the January 2nd Coalition in Defense of Haitian Refugees, of which the RSL is a member. Joseph was not a revolutionary socialist—politically he was closest to a group called the Parti National Haitien. But his "trademark," so to speak, was his willingness to unite with socialists and revolutionaries to build the opposition movement. For this, he became the target of a slander campaign last February that accused him of being a "Duvalierist agent" inside the movement. He defended himself against this campaign and went on with the fight against the Haitian regime, for which he has now paid with his life. □

GRENADA

(Continued from page 3)

of his authority — “was to be an internal matter, a party question, and not to be publicized.”

Of the 13 committee members attending the meeting, nine supported these proposals, one opposed them, and three — Bishop, Foreign Minister Unison Whiteman, and army commander General Hudson Austin — abstained. At a later meeting between the Central Committee and party members on September 27, Bishop reportedly accepted the proposals.

The inner-party conflict reached a more serious stage in mid-October, when rumors and counter-rumors about assassination plots against Bishop, arrests of Bishop and/or Coard, and military alerts emerged from Grenada. Bishop (again according to official sources) changed his mind and refused to accept the Central Committee's leadership proposals when he returned from a trip abroad on October 8. Donald McPhail, first secretary of the Grenadian embassy in Cuba, told reporters that on October 12 Bishop began spreading rumors that Coard and his wife Phyllis — who was a member of the Central Committee — were plotting to assassinate him. Bishop allegedly also attempted to call on “upper- and middle-class businessmen and hotel owners” for support. Later in the day, Bishop went on the radio and said there was no truth to the rumor of a plot against him.

At a party meeting on the 13th, Bishop reportedly denied he had started the plot rumor, and later refused to discuss it. After the meeting, he was placed under house arrest. Four days later, Austin accused Bishop of “disgracing the revolution” by refusing to share party leadership. He also disclosed that differences within the NJM leadership had existed for a year but were concealed from the people because “it was vital to maintain an appearance of unity.”

On October 19 a crowd of people led by Whiteman and other Cabinet ministers broke through the barriers around Bishop's residence and freed him from arrest. The crowd then moved to army headquarters at Fort Rupert. Government sources claim that Bishop and his supporters armed the crowd, which by then numbered several thousand, and “declared their intention to arrest and wipe out the entire Central Committee and senior members of the party and the entire leadership of the armed forces.”

Troops loyal to the government that arrived on the scene to “re-establish control” were allegedly fired on by Bishop's supporters. In the subsequent fighting Bishop, Whiteman, Education Minister Jacqueline Creft, Minister of Housing Norris Bain and over 30 others were killed.

Following Bishop's death a 16-member Revolutionary Military Council, led by Austin, was set up to run the country. It imposed a 24-hour curfew and warned that anyone found on the streets would be shot on sight. This curfew was apparently still in effect when U.S. forces invaded Grenada.

Bishop supporters challenge gov't claims

Sources loyal to Bishop, however, deny major portions of the government's account of the crisis in Grenada. For instance, Don Rojas — Bishop's press secretary and closest aide — told reporters on October 30 that there were no major political issues involved in the crisis. He insisted that there were “only differences in tactics, not ideology” between Bishop and Coard. And he accused Coard, whom he called “the best ideologue in the Grenada revolution,” of wrecking the revolution through personal ambition.

Before his death, Whiteman also accused Coard of a personal coup. On October 18, Whiteman stated that he and three other Cabinet ministers had resigned after learning that Coard was running the country “single-handedly” and that the Central Committee allegedly had not met for days.

And Bishop's supporters insist that the military council lied about the circumstances of Bishop's death. They claim that when government troops arrived at Fort Rupert, Bishop and other government leaders were separated from the crowd, lined up against a wall and executed.

While many questions about the events in Grenada remain, some things are becoming

clear. We can safely assume that Bishop's powers were restricted by the Central Committee — even the Cuban government, which was hostile to the military council, admits in its official statement on Grenada that Bishop had lost the committee's confidence.

We also have some inkling of the issues that divided the NJM leadership. All sources agree that Coard favored closer ties to the Soviet Union and transformation of Grenada's mixed economy into a nationalized, state-controlled economy similar to those in other Eastern bloc governments. According to NJM Central Committee minutes captured by U.S. forces, Coard and his supporters called for “training cadres in the Soviet Union to create an ideological school” despite objections from Cuban advisers. It seems likely that Coard and his allies sought power in order to move Grenada into a fighter and more open relationship with the Eastern bloc than either Bishop and his supporters or the Cuban government believed was necessary or desirable.

It is quite clear that while Bishop had lost the support of the Central Committee, he retained some degree of confidence from the Grenadian people. The only popular demonstrations to take place — and there were several — were organized in support of Bishop and against the ruling faction of the NJM. An increasing number of eyewitnesses also confirm that Bishop and other government leaders were not killed in a shootout, but were murdered by government troops.

Other aspects of the military coup remain a mystery. Some Grenadian diplomats have claimed that Coard and his supporters were the real power behind the military council, while others have claimed that Austin took advantage of the political crisis in the NJM to seize power for himself. At this point, the exact relationship between Coard and Austin, or more broadly, the NJM Central Committee and the military council, is still unknown.

Nature of the New Jewel Movement

But the fundamental question all those who support the Grenadian people must

grapple with is how the New Jewel Movement — a party that claims to be socialist, to be building “people's democracy” — could plunge into a murderous faction fight that ended with the imposition of a military government isolated from the workers and farmers the revolution was supposed to benefit.

The answer to this question lies in the nature of the NJM itself. The New Jewel (Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education and Liberation) Movement formed in 1973 out of a merger of three radical groups that emerged in Grenada from the Black Power Movement that swept the Caribbean in the late 1960s. After Grenada gained independence in 1974, the NJM played a leading role in popular struggles against Prime Minister Eric Gairy's corrupt, brutal regime. In particular, Bishop, whose father was killed by Gairy's thugs and who was himself badly beaten, won an enormous popular following.

On March 13, 1979, the NJM carried out a nearly bloodless coup against the Gairy regime. Their assumption of power was welcomed not only by the workers and farmers, but even by Grenada's small business class and neighboring capitalist governments.

Following the coup, the new government, led by Bishop, carried out a series of radical reforms, including job programs, road repair and literacy campaigns. As many of these reforms were financed by taxes on local businesses and wealthy capitalists, these privileged sections of the population soon turned against the government. Moreover, the government's radical reforms — combined with its friendly relations with Cuba and Nicaragua, and its opposition to U.S. imperialism and its puppets in the region — earned the NJM the hostility of pro-U.S. governments in the Caribbean.

But, while the NJM took many radical and progressive measures, there was no socialist revolution in Grenada. The Grenadian people did not rise up and overthrow the Gairy regime — it was turned out of power in a coup involving a handful of NJM militants. The workers and peasants did not control the revolutionary government — instead the NJM, which was not and did not seek to be a mass workers' and farmers' party, made all the decisions.

In fact, NJM leaders made it clear that they did not believe the Grenadian people were capable of ruling themselves. In an October 1979 interview, Selwyn Strachan, a founder and leader of the NJM, declared that while the new regime was a “workers' government,” the workers themselves “are not fighting for political rights. They are not

fighting for laws to protect their interests. They are not at that stage yet.”

When specifically asked whether he wanted to see the workers raising their own demands and beginning to organize themselves, he responded: “I don't see spontaneous reaction. We feel that everything has to be properly guided. It should be done in an organized way, rather than allowing things to be spontaneous.” He later added, “To build socialism, you must organize the working class properly. The working class cannot be loose, out there, directionless, not knowing what they're doing.” And while Strachan claimed that the Grenadian workers “can eventually have the dictatorship of the proletariat,” he emphatically stated: “But now it is impossible.”

In other words, while the NJM leaders were militant anti-imperialists, they were not socialist revolutionaries. Instead they resembled dedicated, radical social workers with guns, who wanted to do good things for people — and in fact did carry through some progressive measures — but who were convinced their “clients” — the Grenadian people — needed guidance and discipline because they were unable to work out their future on their own.

These conceptions led the entire NJM leadership to conceal their political differences from the people “because it was vital to maintain the appearance of unity.” It led them to define the demotion of Bishop, by far the most popular government leader, as “an internal matter, to be hidden from the public.” And it explains why the NJM never tried to build a mass party or even inform the Grenadian people who was really guiding the country. As Rojas put it, “One mistake we made was not to educate people sufficiently about the structure of the party. There were some security reasons, but we should have expanded the party. Most people did not even know who was on the Central Committee or what it was.”

And, as is all too clear today, the government's policy led the NJM — and the Grenadian people — into disaster. The party's “appearance of unity” exploded into a murderous factional battle. And the NJM's “popular democracy” ended in a military dictatorship that ordered anyone who went into the streets to be shot on sight.

The elitist, undemocratic, oppressive — in other words, capitalist — social relations established between the NJM and the Grenadian people produced a crisis that gave the U.S. imperialists an opportunity to invade Grenada, while sapping the Grenadian people's ability and will to resist. □

EDITORIAL

(Continued from page 3)

be more such “gunboat diplomacy,” along with proxy wars, which may at some point spark a new third world war. If there is any chance of preventing this, we must focus our attention on our “own” ruling class, building a militant mass movement against U.S. imperialism and its reactionary actions at home and abroad.

But in building such a movement, we cannot be blind to world realities. The Russian ruling class has its own empire in which millions of oppressed people are held in bondage against their will and denied their elementary democratic rights. The so-called Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is itself an empire — not much different from the Russian Empire under the Tsars. In this empire, the Great Russians rule over scores of other nations: Ukrainians; Byelorussians (White Russians); Latvians; Estonians; Lithuanians; Georgians; Armenians; Azerbaijanis; Kazakhs; Kirghizes; Turkmen; Uzbeks; Tajiks; Bashkirs; Tatars; Jews; etc., etc. Beyond the borders of this internal empire are the nations of Eastern Europe — Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and part of Germany — nominally independent, but in reality client states of the Russian ruling class.

While it is organized differently, the Russian empire is second only to that of the U.S. And the Russian ruling class, under the “Brezhnev doctrine,” claims the same right to intervene in its “sphere of influence” as does the U.S. under the “Monroe Doctrine,” etc. When the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan in 1979, they did so under this pretext.

Imperialism is a worldwide system. If we are to defeat it, we must build a worldwide alliance of all peoples struggling for national

self-determination and other national rights.

We cannot defend the national rights of the Grenadians, Nicaraguans, Salvadoreans and the Black and Brown people of South Africa, for example, without supporting the same rights for Poles and Afghans. One of the tragedies of today's world is that people fight heroically to be free of one imperialist power — only to find themselves dependent on the other. Cuba, for example, faced with political quarantine, economic boycott and military invasion from the U.S., wound up becoming economically, militarily and, to a degree, politically dependent on the Russians.

While we cannot know exactly what was happening in Grenada prior to the U.S. invasion, there are indications that the Russians may have been behind the efforts to limit the power, and eventually overthrow and kill, Maurice Bishop. If we are to fight against these tragedies and help oppressed nations win true national independence, we must fight against both imperialist blocs. We cannot pretend that simply because the U.S. is Enemy Number One, that the Russian ruling class—Enemy Number Two—is the champion of the world's people.

Finally, the left must come to grips with the real nature of the New Jewel Movement and similar anti-imperialist regimes in Nicaragua, Zimbabwe and elsewhere. Much of the U.S. left hailed the NJM not only as a bulwark of anti-imperialism, but as a regime that was either headed toward socialism or had already achieved it.

Consequently, the movement was shocked, disoriented and demoralized by the power struggle within the NJM, the killing of Bishop, and the imposition of military rule. Many cannot understand how such events occurred—and have no answers for people who legitimately ask why they should fight

for a “socialism” that produces political assassinations and military coups.

The left needs to clarify its conception of what socialism really is. For us, a socialist revolution is a mass uprising in which the workers, farmers and other oppressed people gain their liberation by smashing the capitalists and their state and seizing power for themselves. By the same token, socialism is a society directly controlled by the working people themselves, primarily workers and small farmers, through workers' councils, unions, cooperatives, militias and other democratic organizations.

Regimes established by middle class nationalists, who seize power “in the name of the people,” while actually keeping it for themselves, are not socialist. As the accompanying article explains, although the New Jewel Movement's leadership claimed to be ruling a workers' government, it did not really believe that the Grenadian workers and farmers were capable of managing their own affairs. The regime they created was not socialist, but a radical form of capitalist rule increasingly based on one-party control of a centralized political and economic apparatus. The struggle within the NJM for control of this apparatus took place—until the final crisis—without the participation or even the knowledge of the Grenadian people. It resulted in a military coup that led many in Grenada to welcome the U.S. imperialist invaders as liberators.

We must not mistake the anti-imperialist actions of these opposition regimes, their reforms and their Marxist rhetoric for the actual rule of the workers and farmers. Instead we must recognize that such regimes can oppose the U.S. ruling class while at the same time oppressing the people under their own rule. While these regimes must be defended against U.S. imperialism, they should not be dressed up in socialist colors — to do so will only further discredit the very idea of socialism in the eyes of working and oppressed people throughout the world — the people whose liberation socialists claim to be fighting for. □

THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE U.S. SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT



**SPECIAL
SUPPLEMENT TO
THE TORCH/
LA ANTORCHA**

NOVEMBER 1983

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In this special 8-page supplement to the *Torch/La Antorcha*, newspaper of the Revolutionary Socialist League, we are publishing the text of a resolution on the Central American Revolution and the U.S. Solidarity Movement. The resolution was discussed and adopted by the RSL at its 10th Anniversary Convention, held September 30-October 2, 1983.

The October 25, 1983 invasion of Grenada by the U.S. and its Caribbean allies, adds new urgency to the effort to build a movement in solidarity with the peoples of Central America and their struggles to free themselves from the yoke of U.S. imperialist domination. We are printing the resolution in the interests of building and politically strengthening that movement.

The starting point of the resolution is the need to fight U.S. imperialism and to support the struggles of the people of Central America for national liberation. The resolution also devotes special attention to questions that are controversial—or often not discussed at all—within the U.S. solidarity movement, such as the nature, strategy and tactics of the leaderships of the present struggles in Central America.

We invite comments and criticisms from activists in the solidarity movement both here in the U.S. and abroad.

—Revolutionary Socialist League



WHY DO WE SUPPORT STRUGGLES FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA?

Our country has the strongest empire on earth. It does not rule through outright ownership of other lands (with notable exceptions such as Puerto Rico), as did previous empires. Its main strength is its economic power. By dominating the world market, it attracts other countries as a large magnet pulls weaker ones. But economic power is backed by a monstrous military establishment.

The U.S. capitalists dominate the world. Latin America has long been recognized as the "backyard" of U.S. imperialism. The imperialist powers of Western Europe and Japan are junior partners of the U.S., allied politically, economically, and militarily. In Africa and Asia even the most nationalist governments have to look toward the U.S., because of their dependence on the world market. China, once in Russia's orbit, has been attracted away to travel closer to the U.S. The Eastern European states and the Soviet Union itself are deeply in debt to U.S. and Western European banks and governments. While we oppose Russian imperialist domination of its internal colonies (Ukraine, etc.), Eastern Europe, and Afghanistan, we recognize that the U.S. is the most powerful imperialist state.

The wealth which U.S. capitalism has gained from this empire is a major factor in creating a social peace inside U.S. society. Imperialism has created a relatively conservative U.S. labor movement, which—unlike Western European unions—does not pretend to be socialist.

The nationalist revolutions in the "Third World" have been a major force in weakening U.S. and allied imperialism. These revolutions were not only "local" struggles. Their effects were worldwide. The victory of any one country made it easier for other oppressed nations to oppose imperialism. Because the Vietnamese beat the U.S., the U.S. was unwilling to invade Angola when it won independence from Portugal, which made it easier for Zimbabwe to beat its imperialist-backed settler-state. In turn, these victories have inspired the freedom struggle in South Africa. Both Democrats and Republicans have openly said that the effects of the Vietnam War on U.S. working people—the "Vietnam syndrome"—has hampered them in Central America and the Middle East.

The national liberation struggles shook the social peace inside the U.S. The Black movement of the '50s and '60s was greatly influenced by the anti-colonial revolts of Africa and Asia. Even the moderate wing of the movement, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was inspired by Gandhi's methods in the Indian struggle. The movement against the Vietnam War deeply shook U.S. politics and culture.

For these reasons we welcome the revolutionary movements in Central America. We are glad to see the workers and farmers of an oppressed nation fight against their local tyrants and the imperialists above them. The success of these struggles will not only make it possible to improve conditions in Central America, but will make it easier for oppressed people everywhere to revolt against their rulers. These national revolts further disturb the stifling social peace inside the U.S. They make it easier to see the evils of U.S. imperialism and to build a movement against it. They make it easier to work toward a U.S. revolution.

WHAT KIND OF MOVEMENT ARE WE FOR IN THE U.S.?

There is a debate within the movement between those who wish to limit the movement to "anti-interventionism" (saying only "U.S. Hands Off Central America!") and those who want a solidarity movement, one which openly supports Central American national struggles. There are also some forces inside the movement who feel that its defining character should go beyond either of these two options—that the movement should be a consciously and openly anti-imperialist one. This is our view as well. An anti-imperialist



movement would certainly be against U.S. intervention in Central America and would offer solidarity to the struggles taking place there. But it could also do more. Let's look at what these competing wings of the movement have to offer.

"Anti-interventionism" is a liberal program; the U.S. imperialists can live with it. It does not challenge the system to say it was a mistake to intervene in Central America. This implies that it might be all right for the U.S. to intervene elsewhere, such as in the Middle East. Since the U.S. had to leave Vietnam, it would have been wiser (from an imperialist point of view) for the U.S. to cut its losses and leave much earlier—as was in fact advised by the anti-interventionist ("Out Now!") wing of the earlier movement.

What is harder for the U.S. imperialists to accept is open support for the other side, which the "solidarity" program offers. It is dangerously "unpatriotic" to say that the people of Central America deserve to win against the U.S. But it is our moral duty to support the democratic right of oppressed nations everywhere to self-determination. They have the right to the government and leadership of their own choosing. If they make mistakes, they will learn by making their own mistakes. In this sense, the program of solidarity means a more radical movement than one limited simply to anti-intervention.

A program of anti-imperialism would take the movement still further. One of the most tragic lessons of national liberation struggles is the sharply limited nature of their gains without an extension of the conflict into the imperialist country itself. Imperialism is a social, political and economic system linking the lives of workers and oppressed people in the imperialist country to their counterparts in the oppressed nation. This link can only be permanently broken by revolutionary struggle on both ends of the chain. It is not enough for the solidarity movement to give a nod to the Reagan cutbacks and the growing military budget. These are only symptoms of the problem. The movement should be saying—loud and clear—that there will be a continual series of "Vietnams" and "El Salvadors" until this imperialist system at home is overthrown.

Without this kind of anti-imperialist consciousness and practice, the movement will never be able to offer the best kind of solidarity possible: a militant and hard-hitting

movement here at home which can seriously threaten the U.S. rulers and prevent further military interventions abroad.

An anti-imperialist program is much better able to expose the false analyses of the "solidarity" and "anti-intervention" forces which say that the problem in Central America is caused by "Reagan," "the right wing," or "the party in power." Since imperialist policies have been equally carried out by Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals, an anti-imperialist movement can better argue for independence from all capitalist parties.

Finally, an anti-imperialist program provides much greater opportunities to build alliances with a broad variety of national liberation forces, not simply those in Central America. Once our common enemy is understood to be the system of imperialism (decadent capitalism), then joint solidarity actions among movements will be much more easily achieved. As it is, a "solidarity" movement for Central America moves reluctantly—if at all—to defend related struggles in Palestine, South Africa, the Philippines, Ireland—and refuses to defend anti-imperialist struggles in Poland, Eritrea or Afghanistan. Changing the character and definition of the movement (which cannot be done without massive education and internal struggle over these questions) would be the best way to safeguard the initial gains of the Central American revolutions.

DOES SUPPORT TO THESE STRUGGLES MEAN THAT WE CANNOT OPPOSE THE LEADERSHIPS?

Since we support the struggle of the Salvadoreans against the U.S., we must support the specific organizations and leaderships behind which they are organized: the FMLN/FDR. That is, we support them against the U.S. imperialists and their local puppets. But if we support the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, for example, against the contras and other agents of U.S. imperialism, must we then support the Sandinista regime when it outlaws strikes, subordinates independent unions to the Sandinista union, jails communist opponents for political reasons, outlaws abortions, and expresses its support

for the Polish state's destruction of the Solidarność union?

To much of the U.S. movement, the answer is "Yes." To them "solidarity" means giving uncritical support to the nationalist leaderships, becoming in fact their U.S. cheerleaders. This position is extremely sectarian. It implies that if you do not have complete agreement with the program of a leadership, then you should not support them against imperialism.

Actually, it is perfectly possible for a completely reactionary political grouping to lead a struggle against imperialism which deserves support.

For example, in Iran, Khomeini and his movement had an extremely backward, not to say medieval, program. Yet, for historical reasons, his grouping led the revolt against the shah and continued to resist U.S. imperialism.

We are completely opposed to the ideology of Khomeini and to the horrible government he has created. We want the Iranian working people to overthrow him and establish the socialist rule of the workers and peasants. Yet we support him and his movement against the shah and against the U.S., for example, during the occupation of the U.S. embassy. We are in "solidarity."

We do not support the Islamic state against the Iranian workers, against women and gay people and religious and national minorities. But we do support it "unconditionally" against the U.S. That is, we support it without demanding that it become a socialist democracy, making only two "conditions": That—whether we like it or not—many of the Iranian people still support it; and that it does, in however limited a way, really fight U.S. imperialism.

Another example was the war between Argentina and Britain over the Malvinas ("Falkland") Islands. The Argentine military junta is very reactionary, almost Nazi in its ideology. It was a major supporter of the U.S. in Latin America, specifically doing dirty work for the U.S. in Central America. Then it attacked British imperialism, opposing British ownership of part of Argentina's territory.

We were not neutral. Like most of the left in Argentina and Latin America, we supported the oppressed nation of Argentina against British imperialism (backed by U.S. imperialism). The result of the war weakened the prestige of the junta, showing its inability to really challenge imperialism. To take ad-

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Workers' councils, factory committees, and trade unions do not exist as policy-making bodies. The mass organizations which do exist (Sandinista Defense Committees, women's organizations, etc.) have been created by the FSLN as a means to organize and influence the masses. That is, they serve as instruments of the state to control the masses, not as instruments of the masses to control the state. The fact that many of their programs—literacy and health campaigns, militia training, etc.—have helped improve the overall standard of living does not change the class character of these reforms. All fundamental decisions about social and economic policy are made at the top levels of government. Foreign affairs, investment decisions, wages, allocations of goods—all these questions are decided by the FSLN alone.

WHY DO WE SAY THE FSLN IS AN ANTI-WORKING CLASS FORCE?

The FSLN has a clear strategy of denying the working class (and peasantry) any independent organization or action. The idea of working class power and democracy is, in reality, not even a distant goal of the FSLN. Rather, they seek to preserve and strengthen the hegemony of the middle class organized through the FSLN/state apparatus.

This process is clear as early as the Revolution itself. The Nicaraguan Revolution was a mass uprising, supported by all classes, except a tiny clique around Somoza and the National Guard. The FSLN armed columns, a couple of thousand fighters, tied down a significant part of the National Guard. But the main fighting force in the revolution was the urban working and poor people. They formed neighborhood committees which organized insurrection after insurrection. They seized National Guard outposts and eventually destroyed the National Guard.

These committees looked to the FSLN as the only recognized, national revolutionary force. However, the FSLN did not build and lead these committees. They did not have a solid leadership layer in them. In fact, the FSLN tended to take revolutionary militants from the cities and send them to the countryside to join the guerrillas. Many times the cities rose without FSLN authorization. One Indian neighborhood in Masaya, Monimbo, held off 600 National Guardsmen, armed with tanks and aircraft, for two weeks. This was not an FSLN-directed uprising. The September 1978 offensive was called because a series of cities were rising before the FSLN thought the time was right. During the final offensive, Managua rose two weeks before the date the FSLN had set. The point here is that the revolutionary movement of the working and poor people was not organized or clearly led by the FSLN, even though people looked to and trusted the FSLN.

Following the Revolution, the workers and peasants continued the struggle. The FSLN, now in power, acted as an active roadblock and obstacle to the workers' struggle. The FSLN enacted a series of reforms on behalf of the workers and peasants. But it would not sanction any independent activity. Rather, the FSLN sought to concentrate all effective power in its hands. One reason for this was to reassure the bourgeoisie about its property rights and profits.

A strong supporter of the FSLN, Henri Weber, documents this. "The harshest aspect of the government's early social policy was its attempt to halt the occupation of farms and factories by the most radicalized sections of the population. Similarly, the Junta opposed wage increases even though inflation and unemployment had eroded the workers' purchasing power during the last few years of the dictatorship." The FSLN actively repressed the forces which organized and aided the workers' struggle.

The FSLN banned Frente Obrero (FO—Workers' Front) on July 23, 1979—four days after coming to power. FO was a pro-Albanian group that had split from the FSLN in the early 70s. FO had a small but real base in the working class. Its militia, the MILPAS, sent several hundred fighters into the insurrectionary battles. This militia was disbanded in

vantage of this required both continuing to oppose the regime in its oppression of its people and supporting it in its war against imperialism.

During the period of the Vietnam War, many U.S. radicals had considerable illusions in the "Communist Party" leaderships of Vietnam, China, Kampuchea, and Cuba. Many believed that at least some of these leaderships stood for something different from Russian state capitalism. These leaders, many people hoped, were more revolutionary, more internationalist, and less bureaucratic than the Russians.

These hopes have been disappointed. With the death of Mao Zedong, China abandoned its "anti-imperialist" and anti-bureaucratic rhetoric, leaning closer to the U.S., and becoming clearly a conservative state capitalism similar to Russia. Throwing its weight around, China repeatedly invaded Vietnam. Pol Pot's regime in Kampuchea (Cambodia) waged a war of extermination against its own people. Vietnam has established an ugly dictatorship, which has subordinated the south to the north. Ethnic discrimination against Vietnamese of Chinese origin has driven many of them into becoming "boat people." Vietnam has invaded Kampuchea (after previously supporting Pol Pot) and has a large army stationed in Laos.

In all these countries, including Cuba, a small minority—the top leaders of the party—have uncontrolled power over the nation. Opposition socialist parties cannot be formed; opposition caucuses cannot be formed inside the official party; independent unions cannot be formed; strikes and peaceful protests are illegal. The workers and peasants are powerless.

Vietnam and Cuba have become complete supporters of Russian imperialism, backing Russian suppression of national self-determination in Poland and Afghanistan.

Some have concluded from this that it was a mistake to support Vietnam, for example, against U.S. aggression. All the hopes were betrayed, it is argued, and nothing was gained. We disagree. Given the nature of these leaderships, they were not going to establish socialist democracy; rather they should have been opposed in the name of socialist democracy. But they could defeat U.S. armies, weaken imperialist control over their countries, and weaken imperialism internationally. This they succeeded in doing. As with Argentina against imperialism,

it was absolutely correct to support the North Vietnamese state and the National Liberation Front against the U.S. (and Cuba against the U.S., and so on).

It would be a shame if the current movement against U.S. aggression in Central America developed similar illusions about the leaderships of the national liberation struggles. Let us not get fooled again. We must support the Sandinistas and the FMLN/FDR against the U.S., but we should also be willing to tell the truth about the nature of these leaderships.

HOW DO WE CHARACTERIZE THE STRUGGLES TAKING PLACE IN CENTRAL AMERICA TODAY?

The popular struggles sweeping Central America today are nationalist, anti-imperialist revolutions. Their goal is a lessening of the control which U.S. imperialism has held over the region for the past century, and a freer, more independent development of national capitalism within each country. The Central American struggles—while popular, armed, and anti-imperialist—are not in any sense socialist revolutions. Revolutionary socialism as a leading ideology, program, or mass conscious goal is not a factor in the current movements there.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIPS?

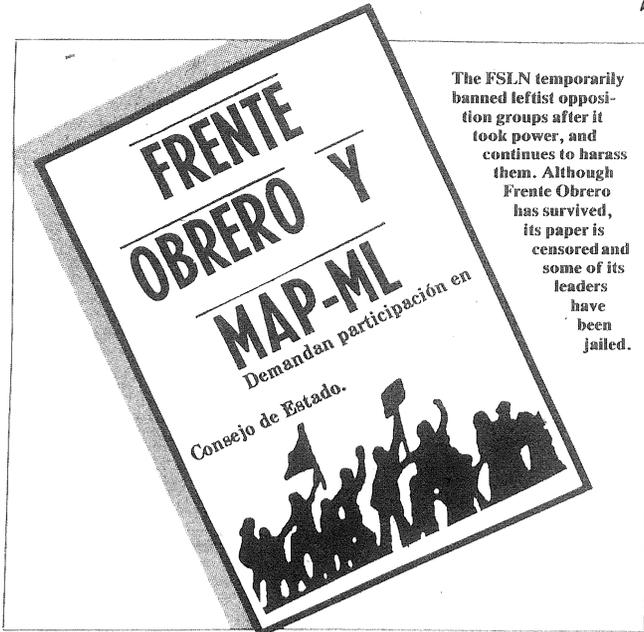
The leadership bodies—the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN)—Sandinista National Liberation Front) in Nicaragua, Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN)—Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) in El Salvador, and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG)—Guatemalan Revolutionary National Unity) in Guatemala—represent a radical middle class nationalist program. They are not socialists in the sense that we use the term, although many consider themselves to be socialists along the lines of "socialist" Cuba or "socialist" Vietnam. They are radical in the sense of advocating sharp,

sweeping social changes—land reform, drastic shifts in the distribution of wealth to raise the standard of living of the poorest sectors, a political break out of the U.S. imperialist orbit. They are middle class in the sense that the ideology, as well as composition, of these leaderships derives largely from a layer of middle class professionals and college educated youth, politically influenced by the Cuban and Vietnamese national revolutions, who are now up against the reality of no jobs and no future in the chronically crisis-ridden societies of Central America under U.S. control. Their programs are nationalist in the sense that they envision the struggle in national, not class, terms. They favor a political bloc of all anti-imperialist classes in which capitalist property rights are guaranteed. A unitary "national interest" is put first in each of their programs, not a "class interest" or an international revolutionary strategy for defeating imperialism on a world scale.

HOW CAN WE CHARACTERIZE NICARAGUA?

Having successfully led a national revolution against the U.S. puppet regime of Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the FSLN is reconstructing Nicaragua along capitalist lines. Nicaragua remains a poor, underdeveloped, oppressed nation, with a dependent economy organized as a mix of private and state property. Most of the small industrial workforce has been unionized into a state-controlled union federation but, under the current state of siege, workers are prohibited from striking or seizing factories. Landless peasants are prohibited from seizing land, although land expropriated by the government has been distributed through government programs to many of these peasants. The worker and peasant voice in the government remains consultative, not decisive. That is, the powers of governing remain firmly in the hands of the FSLN—a small, elite body of revolutionary leaders who are not accountable to anyone but themselves.

It should be noted that the FSLN remains a popular leadership with a truly mass base of support. There are not, however, any democratic mechanisms to translate the will of the working and peasant masses into governmental policies. The FSLN responds to mass pressure, but is not accountable.



The FSLN temporarily banned leftist opposition groups after it took power, and continues to harass them. Although Frente Obrero has survived, its paper is censored and some of its leaders have been jailed.

early August. Later in August, the FSLN repressed the Simón Bolívar Brigade, a group of Nicaraguans and revolutionaries from other countries who were affiliated to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. The Brigade organized a demonstration of 3,000 workers demanding back pay they were owed by private capitalists. The FSLN responded by expelling 60 members of the Brigade. FSLN leader Jaime Wheelock denounced "the Trotskyists and all those who seek to accelerate the evolution of the Nicaraguan regime."

The FSLN tried to force all the existing unions into one FSLN-controlled labor federation, the Confederación Sandinista del Trabajo (CST—Sandinista Labor Confederation). This provoked much resistance, especially since the CST had not existed prior to the Revolution and the FSLN had very little organized base in the unionized working class. The FSLN arrested the head of the building trades union, SCAAS, in October 1979. This union was led by the Stalinist Partido Socialista Nicaragüense (PSN—Nicaraguan Socialist Party), which uncritically supported the FSLN. Four thousand building trades workers demonstrated and struck demanding recognition for their union and wage increases.

Workers in many towns resisted absorption into the CST. In Tipitapa, unions left the CST because of the arrogance of CST officials. The CST officials then declared the Tipitapa Workers Union illegal and the police banned its meetings.

The Partido Comunista Nicaragüense (PCN—Nicaraguan Communist Party), a more militant pro-Moscow group, led the Trade Union and Action Federation, CAUS. CAUS led a bitter strike at the Fabritex factory, demanding a 10% wage increase. CAUS won the strike. However, the CAUS leadership was arrested. Government-organized crowds sacked CAUS's offices during an "anti-CIA" protest. Eventually, Fabritex was closed down, and the FSLN said this should be an example to workers who strike.

Frente Obrero, which had been allowed to reorganize, ran into more repression. Its paper, *El Pueblo*, was banned in January 1980; the organization dissolved and four leaders imprisoned. In Henri Weber's words, "The FSLN was then facing a wave of workers' strikes and illegal land occupations, both encouraged by *El Pueblo*, which jeopardized its national reconstruction policy."

The FSLN lowered its support in the union movement by a proposal to take away a bonus won by workers from Somoza (a month's pay). The FSLN wanted to use this to pay for employing the unemployed in public works programs. This attack on the workers occurred while the bourgeoisie retained its property (except for the Somoza clique) and had its profits in government con-

tracts guaranteed. The workers successfully resisted this measure, although in doing so they no doubt alienated many of the unemployed who saw this as a struggle to defend privilege.

By November 1980, the CST felt it had to back off. It made a public self-criticism and proposed a coordinating body for all the left-wing unions, i.e., excluding the CUS (AFL-CIO-backed) and the CNT (Christian Social). The CST pushed for an agreement among these unions to ban strikes, something the other unions would not accept. The FSLN settled the question with the September 1981 State of Emergency. This made all strikes illegal (60% of the economy was, and is, still in private capitalist hands). To ensure compliance, leaders of the PCN were arrested for "attempting to disrupt the workers and put them into direct conflict with the revolutionary government."

WHAT IS THE FSLN POLICY TOWARD THE MISKITOS AND THE ATLANTIC COAST REGION?

The FSLN's policy is a racist, assimilationist policy. Contrary to the Leninist spirit of self-determination for oppressed people, the FSLN seeks to forcibly assimilate the region and its people into Spanish-speaking Nicaragua, culturally, politically and economically. Some of the FSLN's developmental policies will bring improvements in the standard of living of the coastal peoples (costeños), but the goal is forcible assimilation.

The Atlantic Coast has historically been separate from Nicaragua or enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. It did not become formally a stable part of Nicaragua until the 1890s. Somoza more or less left the region alone and maintained some popular support there. Neither the FSLN nor Sandino's struggle in the 1920s had much backing on the Atlantic Coast. The costeños, about 9% of Nicaragua's population, include 100,000 Indians, 30,000 Blacks, and 40,000 Spanish-speakers, many of them immigrants from the Pacific Coast.

The FSLN's approach to the Atlantic Coast was affected by their fears of continuing Somoza sentiments among the costeños. The FSLN sought to dissolve the organizations on the Atlantic Coast, and force the costeños into the FSLN-controlled mass organizations. The FSLN successfully disbanded the Southern Indigenous Creole Council. The Indian organization refused to disband. It was reorganized as MISURASATA, the head of which was Steadman Fagoth. Fagoth had been an Indian leader under Somoza. In February 1981 the FSLN jailed Fagoth and 30 other Indian leaders,

shortly before a mass meeting to discuss land questions. During the arrests, four Indians and four FSLN soldiers were killed. Mass demonstrations by Miskitos secured Fagoth's release. He then fled to Honduras with 3,000 supporters. The other major Indian leader, Brooklyn Rivera, broke with the FSLN later. Fagoth is now working with the Somocista-contras, while Rivera cooperates with Edén Pastora's contras.

The FSLN did much to deepen the hostility of the Miskito population. The original literacy campaign was in Spanish, despite the fact that Miskitos speak either their native language or English, and that the Black population is English-speaking. The FSLN backed off this later. However, even now, education on the Atlantic Coast is in Spanish after the first four years. The FSLN refused to agree to MISURASATA's demands for regional autonomy. Their attitude was summed up in the title of a government book about the Miskitos—*Nicaragua Is One*. The present governmental apparatus in the Atlantic Coast is virtually entirely Spanish-speakers ruling over the costeños masses. The Miskito hostility to the FSLN led to the notorious forced removal of 8-10,000 Miskitos from the border region in January 1982. To get the Indians to leave their homes, the FSLN soldiers had to burn the houses. No matter how nice the resettlement camps are, the forced removal of Native American people is a national chauvinist act.

The Black population is also very suspicious of the FSLN. Mass demonstrations developed into riots in the town of Bluefields because the Black population did not want the Cuban technicians whom the FSLN brought in to aid them.

WHAT IS THE DIRECTION OF DEVELOPMENT FOR NICARAGUA?

Nicaraguan society is moving toward greater stratification, that is, a greater concentration of social and economic power in the hands of the state, which is in turn controlled by the FSLN. The probable outcome of this process will be a type of state-capitalist society with the FSLN assuming the role of state-capitalist ruling class. It should be noted that this alternative was not the first choice of most of the FSLN leadership. They preferred to stabilize the country around a liberal (but undemocratic) government ruling over a mixed economy in cooperation with elements of the liberal capitalist class, something along the lines of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) regime which emerged from the Mexican national bourgeois revolution of 1910-20. This possibility has been narrowed greatly under the military and economic blows of an aggressively hostile U.S. imperialist policy which aims to weaken and ultimately overthrow the FSLN regime.

WHAT DOES THE FMLN/FDR OF EL SALVADOR STAND FOR?

The program of the Frente Democrático Revolucionario (FDR—Democratic Revolutionary Front), which represents the political/diplomatic expression of the combined rebel forces, calls for a mixed economy (private capitalist and state-owned property), a pluralistic government made up of all parties and individuals who support the revolution, guarantees of individual freedoms, and a non-aligned foreign policy. The details of this program have not been elaborated. It should be noted that this program is very similar to the program on which the FSLN came to power in Nicaragua in 1979.

WHAT ARE THE POLITICS OF THE GROUPS WITHIN THE FMLN?

The FMLN is made up of five organizations. The political poles are defined by the two largest groups, the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación (FPL—Popular Forces of Libera-

tion) and the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP—Revolutionary People's Army).

The FPL originated as a split from the Partido Comunista Salvadoreño (PCS—Salvadorean Communist Party). Cayetano Carpio (known as Comandante Marcial), who was the PCS general secretary, split because of the PCS's reformism, electoralism and its support to the Salvadorean government in the "soccer war" with Honduras. This split was in the late 1960s. The FPL is committed to a strategy of prolonged people's war, the strategy associated with the Chinese and Vietnamese national liberation struggles. The military strategy in prolonged people's war is to slowly wear down the enemy with guerrilla tactics. At the same time, the revolutionaries establish and slowly expand liberated zones of control. The liberated zones demonstrate the revolutionaries' commitment and ability to establish decent health care, education, land reform, and so on.

The FPL saw mass organizing as an essential part of its approach. The FPL plays an important leadership role in a mass revolutionary organization, the Bloque Popular Revolucionario (BPR—Popular Revolutionary Bloc). The BPR includes unions, farmworkers' unions, peasant groups, slum dwellers' associations and other mass organizations such as women's groups.

The FPL/BPR are the most opposed to any deals or alliances with the army or liberal wing of the ruling class. The FPL's strategy rests on the ability of the revolutionary forces to actually defeat the entire army. The FPL rejects notions of winning over a section of the officer corps. The BPR was the most radical among the mass organizations. It split in 1975 from the Frente de Acción Popular Unificada (FAPU—Unified People's Action Front) because of FAPU's willingness to cede leadership to bourgeois and reformist forces. The BPR was the largest of the mass organizations prior to the massive repression in the 1980s, which destroyed the open, mass movement in the cities.

The FPL unfortunately is thoroughly Stalinist. Carpio split from the PCS over tactics, not because he looked to a different vision of society. Carpio, with the other FMLN/FDR leaders, supported a two-stage revolution, in which he promised to respect bourgeois property rights. In at least one FPL-controlled

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village, the morning flag raising ceremony included the chant, "Comandante Marcial—there is only one Comandante Marcial." If the FPL's strategy dominated the FMLN and was successful, the result would be a society like Vietnam. The working class would be a repressed, passive spectator to the revolutionary process. After the revolution, it would be allowed no independent organization or activity.

At this point, the FPL's influence has been severely shaken. The deaths of Cayetano Carpio and Comandante Ana María (FPL second-in-command) and the arrest of the FPL's third-in-command for the murder of Ana María have crippled the top leadership of the FPL. Since these tragic events, there are indications of increased consolidation of the FMLN behind the ERP's leadership.

The ERP, led by Joaquín Villalobos, is the result of a fusion between radicalized Christian-Democratic youth and Maoists in the mid-'70s. The ERP's politics are insurrectionist, much like the Tercerista faction of the FSLN. The ERP wants to use military struggle as a force to inspire a mass insurrection, much like what happened in Nicaragua. It believes that the masses are ready to rise, when often this has not been the case. Its belief in insurrection is tied to its desire to make a firm alliance with radicalized officers and liberal sections of the ruling and middle class. Rather than destroying the army as the FPL envisions, the ERP believes that officers will bring entire divisions over to the side of the insurrection. Another expression of this desire to ally with the left-wing officers is the ERP's support and enthusiasm for negotiations. The FPL has been the sole opposition voice, expressing reluctance and skepticism about negotiations.

The other FMLN tendencies have allied with the ERP against the FPL. These include the PCS (which came to support the armed struggle only in December 1979, after it had served in the "reform" government of the October 1979 coup), the Resistencia Nacional (RN—National Resistance) and the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos (PRTC—Central American Revolutionary Workers' Party).

None of these groups have a conception of the working class and oppressed people running society. They seek to come to power



These Salvadorean leftists were killed when ultra-rightist thugs opened fire on their demonstration. Right-wing terrorists have murdered thousands of leftists, trade unionists and peasants in El Salvador.

by allying with liberal/radical sectors of the old regime to establish a new, more nationalist and developmentalist, but still capitalist, order. The PCS's participation in the government stemming from the October 1979 coup (along with Guillermo Ungo and his social democrats) indicates their desire to establish a reformed capitalist order.

IS THERE A LEFT WING OF THE FMLN?

There is no sector of the FMLN which represents a consistent left wing within the context of the FMLN/FDR program. Political differences among the five factions of the FMLN range over a narrow spectrum which includes several variations of middle class nationalism/state capitalism. There is no organized grouping, to our knowledge, which shares our conception of working class rule or total, permanent, revolution. Consequently, we should not generally support any one faction over another in their many disputes. We should have a critical attitude toward all of the factions and remain flexible in our willingness to form temporary blocs and agreements with any.

WHAT ABOUT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC TREND?

Social democrat Guillermo Ungo's role as an international spokesperson and president of the FDR is useful to win a sympathetic hearing in Western diplomatic circles, especially among the social democratic parties and governments of Europe. But this tendency has almost no base or mass influence inside El Salvador. We should not expect either Ungo or his party, the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR—National Revolutionary Movement), to play much of a role after a rebel victory.

WHAT IS OUR VIEW OF NEGOTIATIONS?

This issue has often been falsely posed as if there were a counterposition between negotiations and military victory. In fact, negotiations can be part of a strategy to win a military victory. Negotiations can be used as a tactic to win international public sympathy, or to gain a breathing space in a difficult military struggle. Of course, an outright military victory for the rebels would mean a greater blow struck against imperialism, and we are for that. But because we are for military victory doesn't mean we are against negotiations. And it doesn't mean we shout "sellout" at every suggestion of negotiation talks. We need to redefine this question. Those who are most opposed to negotiations act as if a tough, military-victory posture on the part of the rebels would mean socialism, or at least some better society than could be won through negotiations. But from our view, the people of El Salvador can expect to be "sold out" to one degree or another no matter how the FMLN comes to power. That is to say, the mass expectations of freedom, equality, and a life free from imperialist pressure cannot be achieved in any lasting way on the basis of the FMLN/FDR program. Any outcome of the revolutionary war which maintains the rule of capital and the political powerlessness of the workers and peasants—whether it is achieved through a sharp military seizure of power or through prolonged negotiations—will not meet the expectations of the revolutionary masses. Furthermore, it is not necessarily in the best interests of the working class and the oppressed to have a hard-line Stalinist faction win a definitive military victory, consolidate its power rapidly and establish state-capitalist rule. While this would indeed be an important blow to U.S. imperialism, it would also mean fewer democratic rights for the working class and less maneuvering room for socialist revolutionaries than might be the case with a less definitive, possibly negotiated, settlement. The point is that negotiations themselves are neither good nor bad. We should be focusing on the terms of the victory (whether military or negotiated), the nature of the new society and the role for workers and peasants in that society.

The pro-negotiation sections of the FMLN leadership want to use negotiations to establish a reformed, more nationalist and honest, capitalist government. They will seek to subordinate the workers, peasants and op-

pressed to this government and its austerity and reconstruction policies. They seek something like a Zimbabwe-type solution, where the new radical ruling elite can rely in part on the old repressive apparatus to maintain order over the popular masses. They argue for a Zimbabwe-type solution as the best way to avoid the devastation of the country and a possible U.S. invasion.

This view was articulated quite clearly by Roberto Roca, leader of the PRTC, when he said, "That if a self-purged army could become a guarantor of the democratic process, a non-violent political struggle could take place." Also, he explained that "We are willing to make concessions in a negotiated solution before the Salvadorean army collapses." These politics could, under bad conditions, lead to a repeat of the 1979 coup. This coup supposedly put the radical military officers, Militar Juventud, in power. Actually, power stayed in the hands of the same reactionaries who had always held it. The new government sought to gain popular support by bringing in the PCS and the social democrats. However, the army and the death squads escalated their terror behind the cover of this new reform government. One day after the coup, the army evicted sit-down strikers, jailing 78 and killing 18. The terror steadily escalated from there. Under the best conditions, a Zimbabwe-type situation would develop. The ERP's support for the general position expressed by Roca is clear from its great praise for Militar Juventud.

Despite the aims of these leaders, a negotiated settlement could be used by revolutionaries and working class militants as a breathing space in which the workers might regain a chance to organize in their own interests. The working class might be able to use a negotiated settlement for its own ends, better preparing it to launch a new stage of the struggle against the leaders who negotiated that settlement. Such a negotiated settlement might easily leave the workers in a better position to continue the struggle for workers' power than a protracted war in which the country is devastated and the working class suffers continued systematic, bloody repression.

WHAT IS OUR VIEW OF ELECTIONS?

Most of this discussion centers around the various U.S.-sponsored plans for elections in El Salvador—elections which are, more than anything, public relations gimmicks for the right-wing regime. We are not interested in promoting participation in elections such as these. There is, however, another aspect to the question which is seldom taken up in the Central America solidarity movement. That is, we believe that the electoral principle, voting for one's leaders, is an important part of the revolutionary process and the new society which will emerge from that process. We do not define elections in the same distorted way they have been presented to us under capitalist "democracy." But we do believe that leaders must be democratically chosen, elected, and must be accountable to the people they lead, especially to the working class. There must be some direct,



Leaders of the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación [FPL] — masked to conceal their identities — hold a press conference. The FPL leadership was badly shaken in 1983 by the murder of Comandante Ana María, the group's second-ranking commander, in an internal factional struggle and the subsequent suicide of top FPL leader Cayetano Carpio.



tangible method for the working masses to express their will and choose their leaders. Vague concepts of "popular support," "mass sentiments," etc., are not sufficient. In this sense, democracy as we define it—workers' democracy—is no luxury which can wait until some day "after the revolution is secure," but rather is an essential part of creating and maintaining a free society.

WHAT ABOUT THE QUESTION OF ARMING THE PEOPLE?

Since all of the struggles in Central America currently have the character of armed insurrections or armed confrontations with imperialism, this is not much of a controversy inside the movement. What we should be stressing, however, is the vital necessity of defending the people's right to carry arms even after the national liberation victory. Here is where the movement divides. We are for an armed population in any case, as long as classes exist and threats to the working people still survive. We favor locally-controlled militias of workers, farmers, and other oppressed people, with arms supplied from the central government. We do not agree with the strategy of integrating the rebel forces into the state's standing army after a national liberation victory, as is the current FMLN position. We believe the standing army should be dispersed and replaced with a militia system. In the case of Nicaragua, the old Somoza army was dispersed, but only to be replaced with a new standing army under control of the FSLN leadership. An attempt was made to disarm the civilian population of Nicaragua after the 1979 victory. More recently, under threat of U.S. intervention, arms have once more been distributed widely among the Nicaraguan people (still under strict control of the state) and militia training on a large scale has begun. This is a move in the right direction and we support it. We expect, however, that once the situation has stabilized and the U.S. threat has eased, the FSLN government will once more attempt to disarm and demobilize the people.

WHAT ABOUT DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS?

Everyone says they're for this in Central America, so on the surface it doesn't appear to be much of a controversy either. What most people mean by this is the overthrow of the existing oligarchic societies (rule by the Fourteen Families, etc.) and the establishment of a more equal, democratic system, a system in which the government rules "in the best interests of the majority" even if the majority doesn't rule for itself. Another angle to this question which we can stress, is the importance of not just expressing the will of the majority, but also of defending the rights of oppressed minorities. The idea of the revolution taking up the cause of all oppressed people, women, gay people, Indians, and so on, is not very well accepted inside the solidarity movement. For that reason, there is a dismaying lack of interest in the views and behavior of the FSLN and FMLN toward women's rights to control their bodies, gay people's rights to live openly and equally, Indian people's rights to self-determination, etc. These are some of the issues we can raise as a means to communicate better what we mean by a revolutionary society run by workers and oppressed—as opposed to a nationalist regime influenced by the church and other backward elements.

WHAT DO REVOLUTIONARIES DO AFTER A NATIONAL LIBERATION VICTORY?

The first requirements are organization, preparedness and tactical flexibility. The middle class nationalist leaderships (even those who may come to power covered with Marxist terminology and pretense) will be trying to build up a strong state, to increase production by squeezing workers and farmers, on the one hand, and the biggest capitalists, on the other, and to consolidate their own rule by limiting democratic rights of all kinds. At the same time, these new rulers will be forced to give some immediate and impor-

tant concessions to the working masses to maintain their own credibility and their hold on power in a socially turbulent period. There will be plenty of repression by the new rulers against opposition from the revolutionary left, but as much as possible this repression will be masked by appeals to unity against the imperialist threat. At the same time, such a threat is *very real*, as the current situation in Nicaragua shows.

Our response should be, to the degree possible, a continuing military bloc with the nationalist leaderships against imperialist intervention. At the same time, we need to find ways to more aggressively raise our own program and our political opposition to the continuing capitalist system. With the national liberation demands already largely achieved, other popular demands will become more prominent—workers demanding more wages, more control; peasants demanding land; Indians demanding autonomy, etc. This will allow us more opportunities to raise our full program and attempt to link the struggles in a general political offensive in favor of moving the revolution forward to workers' rule.

We should base ourselves as much as possible among the urban working class, especially its poorer sections. We should call upon workers and peasants to keep their guns, and to demand all that they need, even if it goes beyond the limits imposed by cap-

WHY HAS THE CENTRAL AMERICAN WORKING CLASS NOT LED THE REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLES?

The key problem of the Central American revolution is that the working class—as a unified, conscious, organized class-for-itself—has not played a leading role. In this, the Central American revolution is similar to the revolutionary national liberation struggles in various parts of the "Third World." The workers have actively participated in the revolutionary struggle, but most often not with their own organizations and not conscious of their separate interests as a class. There are many complex reasons for this, prominent among them being the Stalinization of the notion of Marxism. Another reason in Central America (and elsewhere) is the creation of a semi-privileged layer of the working class, saddled with a reformist bureaucracy. These privileges and the bureaucracy they support can negate the working class as a leading revolutionary force. The revolutionary initiative then can pass into the hands of the radicalized middle class, with relatively pliant

and large the case in Central America.

Before discussing Central America, we can make the point clearer by examining the Iranian Revolution. In the 1950s, the Iranian working class was a powerful actor in the nationalist upsurge. Sections of the urban poor were manipulated by the CIA into helping restore the shah. During the shah's reign, he combined economic concessions to unionized workers with fierce political repression against anything resembling political activity. In this, he was aided greatly by the Iranian Communist Party, which collaborated with the shah and kept the labor movement non-political.

This process meant that the working class did not play a leading role in the Iranian Revolution. Different strata of the middle class, petty-bourgeoisie and urban poor moved into struggle first and defined the politics of the movement. The oil workers in particular played a major role in actually bringing the shah's regime down, but they entered the struggle relatively late.

After the Revolution, the Khomeini regime successfully maintained the loyalty of the urban poor. This was the base of the mass, semi-fascist movement of the Party of God, which attacked left-wing demonstrators. Khomeini's ability to fund certain social programs and food subsidies from the oil wealth combined with the appeal of his Islamic fun-



A Miskito Indian and her child in a Nicaraguan "settlement camp." The FSLN has flagrantly violated the rights of the Miskitos to enforce "national unity." Over 8,000 Miskitos were forcibly evacuated from their homes to isolate rebels and enforce the government's racist, chauvinist policies.

italism or the new rulers. When the new nationalist government is forced, out of fear of mass unrest or fear of imperialist attack, to implement leftist reforms, we support those reforms, but without supporting the government or its program overall. We would defend the government wholeheartedly against attacks from imperialism, but when conflicts arise between the new government and the working masses, we would take the side of the workers and oppressed in every case—even if it means a break in national unity under imperialist threat. We say that a national unity based on oppression is not worth defending, and that a better unity can be created by turning loose all the oppressed sectors to fight in their own interests against imperialism.

To repeat, the revolutionary left in Central America can expect severe repression after the victory of the national liberation leaderships. This will probably mean a return to clandestine work quite soon after the nationalist victory. In Nicaragua, where capital punishment is outlawed, at least 60 left oppositionists remain in prison. In El Salvador, where the struggle has been much more prolonged and divisive, a victorious FMLN is not likely to be as gentle as the FSLN was. We are allies with the nationalist leaderships in the fight against imperialism. But, as it should be clear now, and will become much more clear in the future, between them and us lies a huge political gulf. Today, we are fighting *against* the same enemy, but we are not fighting for the same goal.

mass support from peasants and/or the masses of marginalized, ex-peasant urban poor who are crowded into the shantytowns around so many Third World cities. The ruling class is more able to control the urban, unionized working class through concessions/repression when the wealth of the country depends primarily on agriculture. Then the concessions to the urban, unionized workers cost relatively little. This is by

damentalist ideology. The urban poor, who are not organized collectively through factory life, built no organizations independent of, or struggling against, the Khomeini regime.

The consciousness among the stably employed workers was quite different. They were influenced by modernist, socialist (i.e., state-capitalist and/or social democratic) ideas. In many different instances, the workers' committees would strike against or op-



Over 15,000 peasants marched through San Salvador in September 1983 to demand implementation of promised land reforms. The Salvadorean government's refusal to keep pledges of social reform are sparking renewed mass protests by workers and farmers.



pose the regime. The employed workers were, as a group, much more likely to be allied with the oppressed nationalities, women and the progressive middle class which opposed Khomeini from the left. The urban poor provided the support (along with sections of the peasantry) for smashing this bourgeois democratic movement. All this was done, of course, in the name of a radical, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist ideology—Islamic fundamentalism.

Similar processes occurred in Central America and the Caribbean. In Cuba, the tragedy is quite clear. The Cuban working class was the central force in the 1933 revolution which overthrew the Machado dictatorship. A general strike in 1930 played a major role in weakening the regime. In 1933, a bus drivers' strike grew into a general strike. This led directly to street fighting throughout the country and the flight of the dictator. While students had an important revolutionary organization, the heart of the struggle was the working class. Unfortunately, the working class was not able to carry through the struggle to socialist revolution. A bourgeois nationalist, liberal regime came to power. Very quickly, Batista overthrew the liberals and instituted a bloody regime of terror against the working class. Rural workers, some of whom had formed soviets and workers' militias at the sugar mills, suffered particularly.

Later, the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP—Popular Socialist Party, Cuba's Communist party), which had gained some hegemony over the working class, reached an accommodation with Batista. Two PSPers joined Batista's Cabinet in 1942, while a third PSPer led the government-sponsored union movement, the CTC. Even though Batista later turned on the PSP, he successfully established a pro-government union movement. He too combined economic concessions with vicious repression of political activity. Cuba's wealth depended overwhelmingly on the sugar industry and sugar workers. Batista could make relatively cheap concessions to urban workers since they were not the heart of the Cuban economy. This policy, the relative privileges of urban workers compared to the masses of horribly impoverished rural poor and workers, and the reformist leadership of the Stalinists, combined to remove the revolutionary initiative from the working class's hands. It shifted to Castro and the radicalized middle class.

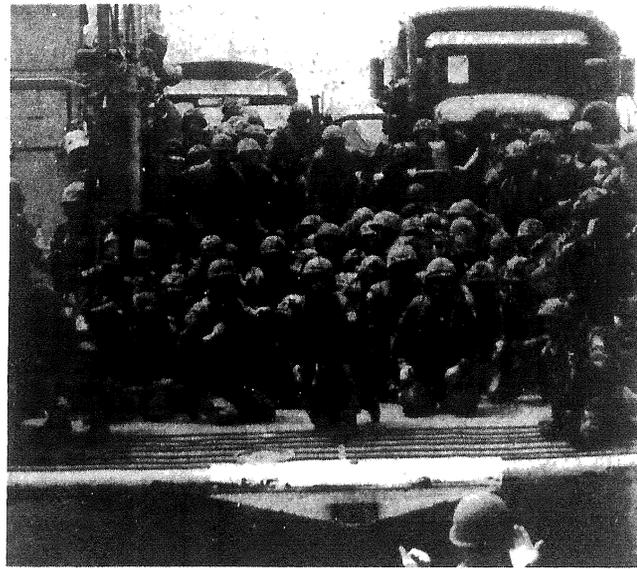
The Nicaraguan working class did not have nearly so revolutionary a tradition as the

Cuban. Nonetheless, Somoza sought to develop a reliable reformist union bureaucracy. He invited the Stalinists of the PSN to build unions. This policy meant that the bulk of the existing unions did not play a leading role in the Nicaraguan Revolution. Instead, the initiative was in the hands of the radicalized middle class FSLN and the neighborhood committees of the urban poor. The urban slum/shantytown population truly had nothing to lose. It existed in a very marginalized manner, without stable employment, without real housing, many surviving extremely precariously. The organized workers may not have had much, but they had something.

The history of the Nicaraguan Revolution since July 1979 shows the FSLN at loggerheads with the unionized workers, who sought to maintain their independent organization. There is not the same clear, consistent history of struggle between the FSLN and the urban poor. In this light, the FSLN proposal to lower the employed workers' pay in order to fund public works programs appears as a clever maneuver to increase support from the urban poor and turn them against the potentially troublesome labor movement.

The Salvadorean working class has a more revolutionary tradition than the Nicaraguan. Also, El Salvador saw some real industrial growth in the '60s and '70s that enlarged the working class and increased its self-confidence and combativity. In the '70s, the working class began to break through the reformist leadership which had been imposed on it. (The Salvadorean labor movement in the '60s consisted of one pro-government wing supported by the AFL-CIO and a "non-political" wing led by the PCS.) Through the mass revolutionary organizations, such as the FAPU and BPR, the Salvadorean workers staged strike waves, sit-downs, mass demonstrations, etc. These struggles united the workers with the slum dwellers and rural poor.

The tragedy of the Salvadorean Revolution is the massive repression especially since 1980, that has virtually destroyed the mass movement in the cities. Not only has it been driven underground, but much of the cadre and infrastructure of the workers' movement has been murdered. The revolutionary struggle ceased being a mass movement with the working class playing a leading role. Now it is a guerrilla struggle with the working class isolated from the struggle. Hopefully, if the terror is lifted off the working class, the



U.S. troops land in Grenada. Invasion of Grenada was a warning to the peoples of the Caribbean, Central and Latin America that U.S. imperialism will stop at nothing to maintain its domination of the region.

workers' organizations will redevelop and a new stage to the struggle will begin.

The main hope for the Central American revolution assuming a more working class character is the fusion of that revolution with the broader Latin American revolution. In many countries of Latin America, the working class is a major revolutionary factor. The revolutionary initiative in Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Peru, Brazil, etc., lies with the working class. The Central American revolution can play a key role in weakening the U.S. It is serving as an inspiration to working and poor people across the continent. The Central American revolution can be an important catalyst in the burgeoning Latin American revolution. If the working class becomes the leading force—in its own name, with its own program, organization and interests—in the Latin American revolution, this will have a powerful impact in turn on Central America.

WHAT ARE OUR TASKS INSIDE THE SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT IN THE U.S.?

First of all, we are—and want to be known as—serious, hard-working builders of the movement. Our loyalty is to the overall movement (to people in motion for a cause) over and above our loyalty to any specific organization inside the movement. Today we are primarily active inside the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), as it remains the largest and most active national solidarity organization, but this may not always be the case.

Additionally, we want to help create a left pole inside the movement, that is, a bloc of activists committed to a series of ideas and goals which we feel are necessary to build an effective movement. These ideas will generally be more left-wing than the present movement leadership (made up of liberals, social democrats, and soft-Stalinists) will accept.

For example, we argue for a movement built around democratic organizational norms. These include: the election and recall of leaders, accountability of these leaders, free debate, openness to all tendencies on all issues, and no political exclusions.

The movement should be democratically open to discussing different points of view about the programs for the Central American revolution. While we offer our solidarity and support to the national struggle there, we want a movement which is not tied to the policies of the existing leaderships.

We argue for an explicitly anti-imperialist movement—one which names things by their right names, takes on the task of educating new layers of activists, and remains independent of the Democratic and Republican parties. We should use every occasion to advance our view that imperialism is a political and economic system, an extension of capitalism, not simply a bad policy by a few right-wing politicians and generals.

We want a movement which looks first to workers and specially oppressed people as the main source of its strength. This requires conscious efforts to attract such people, including special outreach and solidarity work with other struggles. The Central America solidarity movement will never grow to its full potential with a "single-issue" orientation.

Finally, the movement, while using a variety of flexible tactics, should direct its efforts primarily toward organizing people to act directly and militantly. This orientation is counterposed to the more passive electoral, lobbying, and social service approach favored by many of the movement's current leaders. ■



A woman and her children flee attack by rightists at funeral of murdered Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero in 1980.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

Program in Brief of the Revolutionary Socialist League

1 The **REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST LEAGUE** is an organization dedicated to the fight for freedom for all the world's people—freedom from poverty and hunger; from racism and all forms of national, sexual, age and class-related oppression; from privileged rulers and wars—freedom from capitalism.

We believe that this fight is more necessary than ever. Today, the world capitalist system is sliding deeper and deeper into a massive economic, political and social crisis. This crisis is bringing conditions as bad as or worse than the Great Depression of the 1930s. In all countries, the ruling classes are responding to the crisis by bludgeoning down the living standards of the masses of people and curtailing our rights. Unemployment and wage-cutting, cutbacks in social services and a beefing up of the repressive apparatus—the police, military, prisons, etc.—are all part of the capitalist attack. As in the 1930s, the crisis is paving the way for the rise of fascist groups eager to impose their genocidal solution on humanity.

Internationally, the crisis will cause the battles among the different blocs of national capitalists to flare into full-scale wars, as each seeks to defend and increase its power, markets, investment outlets and control of natural resources against the others. Twice already this century the capitalists have fought devastating world wars, in which millions of people died. Now, with the development of huge nuclear arsenals capable of blowing up the planet hundreds of times over, human civilization itself hangs in the balance.

Thus the continued existence of the capitalist system is pushing us closer every day to depression, fascism, world war and possibly total destruction.

2 We in the RSL believe there is an alternative to all this. That alternative lies in the workers, small farmers, peasants, unemployed, national and other oppressed minorities, youth, women, lesbians and gay men—in sum, the downtrodden and persecuted people of every society—uniting together to overthrow our common enemy, the capitalist system, and establish **SOCIALISM**.

This will require a **REVOLUTION** in which the masses of people fight to seize control of the governments, banks, means of transportation and communication, factories, fields, mills and mines. A revolution would also have to smash the capitalists' state apparatus: their police and armed forces, their courts and prisons, their political bodies (legislatures, congresses, parliaments, etc.) and mammoth bureaucracies, and other institutions of capitalist class rule.

While such revolutions are most likely to develop on a national basis, we believe that to be successful they must become worldwide in scope. Capitalism is an international system, with a world economy and a world market. Only through an international socialist revolution can the workers and their allies eliminate all capitalist oppression and have access to the human, natural and technical resources

necessary to solve the problems confronting human society.

3 In place of the dictatorship of the capitalists, the RSL believes working and oppressed people can build a cooperative, humane world society. Run by workers' councils and other mass organizations of farmers, women, soldiers and specially oppressed groups, the new society would provide the fullest democracy for the vast majority of people, while ruthlessly suppressing the capitalists and those who seek to get ahead by stepping on the backs of others.

Although the destructive legacy of capitalism would be severe, a truly democratic, mass-controlled government could begin to reorganize society to fulfill human needs, not provide a privileged existence for tiny elites. Resources currently thrown into the military, for example, could be used to end hunger, build housing, schools, roads, etc. The workweek could be shortened, creating jobs for millions of unemployed people.

In ways such as these, the inequality and scarcity that lie at the heart of capitalism's dog-eat-dog competitiveness could be eliminated. People would increasingly have no reason to get over on others, and the material basis of classes, the state, racism, sexism and anti-gay bigotry would disappear. Increasingly, everyone would have the time and opportunity to develop their full human potential; everyone would become truly **FREE**, able to control their own destinies.

This is our vision of **SOCIALISM**. It will not be easy to achieve. And it is not inevitable—people have to want it and fight for it. But we believe it is the only alternative worth fighting for.

4 Socialism does not exist anywhere in the world today. What is called socialism in countries like Russia, China, Cuba, Albania, Poland, etc., is state capitalism, a 20th century variation of traditional, private shareholding capitalism. In the state-capitalist (often called Stalinist) countries, as in the "regular" capitalist nations, a small elite dominates society, making all the decisions and reaping all the benefits. Working and oppressed people have no more control of the factories and other workplaces, the economy, the government or anything else than do workers in traditional capitalist countries. The state-capitalist ruling class controls the state apparatus and nationalized industry, while the workers are in the position of being wage slaves, chained to a giant capitalist machine.

In these countries—as in all the countries of the world—**REVOLUTION** is the only way to establish real socialism and win freedom for all working and oppressed people.

At a time when the struggle between the world's two main imperialist powers, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., is being portrayed wrongly as one between capitalism and socialism, democracy and totalitarianism, the RSL believes it is more important than ever to take a clear stand in opposition to capitalism in all its forms and

to fight for a revolutionary, libertarian vision of socialism.

5 In the coming period, as the capitalist crisis intensifies, we expect mass movements and mass struggles—both of the right and the left—to break out with increasing frequency around the world. The question is: Will these upheavals lead to fascist dictatorships, state-capitalist transformations, a new world war—or an international socialist revolution that puts all the capitalist garbage behind us?

The RSL believes that the last outcome can be brought to pass only with the active intervention and political leadership of a disciplined international revolutionary working class party. This party, and its sections in countries around the world, is needed to educate and organize workers and other oppressed people about the cause of their misery and the solution to it; to work in different movements and struggles to increase the class-consciousness and militancy of their participants; to combat reformist, social-democratic, state-capitalist, fascist and other leaderships that would derail mass, popular struggles and lead them to certain defeat; and to help unite the different forces oppressed by capitalism into a massive assault on the system.

The existence of revolutionary working class parties does not guarantee victory. But without them, the more-organized and powerful enemies of socialist revolution will surely triumph.

The RSL considers the construction of a revolutionary party in the U.S. and around the world to be our main strategic task. In so doing, we reject any and all elitist notions that have come to be associated with such parties: that the party stands separate from and above the working class; that the party may use any method, no matter how base or dishonest, to gain leadership of the masses in struggle; that its goal is to form a one-party state within a supposedly socialist society. Our goal is a society where human beings can consciously shape their own existence; we see a revolutionary party simply as the vehicle through which this can be made possible.

6 As an organization based in the U.S., it is our special task to fight U.S. imperialism's domination and exploitation of the peoples of the world, and to support working and oppressed people of all countries in their struggles for self-determination and freedom. We stand for the immediate and unconditional independence of all U.S. colonial holdings: Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the islands of the Pacific. We also demand the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops and military installations in the Caribbean, Central and South America, Asia, Europe, Africa, the Middle East—everywhere. Within the U.S. we support the right to self-determination for Native Americans, Blacks, Latinos of the Southwest, and other oppressed groups.

7 The RSL identifies itself in the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, particularly the pioneering theoretical work of Marx and Engels; the conception of the party, the stress on the importance of national liberation struggles and the anti-statism shown in *The State and Revolution* of Lenin; and the fight against Stalinism of Trotsky. But we also identify with the best of anarchism, particularly its libertarian spirit. And we hold in no less regard those leaders throughout the ages who have fought against various forms of exploitation and oppression: from Spartacus to Harriet Tubman, from Emiliano Zapata to Malcolm X.

We believe it is crucial for the left to rid itself of the state-capitalist baggage which it has carried for far too long. To do so requires a careful evaluation of the theoretical underpinnings of the modern left, from Marx to the Russian Revolution to the current day. Only in this way can the best of our heritage—the fight against oppression and for revolutionary socialism—be preserved and the worst of it—an infatuation with technocratic planning and strong states—be discarded. Revolutionary states must be the vanguard in the fight for common decency and true freedom. It is to that fight the RSL is committed, body and soul. Join us!

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