

The Workers' Advocate

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Cardenas and the Mexican election crisis

On July 6 elections were held in Mexico for president and the national legislature. Usually they are pretty much a routine affair which ratify the victory of the candidate of the ruling party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). But this time the political system was thrown into a major electoral crisis. Months after the elections, this crisis continues, and the people remain agitated.

For the moment, the stranglehold of PRI over the political life of Mexico has received a shock. This opens up some possibilities for the toilers. But it is not clear how things will turn out in the end. Will the bourgeoisie be just able to restore business-as-usual, helped along by refusal of the reformist opposition to do anything that would really organize the toilers as an independent revolutionary force? Or will the class conscious workers be able to utilize the crisis to take significant steps in building a mass toilers' movement independent of all bourgeois factions, a movement with revolutionary potential?

A Political Crisis

For more than half a century, the main party of the Mexican capitalists, the PRI, has ruled the country with a monopoly of the political system. It speaks in the name of the revolution, and it makes free with nationalist phrases. But it is not a party of the Mexican toilers. On the contrary, it springs from those leaders in the Mexican revolution who succeeded in subordinating the upsurge of the masses to the strengthening of the national bourgeoisie. After a decade of rule in the 1920's, the new elite created the National Revolutionary Party (PNR) in 1929 to mediate between its squabbling factions, develop its political monopoly, and consolidate its rule. It is this Party, a party that ruled despite the discontent of the impoverished majority, that is the predecessor of PRL. From then and through its transformation

into the PRM in 1938 and then the PRI in 1946, this Party has ensured its continued victory in elections by repression and thuggery, by habitual fraud and cheating, by control over the trade unions and other mass organizations, and with a widespread machine of favors and patronage.

In recent years the economic crisis has hit Mexico hard. As a result, the PRI has abandoned some of its own programs and rhetoric in order to squeeze the masses. And then the PRI itself split, with a popular PRI leader, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, leaving to run his own election campaign. He managed to rally around him much of the left-wing opposition to PRI. (There is also a right-wing, Reaganite-sounding, bourgeois opposition around PAN, the National Action Party.)

In this year's elections, fraud and thuggery weren't enough. The PRI's influence over the masses through its mass fronts and patronage was seen to be cracking. The government had to disrupt the counting of ballots when it looked like PRI was losing. They finally did announce a PRI victory (which is dubious), but were forced to acknowledge that their margin of victory was the smallest ever.

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POSTAL WORKERS STRIKE IN BRITAIN AND OTHER NEWS

From the Sept. 27 issue of **Detroit Workers' Voice**, paper of the MLP-Detroit:

NO TO DRUG TESTING OF POSTAL WORKERS!

In June the USPS [U.S. Postal Service] announced it would be drug testing for new hires. Current employees can already be tested on a "for cause" basis during fitness-for-duty examinations any time they are injured at work or return from extended sick leave. **Detroit Workers' Voice** condemns drug testing as an attack on all postal workers. It signals harassment and threats on our jobs.

The USPS claims losses (due to absenteeism, low productivity and accidents) from employee "drug abuse." This means they intend to use drug hysteria and testing to harass workers taking their sick and annual leave, to push for higher production, and to blame workers for accidents. ...

These tests are notorious for false results. ...

Drug testing is widely used in many industries not to locate and help workers with drug problems but as a means to harass and intimidate the

workforce. ...

What is the response of the postal unions to drug testing?

While assuring us they're opposed to it, in fact the sold-out leaders of the APWU already agreed to fitness-for-duty drug testing during the settlement of a 1986 grievance. We can count on the postal union chiefs to fight drug testing just like they've fought one-man parcel-keying, route combination, and the multi-tier wage system--not at all. Only militant, organized resistance by rank-and-file workers can stop this assault on our jobs and basic human dignity.

Detroit Workers' Voice and the Marxist-Leninist Party oppose the abuse of drugs by working people. It undermines our health, exposes us to government and on-the-job harassment, and worst of all, takes away the strength and determination that we need to fight for our rights as a class. At the same time, we cannot allow the bosses to use drug testing to deny workers a livelihood because of their private, leisure-time activities. <>

**Fort St. PTFs petition for regular status
FULL PAY AND RIGHTS FOR
ALL POSTAL WORKERS!**

The tiered employment system at the U.S. Postal Service is unjust. Workers are divided up into different categories giving some workers lesser pay, rights and benefits, even though they may all do the same work. The **Detroit Workers' Voice** takes the stand of FULL PAY AND RIGHTS FOR ALL POSTAL WORKERS.

The largest percentage of employees is the full-time regular work force who have full status as postal workers. But other categories, such as part-time flexibles (subs), NTE/casuals, part-time regulars and 20-hour regulars, lack many rights and benefits and face harder working conditions.

For instance, letter carrier PTFs are always on call. They are often forced into 6-day weeks, in some cases for up to 2 years. PTFs are sent from route to route, station to station, which are unfamiliar. Then they are harassed when they cannot do top production.

For PTFs in general, there is no guarantee of an 8-hour day or a 40-hour week, and no paid holidays. PTFs' paychecks can go up and down like a ping pong ball, making it difficult to finance their lives. PTFs must be available to work flexible hours, which disrupts their life outside work. PTFs also have fewer options than regulars to

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refuse overtime. Meanwhile, casuals are expected to work for half pay with no rights or benefits.

The stand for full pay and rights means that every employee should have equal footing with his fellow workers. For full-time regulars who want to improve their working conditions, it is in their best interests for all workers to have full status. Otherwise management will use divisions between the postal workers to break down their solidarity.

The struggle for full pay and rights for all postal workers must, therefore, be a united struggle of workers in all tiers. So when a struggle develops over a particular injustice, say excessive overtime for PTFs, then all workers should come to their defense. All workers, too, should support the petition that has been circulating at the Fort St. GMF calling for converting PTFs to regular no later than 6 months from the hiring date.

Since the union leaderships continually make empty promises and do nothing to organize the workers into collective action, the workers must go ahead and organize on their own. The **Detroit Workers' Voice** is here to give its support to the struggles of the postal workers. Bring news, views and questions to a distributor, or write to the address at the top of the leaflet. <>

LETTER CARRIERS FIGHT INCREASED REFERENCE VOLUME

At Detroit's Seven Oaks, Mt. Elliott, and Hamtramck stations, USPS management has infuriated the letter carriers with a new attack: increasing the reference volume (the amount of mail a carrier is supposed to sort each morning) by an average of 1-1.5 feet per route. By management's own casing "standards," this equals another 15-22 minutes work in the office which the carriers must simply "absorb"--no later leaving time, no overtime, no help. This is nothing but a barefaced attempt to speed up the carriers, to squeeze more work out of them with no additional pay.

At Seven Oaks, when management first declared new a.m. reference volumes of 12-13 feet per route, from 6.5-8.5, the carriers hit the ceiling. They are already working 9-10 hours a day, 6 days a week, on long, heavy volume routes. Especially outrageous was the fact that the oldest carriers were hit with the biggest increases, which workers saw as an attempt to drive them out. After the carriers denounced management for days, management backed down to 8-9.5 feet. But the carriers are rightly continuing to fight. They are demanding NO increases at all plus more routes.

At Mt. Elliott, the workers' struggle forced management to retreat, at least temporarily, from its threats last July to eliminate routes. The carriers had gotten organized on their own, including

wearing buttons demanding "No Route Cuts!" Now they are preparing to fight this new assault of increased reference volume.

At both Seven Oaks, and Mt. Elliott the union isn't lifting a finger to help the carriers fight the increased workload. In fact the unions reps are being management's little echoes, blaming the carriers and telling them to stop talking and drinking coffee and just case that mail!

No way can the carriers rely on the union leaders to fight this. They must get organized independently and wage collective action against this latest attack by management. <>

MILITANT STRIKE BY BRITISH POSTAL WORKERS

Fighting pitched battles with cops, ignoring government threats of privatization, and defying the cowardly leaders of their union, the 140,000 postal workers of Britain brought that country's postal system to a virtual halt for 2 1/2 weeks.

On Aug. 31, the Union of Communication Workers (UCW) called a 24-hour strike against the Post Office's introduction of divisive pay supplements ONLY for new hires ONLY in southeast England.

When the workers returned the next day, management announced that the backlogged mail would be cleared out by casuals rather than by regulars on overtime. Workers walked out in city after city. Mail slowed to a tiny trickle. The British Post Office had in fact been shut down by dozens of local wildcat strikes. The workers had the Post Office in a corner, the UCW President Tuffin did nothing to mobilize an all-out, unified, national strike.

After two weeks the UCW leaders agreed to a sellout. The differential pay scheme was put off to later negotiations, and a 5% cap was put on overtime, with casuals to clean up most of the backlogged mail--exactly what the workers had been fighting against! Though many workers returned to their jobs, thousands were still out a week later.

The militant rage of our British brothers and sisters was not just a reaction to a divisive pay scheme. They are burdened with low pay, overloaded routes, bad working conditions, and harassment by management. Many facilities have an annual employee turnover of over 50%.

Last year British postal workers waged 195 wildcat strikes. This fall they forced a powerful national strike. But just as here in the U.S., the workers' struggle is hamstrung by the treachery of the union chiefs. To fully mobilize their strength, the British postal workers have to fight against the sellout union chiefs and develop the organization of the rank and file. <>

UNION/MANAGEMENT ANTI-SAFETY COMMITTEE IN NEW YORK TRANSIT

The following articles are from September issues of **New York Workers' Voice**, paper of the NY Branch of the MLP:

**TA/TWU SAFETY COMMITTEE
IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH**

It's okay to work under unsafe conditions. So says the not-so-impartial arbitrator.

According to a recent grievance ruling, unsafe working conditions are **never** to be dealt with immediately and on the spot. Toxic chemicals, electrocution, falling from wet or icy tracks, getting hit by a train--why, the arbitrator says, you must accept these minor work hazards.

Heaven forbid you refuse an unsafe job--this might constitute a "job action." Your only recourse is to "take it to the Safety Committee." But the immediate threat of injury or death won't stop the TA/TWU [Transit Authority/Transit Workers' Union] Safety Committee from plodding to some kind of conclusion--**in a few weeks or months**.

Meanwhile, our great courts of capitalist justice have already ruled that no TA supervisor can be held criminally accountable for an injury or death caused by TA negligence. No wonder we are continually exposed to life-threatening conditions.

This state of affairs is perfectly acceptable to the union bureaucrats in their comfortable offices. They love the white-shirted Safety Committee because it means a few more "clean hands" jobs for loyal union hacks. More important, because it takes pressure off our misleaders to respond to hazards. Have a problem? Take it to the Safety Committee.

Workers in a number of locations have shown that they are ready and willing to take safety matters into their own hands. Trackmen have refused work in the rain. Maintainers at 207th Street stopped burning car tile until provided with complete safety gear. And at Coney Island, work stopped when toxic diesel fumes built up in the shop.

These examples show that defense of life and limb need not and cannot be entrusted to a man-

agement/bureaucrat safety committee. Only when transit workers get organized independently and take up rank-and-file action will we have any real say about our working conditions. <>

**Another death on the job
MONEY FOR PRODUCTIVITY, NOT FOR SAFETY**

On September 12, badly rotted slatting on the "J" line in Brooklyn gave way under a maintenance supervisor, plunging him to his death on the street 30 feet below. Bernard La Padula had 25 years on the job.

An accident? That depends on your point of view. The pencil-pushing suit-and-tie crowd with multi-billion dollar budgets consider it an accident. Why should such overbloated capitalist managers give a hoot if we have to walk on rotten slatting--or on air, for all they care?

And how did the TA bosses pay tribute to this man who gave 25 years to the TA? Easy. They placed the blame on us workers. According to a TA spokesman, "At this point, we have a system that basically works." "We have workers out there every day. They can obviously report any unsafe conditions that exist." Yeah, sure. And the TA would run to the rescue.

All maintenance workers know that the road is littered with thousands of similar dangerous spots left unattended for years. Safe slatting for us to walk on is no priority for the money managers down at Jay Street. We have buried several from falls and have many more with twisted bodies to show as proof.

Now listen to Sonny Hall [union bureaucrat] talk tough. "The union has now taken the position because of this (death) that if we're not sure of the area, we will not work." But don't put much faith in this hot air.

For sure, workers, on their own, have refused unsafe conditions. For this they have faced suspension and even threats of termination. Currently there are trackwalkers in Brooklyn still being threatened with time in the street. Where was Sonny Hall? He was pledging, over and over again, against any type of job action whatsoever.<>

WHAT ARE THE "LABOR" GOVERNMENTS DOING IN AUSTRALIA?

From the September 1988 issue of the Australian paper **Workers' Voice**, P.O.Box 56, Newport 3015, Australia.

Before the State election on October 1st we can expect the ALP [Australian Labor Party] politicians to be around the job making pleas for money and for votes to keep the Cain Labor Government in office. Such appeals are made on false pretenses.

The lie is spread that political and social change can only be achieved through the ballot box and parliament.

Thinly veiled threats will suggest that workers simply can't afford defeat of a Labor government. We should call this bluff.

What if the Labor Party is defeated?

At all times the workers, who create society's wealth through their collective labor, need to organize and struggle against any government that attacks the working class and the poor on behalf of the rich and powerful minority capitalist class who owns the means of production and who take possession of the wealth created by labor.

The long and sordid history of both the Labor and non-Labor governments proves that they all administer capitalism on behalf of the ruling capitalist class.

A Labor Government that attacks the workers and boasts about it!

The federal ALP leaders lay claim to great successes in the management of the economy over the five years of the Hawke Government.

They get strong support for this from among the ranks of the biggest industrialists, bankers, landowners, transport monopolists and media barons. These bosses are the ones who have benefited enormously from the Labor governments' (Federal and State) big business policies.

Company profits have risen consistently in every year of the Federal labor Government and its "Prices and Incomes Accord".

This remarkable profit "turn-around" in the crisis-ridden economy is credited to a number of factors, including:

- 1) The success of the Labor Government's wages policy which has delivered a consistent reduction in the real value

of wages.

- 2) Labor's successful industrial relations policy for which the ACTU [trade union] leaders have delivered the support of the official trade union movement for such measures as wage-cutting and the tying of wage adjustments to award restructuring (attacks on working conditions).

And now they tell us we have no option but to vote for them!

Cain is in it up to his neck.

The Cain Government is part and parcel of this attack on the working class. In some respects it has been a front runner in the use of the legal machinery and police intimidation against those workers and their unions who have persisted in struggle to defend wages, living standards and working conditions.

During the railway workers dispute in November 1985, public transport unions affiliated to the VTHC condemned the Cain Government for adopting punitive industrial relations tactics similar to those used by the Bjelke Peterson Government in Queensland against SEQEB workers.

Any future Victorian [i.e. of the state of Victoria] Government--whatever its label--that wants to use the police "anti-terrorist squad" to raid a trade union office, seize records and funds has been given a precedent by the actions of Cain and Crabb in the BLF raid of October 1987.

Collaboration with the employers -- big stick for workers

ALP Governments and the ACTU bosses have always made a great play of the "consensus not confrontation" philosophy of the ALP-ACTU Accord. But this refers to the class collaboration of the trade union mis-leaders with the employers in matters concerning the running of the capitalist economy. It is a different story when the workers organize and confront the boss in struggle on the job.

The period of the Accord has seen many court actions, heavy fines and all sorts of police intimidation against workers and their unions by Labor Governments.

In one case factory workers won a wage increase from a multi-national company through job action. After six weeks they were forced to hand

it back after the Federal Government intervened against their union (Remcraft workers, Furnishing Trades Union, 1984).

None of this is new. It merely repeats history. In 1949 the Chifley Labor Government jailed the leaders of unions which donated money to coal miners on strike for better wages and conditions. Then military scabs were used in the mines to finally break the miners strike.

A word of appreciation from the National Farmers Federation

Some of the most extreme reactionary organizations in the land have been impressed and encouraged by the class collaboration policies of the present Labor Governments.

Speaking recently to a Country Liberal Party Conference in Alice Springs, the President of the National Farmers Federation praised the Hawke Government for implementing many of the policies of the New Right. His only complaint was that it "didn't go far enough".

But Labor Governments always go far enough to provide the precedent and justification that paves the way for other governments of capitalism that follow them to "go further".

Greiner's Liberal Government in NSW [New South Wales] is a current example.

A large minority of workers, who occupy better paid and more secure jobs, still see the ALP as a "workers' party". But a growing number are beginning to see through the false pretenses of the ALP. They are angry with Labor. At the same time they know that there is no solution at all in the "alternative" offered by the parliamentary elections.

All that the elections can do is to decide which set of stooges will form a government to admin-

ister the capitalist system of wage robbery and exploitation for the next three years.

Capitalist dictatorship behind the sham of parliamentary democracy

The tycoons who run outfits like the Bond Corporation, Elders-IXL, BHP, TNT, the banks and media monopolies are never elected by the people to the positions of privilege and power that they occupy.

The parliamentary politicians who are elected by the people simply administer the machinery of state that is designed to enable the wealthy minority to exercise the real political power.

The political power of the boss class comes from the concentration of ownership of the economic wealth of society which is derived from its private ownership of the key sectors of the economy--the means of production, the finance institutions, retail outlets, transport services, the land and media networks that are so necessary to manufacture a public opinion.

What to do? Where do we go from here?

** Reject any suggestion that the workers and the poor must wait passively for parliamentary elections to bring about social change.

** Work hard to develop class consciousness, the unity and organization capable of acting effectively against any government.

The most fundamental social change will come when the working class rejects parliamentary democracy, wrests the means of production from the capitalists and places itself in the position of ruling class and acts for all exploited people. The struggle for socialism currently requires workers to reject the Labor Party Government. <>

INTERNATIONAL BANKERS DENOUNCED IN BERLIN

The last week of September, 10,000 bankers, financial ministers and their hangers-on gathered in West Berlin for meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

But thousands of activists also showed up to protest the cabal of capitalist bankers. The IMF and World Bank are organizations of capitalist bankers from around the world, dominated by the richest capitalist countries. They are directly responsible for imposing harsh austerity measures on poor countries, in order to ensure interest payments be paid back on the huge debts that many countries have built up. The youth gathering in Berlin came to denounce the rape of the working people of the poor countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America by IMF-directed austerity plans.

During the week, sharp clashes broke out between groups of protesters and police.

The West Berlin and West German capitalist authorities also brought out 8,700 policemen to smash heads of protesters. They attacked protest gatherings throughout the week. This was the largest police force assembled for decades in West Berlin or West Germany. Police behavior against demonstrators was described even by some city officials as "overkill".

Many IMF/World Bank convention delegates roomed in East Berlin. The state-capitalist authorities in East Germany ensured that no protests would take place there, and they even toned down criticism of the IMF in their media. <>

WHAT WE SAW IN NICARAGUA
-JULY 1988-

Recently some comrades of the MLP,USA visited Nicaragua. This was one of a number of trips by activists and delegations from the MLP,USA to Nicaragua. The comrades prepared a presentation with slides on their trip. The text below is rearranged from their observations which accompanied the pictures.

In July we visited Nicaragua for a week. We met with the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua and the Workers' Front (FO) and with workers and peasants organized by FO.

This is a critical time for Nicaragua. The U.S.-sponsored contra war and the imperialist blockade have greatly damaged the country. The cost in lives and human suffering is enormous. The contra cutthroats continue their murder and sabotage. U.S. weapons are still flowing to Nicaragua.

U.S. imperialism has hurt Nicaragua a great deal. This small country of only three million people must finance a huge war effort. But its economy is already a shambles!

A severe economic crisis exists in Nicaragua today. Production of everything is way down. Production is being undermined by several things, by the destruction of war and the economic blockade, by the diversion of resources and labor for the war effort, and also by sabotage by the Nicaraguan capitalists.

Nicaragua's economic problems are not strictly internal problems. But the policies that the government sets will determine how severe the crisis is for the different classes in Nicaragua. And which class the government is based on will determine how successful it is in maintaining the revolution and the economy.

The answers are clearly visible in Nicaraguan society today. Unfortunately for the Nicaraguan working class and people, the FSLN government is giving the wrong answers. The Sandinistas are making concessions to the capitalists. They are striving for a compromise with the rich contra supporters by handing out subsidies and privileges, and at the same time, they are imposing austerity measures on the working masses.

This is a prescription for disaster. It is the opposite of what should be done. Bureaucratic measures against the toilers only dampen their enthusiasm and weaken the revolution. Incentives to the bourgeoisie do not help the economy and do

not increase production -- the capitalists just take the money and use it to strengthen the counter-revolution.

From the comrades of the MLP of Nicaragua we learned that the Sandinista policy goes hand in hand with the Arias pact. From the negotiations at Esquipulas to those at Sapoa and Managua, the Sandinistas moved quickly to reach agreements with the Nicaraguan capitalists and the contras.

In the one year of the Arias plan, the social pact between the bourgeoisie and the FSLN has developed. Politically the FSLN has recognized the armed counterrevolution as a legitimate alternative political force to themselves. In Nicaragua they made an opening so that the right opposition could spread. They allowed demonstrations to be organized around these pro-contra positions. American Congressmen came to these demonstrations and shouted slogans of the counter-revolution. They came primarily to organize all the forces of the counterrevolution around the Melton plan [Melton was U.S. Ambassador to Nicaragua before he was expelled from the country by the Sandinista government].

And economically the Arias plan also meant more capitalist measures. The pro-contra right-wing actually came out in support of the economic measures taken by the government in February:

The monetary reform, which devalued the cordoba 10,000%.

"Compaction" of the state sector which laid off 15,000 employees.

Re-establishment of incentives in U.S. dollars to the capitalists while workers' wages remain frozen.

And then, four months later, on June 14, the government took even harder economic measures:

They let the cordoba float with respect to the dollar.

What we saw in Nicaragua -- July 1988

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They freed interest rates and credit rates.

And their harshest measure was unfreezing the prices of basic necessities while wages remained frozen.

The only thing the government did for the workers was to leave open the possibility that wages could rise, but in practice the FSLN government says that raises and strikes are counter-revolutionary.

Public transit in Managua

To get around Managua we used public transportation. There is a severe transportation crisis in Nicaragua. Here we also see a privately owned "bus", a small pickup truck actually. It costs 20 cordobas, that's 40 times what the public bus costs. But the public bus doesn't always come. And when it does, it's as packed as the private ones.

Vendors everywhere

Life is hard. The wages are so low that people often give up their job to eke out a living selling things. There are vendors everywhere. Especially children. It looks like every kid in Managua is out selling something. Some turn to crime.

The market is crowded and busy. The problem is that workers can't afford to buy much of anything. Capitalists, government officials, and some professionals have money to spend.

Even many of the petty bourgeoisie are suffering. A lot of the young technical and professional workers are leaving Nicaragua because the wages are so low, even for skilled labor. Canada is taking advantage of Nicaragua's situation and is recruiting technical personnel. Class-conscious workers we spoke with are angry about this. They said, "If we had a really revolutionary government, this would not be allowed."

In the free market, the prices are:

rice...120 cordobas/pound
beans...100 cordobas/pound
sugar...100 cordobas/pound
cooking oil...250 cordobas/liter.

100 cordobas, that's roughly a day's pay for most workers.

Billboards

A billboard exhorting the masses for more production -- this is the typical FSLN billboard today. Two years ago, when we were here on our first visit in 1986, we saw more political slogans and in general there was a more political atmosphere. Today there is a non-political mood, even cynicism. People are tired of hearing the

usual FSLN rhetoric. It rings so hollow that some people want nothing to do with politics.

The FSLN still has some billboards like "Nicaragua Victoriosa". But they have mainly stopped their revolutionary exhortations--they don't want to scare the bourgeoisie away, so public service announcements have largely taken the place of political agitation. For example, there are billboards promoting mother's milk, an important public health issue. There is a great need for public education on all sorts of issues, especially health issues, but political agitation is also important.

The FSLN has even found a non-political way to mobilize the youth for the war effort. "Join the army 'cause girls love a man in uniform" is how their recruitment ads run today.

The workers' movement

The workers are turning to strikes because they can't live on their meager wages. The automobile repair workers decided to strike when the Managua construction workers went out. There have also been several smaller strikes. A lot more strikes are expected.

The FSLN is calling the workers counter-revolutionary. The FO has to fight this dirty Sandinista lie and also the right-wing lies. The right-wing press also at times says that the MLPN is the same as the FSLN.

At the FO office, we heard the basic plan of struggle set forth by FO to deal with the current situation. The office had banners "Government, No more concessions to the contras, Yes to the demands of the working class" and "For the class independence of the trade unions, support the strike", which were slogans during the construction strike.

The overall plan goes as follows:

1) For wages indexed in accordance with the cost of living. Wages must rise together with the cost of living index. The FO is proposing a law for the National Assembly and is doing a lot of agitation for it.

2) For the owners in each factory to give free to the workers each month a "canasta basica", a package of eight food products: rice, beans, corn, oil, milk (dry), eggs, soap, sugar, about twenty pounds of each and also two liters of oil.

3) Collective bargaining for contracts to win this food, transportation, free medicine (when not covered by the government) and other demands.

4) Against commercial secrecy. With the measures taken on June 14, the government said that factories with higher profits must pay higher wages. But how are the workers to know what the profits are? Workers must have access to the books, not just to see what profits are being

made, but mainly to make sure that the company is not de-capitalizing (draining needed resources out of the enterprises or even out of Nicaragua). One economist did a study and concluded that the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie de-capitalized \$400 million last year.

FO demands higher wages no matter what the owners' profits are. With the demand against commercial secrecy, mainly FO wants to check on decapitalization, mis-use of government loans, etc.

5) Independence of the trade unions from the owners and the government, and the unity of action of the workers' movement. The MLPN and the FO stand for an independent workers' movement.

The toilers are now trying to find answers to the economic problems. They are coming into conflict with the CST (Sandinista union confederation) and the ATC (Sandinista peasant organization).

At a brickyard

We met about 20 workers at the Cooperativa Carlos Arroyo. This is a factory that makes rectangular bricks for the construction industry and cylindrical ones for drains and sewers. They also make tiles. It is supposedly a cooperative, but in fact is a state-owned and run enterprise that treats the workers like any capitalist enterprise.

There used to be a CST union here. In 1985 the workers wanted to strike, but the CST opposed them. So they turned to the FO. They gained a little in the strike. From this experience they concluded that FO represents their interests and affiliated with it. They struck again in 1987, this time for 15 days.

Their biggest demand is for a price freeze and an increase in wages, but the company won't negotiate this. They are now negotiating for uniforms, dust protection and other things, not wages. They gave a document to the manager and negotiated 23 out of 35 demands with the factory representative, but his boss wouldn't recognize it. So the labor ministry MITRAB gave a directive acknowledging what had already been agreed to, but the factory director still won't concede.

The workers told us that "The government slanders FO saying it is funded by the CIA, others call them 'trotskyists'. So, if you sympathize with FO, then the police, the government, MITRAB, etc. look differently at you."

The workers here supported the construction workers strike. There is an auto shop nearby, and they went to it to show solidarity with the auto repair strike which was also going on.

The workers pointed out that their wages had gone up 30%, but in the same period prices in-

creased 300%. The price of water and electricity increased too, so a 30% wage increase did nothing. The workers said: "How can we feed 4 or 5 kids on such low wages, so we have to send our children out into the streets to sell stuff."

Sacos Macen

We met FO activists from SACOS MACEN. Militant workers had won the union elections here in August 1987. [The visit was prior to the forcible imposing by government officials and the CST apparatus of a new CST leadership on the union at Sacos Macen. This was reported on in the Oct. 1 issue of the **Workers' Advocate**.] Here the union is officially a Sandinista, CST union, but in fact it is independent. FO, in fact, has work inside the unions of all political trends.

MACEN is a state-owned plastics factory. It makes sacks of woven plastic for sugar, coffee, cotton and other products. It is important to Nicaragua's export economy since it makes the packing material for the main products and also is the main producer of its product in Central America. Everyone who goes to the market in Nicaragua carries a sack made at MACEN.

Recently the boss of the machines repair department decided that if a worker is one minute late he would not be allowed in to work. So the workers in the department had a work stoppage, demanding that the boss be let go. As a result, he had to change his policy.

MACEN runs three shifts, 24 hours. There is a quota system. Many workers are women, concentrated in sewing and cutting the bags, although some women operate weaving or other machines.

The MACEN workers have won a series of demands such as company-paid transportation, one month's paid maternity leave, literacy classes at work, etc. Their most pressing demand at present is a salary increase, which they have so far failed to obtain.

Why does the union stay affiliated with the CST? In order to get a place to build a house, or to get sheet metal from the METASA steel plant for a roof, the workers must get a letter from a CST union. So they stay formally affiliated to the CST but the CST considers the MACEN union as FO. The MACEN workers' union does not pay dues to the CST center or distribute CST literature.

Workers at MACEN denounced the Nicaraguan constitution to us. Supposedly it gave workers the right to strike as well as other rights, but when workers try to exercise their rights they suffer repression. In reality, they don't have these rights.

They also denounced the Sandinistas for being

undemocratic and not allowing the workers to choose their own union.

They were very interested in the American workers' movement and asked us many questions. They told us that the FSLN is pulling for the Democrats. The FSLN claims there is a distance between the Democratic Party and the contras, especially between Speaker of the House Jim Wright and the contras. Wright has his own observer in the FSLN/contra talks, and the FSLN believes this is evidence of his disagreement with the contras.

The construction strike

We also met workers who had been active in the construction strike. One striker was only 17-years-old. His story:

"The union [SCAAS; whose leadership is affiliated to the SP, which is one of the Nicaraguan revisionist parties] was prolonging the strike because they weren't negotiating. I didn't know of FO before the strike. An FO comrade came to my work center. He gave an orientation, and the whole thing was good, so I started working with FO. We put out posters, collected money, and gave 'coupons of solidarity' to people who contributed (usually five cordobas). We gave speeches with a megaphone.

"The SCAAS leaders were saying 'FO is robbing the workers.' We told other workers and leaders that it wasn't true--everything we collected was distributed to the workers.

"The SCAAS union bureaucrats wouldn't let us enter the union meeting. CAUS [the leaders of auto repair workers' union, CAUS, are affiliated with the other Nicaraguan revisionist party, the CP] leaders said to workers inside that FO sympathizers were boycotting the meeting.

"If any of us entered we would question the presence of the parties of the right-wing. 'How is it possible that in a struggle for the demands of the workers the slogans of the right-wing are introduced?' That is why they wouldn't let us in.

"Since we couldn't enter, we went to the FO office, carried out activities and collected funds. The police came and arrested four comrades.

"They gave us six months in prison. [But they got out sooner.] No food or water for two days. They took us in

the night for interrogation:

"'Why were you in the streets? Does FO have weapons?' We said no. The police said 'You are giving space to the contras, you and FO.'

"No, we replied, we are not giving space to the contras, we are striking for our interests.

"The FSLN police said, 'If you don't tell the truth, we will shoot you'.

"They beat me the day they arrested me. 'What Party are you with?' MAP-ML. 'MAP has relations with right-wing parties.' No, the right-wing parties have a bourgeois line and our Party has a class line."

[More on the construction strike can be found in "The workers' Front Sums Up the Construction Strike" in the Sept. 15 issue of the Supplement.]

Committees of Popular Struggle

The FO helps the workers set up united front organizations of activists at the base. These are organized outside the workplace as well as inside. We visited the Barrio San Judas where the "Erlinda Lopez Committee of Struggle" was active. This is a community organization that fights for better living conditions, food, services, etc. We met one of the leaders who was a trade union activist in the auto workers' strike and a Sandinista.

The memorial service for the martyrs of MILPAS who fell in the struggle against Somoza

In this community, on July 15, a memorial service was organized for the martyrs from the barrio who fell in the struggle against Somoza, including MILPAS martyrs and others. Many of the mothers of the martyrs came. A permit had been obtained for the meeting. Nevertheless the Sandinistas broke it up and dispersed it.

The Committee of Popular Struggle sent out a letter of protest to the FSLN. They explained the situation to the people who attended the memorial and to the mothers of the martyrs. One of the things the meeting had done was place a monument to Saul Obregon, a hero of the MILPAS. MAP had placed a monument years ago, but it had deteriorated. The FSLN didn't touch the new memorial.

In the countryside

We visited the countryside, taking a bus to Dolores, about 40 kilometers south of Managua. The MLPN has always had a presence here. In fact, Dolores was liberated from the Somocistas by

the MILPAS (workers' militia organized by MAP-ML), and the town hall is named after a martyr of the MILPAS.

MAP organized the government here right after the liberation, but the FSLN took over soon after. The FSLN appointed the mayor of Dolores in 1982. Since then, he has not given any reports on finances or other activities. In fact, nine years after the revolution most mayors and local officials are still appointed, and only a few are elected.

The conditions in the countryside are worse than in the city.

At the hospital there is no medicine to buy. They give you a prescription and one pill, but they can't fill the prescription.

Hunger is increasing in this period for children and everyone.

The minimum salary is 60 cordobas/day. You can't even buy a pound of rice for 60 cordobas, and a family needs three pounds per day if it eats only rice. Breakfast here is just coffee (without sugar). They now eat only once or twice a day. Traditionally they ate four times a day.

They told us that "The Sandinistas say 'if you talk about poverty, you're a counter-revolutionary.'"

The government gives some provisions free to each peasant family in this area:

- 5 pounds of rice for 15 days,
- 5 pounds of sugar for 15 days,
- and one-quarter pound of oil.

In general the families are large, and often the supplies don't come through. This past month, they came only once instead of twice.

We met peasants in a self-help cooperative organized by FO. In the meeting we met with seven peasants, all owners of small plots of land. They grow rice, beans, wheat and corn. They produce enough for themselves when there is a good winter; when winter is bad, they can't make ends meet.

There are nine families in this cooperative; they work their fields separately but collaborate to solve problems. FSLN does nothing for them. Four years ago the Sandinistas came and shot their guns in the air to scare the peasants away from the FO.

Recently the banks cut back on credit. Last year was a bad year. They had to starve and sacrifice their food to have seed to plant this year. This year the crop is good, but they were unable to fully plant their land due to lack of seed, money, insecticide.

They told us that "In these zones the struggle is more to get credit, seeds, and insecticides than land." It costs about 3,000 cordobas to plant one manzana [somewhat more than an acre]. Also the peasants have trouble selling their product. FO works to assist them. And land too does remain a big issue with them.

The FSLN's land reform

But what about the famous FSLN land reform? Where are cooperatives in this area?

The only one in this whole zone is the Saul Obregon Cooperative (named after a MILPAS martyr) which has 1,800 manzanas of land for 22 families. It is further down the road from where we met the other peasants. But these families are all inter-related. They hired other workers and act like bosses. You can not just join the cooperative.

We had discussion with a MLPN comrade about the land question. He pointed out that in this area they grow coffee on fincas (plantations), in Masaya, cotton. Some of the fincas are state-owned, some private, but not many are large. Nevertheless the best lands are in private hands, while the state lands are less desirable.

He pointed out that there is a serious problem that the law bans land seizures. Also the peasants are not organized enough or conscious enough to seize land.

Meanwhile the FSLN could buy land for peasants, but they'd rather buy land for the bourgeoisie, for example, Enrique Bolanos.

In Masaya, the peasants confiscated the land of Bolanos, president of COSEP [the Superior Council of Private Enterprise] outright in 1981. The government offered to give him twice the acreage elsewhere, but he was more interested politically in posing as the victim of confiscation so he has been opposing a settlement. The FSLN keeps trying to negotiate with him, to settle which land he'll get and how much.

He also gave the example of Roger Miranda. This high-ranking Sandinista defected to the U.S. recently. The government took his land and gave it to peasants. But now the government is taking it back and giving it to Miranda's family!

The FSLN policies--the ban on land seizures, the lack of credit, the low prices they pay for crops--are driving the peasants into the city. Some are fleeing the war and others are just driven out because of capitalist agriculture. <>

ON DIFFERENCES OF VIEWS AMONG THE REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVISTS IN EL SALVADOR

The mass struggle in El Salvador continues despite the bombs on the liberated areas and the death squads in the cities. The workers and peasants of this small county, with only five million people, continue to struggle against a brutal tyranny backed up by hundreds of millions of dollars of U.S. aid. Indeed, there is now a new upsurge among the masses in the cities, and organizations and protests of all kinds are being organized in El Salvador.

Inside the Salvadoran mass movements, there are differences concerning the path of struggle. In the U.S., there are those who say that the solidarity movement should support whatever is said in El Salvador. Besides the foolishness of believing that a powerful solidarity struggle could be build up without the activists thinking over the issues for themselves, this ignores the fact that there are differences within the ranks of the Salvadoran activists.

This month there have been some protest actions in the U.S. against U.S. intervention in El Salvador. There is also a national tour of the U.S. by the Salvadoran leader Ruben Zamora. And the political crisis in El Salvador continues to percolate. All this underlines the importance of the issues of revolutionary strategy.

Below we reproduce a document from a newly-formed organization in El Salvador, the Salvadoran Workers' Tendency (**Tendencia de los Trabajadores Salvadoreños**, or TTS). We have only a bit of information about it, but it appears to be a grouping of a number of forces that have been active in the struggle in the cities against the exploitation and repression of the oligarchy. We do not necessarily agree with the views in TTS's document on past

events or present strategy, but we are reproducing it in order to help give activists and class-conscious workers an idea of the range of views among the Salvadoran activists.

For one thing, it openly criticizes some of the activities of the reformists Guillermo Ungo and Ruben Zamora. (See Sec. VI) Ungo and Zamora are leaders of the FDR, but they have been denigrating the armed liberation struggle, the class struggle, and the revolution. They have been strenuously seeking support from U.S. politicians and the Salvadoran bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, the document also talks of unity as a first principle. (See Sec. V) It doesn't only talk of unity of action of the revolutionary forces, which is a necessity for the toilers in their struggle against the blood-stained regime and its barbaric Pentagon and State Department backers. It also states that "In the present conditions, nothing justifies a rupture or division in the FDR-FMLN." But, in fact, such divisions already exist inside FDR/FMLN and inside the toilers' movements as a whole. There have been bitter divisions for some time on revolutionary strategy, and Ungo and Zamora's denunciation of the revolutionary path constitute another such division. The dominant leadership of the FDR/FMLN, complacently watching Ungo and Zamora denounce the revolution, is placing fierce pressure on the left-wing critics of Ungo and Zamora, including taking repressive steps against some. It is necessary to take account of these divisions in order to see how to struggle for the unity of the workers and peasants behind the revolutionary path.

The document below has been translated by the **Workers' Advocate** staff. <>

TO ORGANIZE THE REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY AND ACTION OF THE MASSES
From the Tendencia de los Trabajadores Salvadoreños -- mid-1988

I. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE PRESENT SITUATION

A) The opportune moment is lost

The mass movement had been on a continual rise from before the fall of [former military dic-

tator] Romero. This continual ascendancy of the masses had its culminating point on January 22, 1980, when the social and political conditions had matured for the launching of a successful insurrection, but these conditions were not taken advantage of due to the absence of a clear and definitive directive of a decisive line towards insurrec-

tion on the part of the leadership, which remained in the hands of the FDR-FMLN which let the opportunity go by. In these conditions the mass movement had achieved the complete destabilization of the dictatorship, had profoundly divided the bourgeoisie, had destroyed the functioning of the social and political institutions of the regime, and had mobilized and organized practically 100% of the working class and, in all probability, a percentage of the peasantry such as had never been seen; this is to say that the political and social conditions for an insurrection were present and that the absence of a correct leadership deteriorated these conditions in such a manner that the conditions for a victory in the offensive of 1981 were not prepared.

"At the center of all our political-military strategy at the present is the problem of the advance of the masses towards the general insurrection.

"In relation to this point it is useful to point out, as a fundamental premise, that the mass movement in El Salvador since May 1980 entered a process of ebb that was manifested in the following manner:

"a- Reduction of the mass activity in the cities to a very low level.

"b- The creation by the enemy of totally adverse conditions for the forms of struggle used up to that time.

"c- Very big blows (in some cases almost total) to the political and military apparatus of the organizations in the principal cities.

"d- An evident lowering of the morale of the masses, to the point of beginning to resist participation in actions for fear of the enemy's repression.

"All of this was a result of the fact that the revolutionary movement didn't achieve a qualitative leap in terms of mass struggle that would have permitted entry into a stage of struggle for power. On the contrary, the struggle was maintained under forms that were totally vulnerable to the impact of the enemy's military apparatus and which did not put forward a definition of the situation to the masses.

"The resistance of the masses to participation....; was a lack of confidence in the vanguard which was not capable of putting forward a political-military strategy that would give meaning to the strength that they had been realizing." (Taken from documents of ERP-PRS, "Military development and insurrectional

perspective in El Salvador", February, 1982)

B) From Ascendency to Ebb

So, the mass movement, beginning in May 1980 enters a situation of ebb, which was made obvious and deeper in the development of, and after the offensive of January 10. The dictatorship achieved practical military and social control of the main urban centers in El Salvador. At that time it wasn't possible to clearly appreciate how much advantage this situation had given the dictatorship and how deep the blow was for the masses, nor how long a time the ebb would be prolonged.

Only the development of the class struggle would answer these questions. What became evident after the offensive was that the dictatorship passed from the defensive to the offensive. This was a step with the expectation of taking the initiative, allowing the dictatorship, with the millions of aid from Yankee imperialism, the massive reorganization of the military apparatus against the organized popular movement.

The January 10th offensive was a partial defeat, not a crushing of the popular movement. It was hoped that after the results and the experience that it left, that the FMLN would plan out a line of systematic organizational work during the ebb period that the masses confronted; but in fact this did not happen. The militaristic and verticalist [bureaucratic or top down] line ended up imposing itself on the fact that it is the masses who make revolutions and that resources and strength had to be dedicated to the reorganization of the mass movement. This militaristic [line] was

Organize the revolutionary activity and action of the masses

Tendencia de los Trabajadores Salvadoreños

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what led the FMLN to postpone the moment of the insurrection until better military conditions were had, to postpone the moment in which the immense majority of the exploited and oppressed in El Salvador were in perfect conditions to smash the regime.

"Apparently, sufficient military power didn't exist to push an insurrectional strategy that constituted the answer that needed to be given in that moment; but the problem of the military power of the vanguard, in the final instance, is not a quantitative problem but rather is political.

"In the existing conditions of that moment, with a third or perhaps a fourth of the military power that now exists, it would have been possible to militarily overthrow the enemy. The political unity of the revolutionary forces would have given the conditions to multiply the military power until the time the military strength would have shown itself.

"The level of military presence that the masses required at that time to resolutely launch a general insurrectional strike was much less than what is now necessary.

"In those conditions [the FMLN] did not have the capacity to conclude something that was obvious: that in El Salvador and Central America there existed and exists a revolutionary situation." (From a document of the ERP-PRS, "Military development and insurrectional perspective in El Salvador", Feb. 1982)

C) A different situation

The open war has been prolonged over eight years. The FMLN maintains and reaffirms its presence. The masses mobilize in a spontaneous manner. The principal spokesmen of imperialism recognize one thing: the failure of the dictatorship and the U.S. government in their objective of destroying the popular movement. This is absolutely extraordinary, because, if in January [1981] we were facing the failure of the insurrectional offensive, today we face the failure of the dictatorship in its attempt for eight years to crush the struggle of the people. A completely different situation, because in the first case we were facing a defeat, now we are facing a victory. This victory would have been better, faster, and definitive if a decisive and clear line of organization of the mass movements in the principal cities had been

carried out. The present situation is completely different. We can characterize it as a stalemate ["enpantanamiento" in the original] where the war situation is prolonged in an indefinite manner, without a force that can impose itself over the other. Only the organization and participation of the workers' and popular movement, which began to show itself in mid-1984, has been capable at certain moments to give a different dynamic to events and to put into question the existence of the governments in their turn. This including the government of Jose Napoleon Duarte, who for a time was able to create a social base of support, thanks to the social pact made with the UPD.

II. THE PRESENT PERIOD: A STALEMATE

In the light of the failure of the dictatorship in its attempt to destroy the popular movement, we can appreciate two things:

(a) that our people have, for a long time, been fighting for the overthrow of the dictatorship,

(b) that a destabilization has been produced so powerful that the regime doesn't have the capacity to recover security and stability unless it achieves the total crushing of our people.

The failure of the regime shows us this and further confirms for us that the masses have reached such a level of development that their crushing has not been possible for the dictatorship and its military apparatus. This shows us that despite the grave errors of leadership committed by the FDR-FMLN, the masses essentially maintain all their potential to recover lost time and to pass to the initiative. This continued failure of the dictatorship tells us then that the revolutionary situation continues to be present in our country, this is to say, the conditions, the necessity, the urgency of the popular revolution of national liberation against the dictatorship, imperialism and its allies.

In January and February of 1981, many questioned if we had passed into a reactionary period and if the defeat had been total; but no, eight years later we continue to be in a revolutionary situation. Facing the defeat of January we had to be prudent and retreat, facing the failure of the dictatorship reveals a different situation. This situation is the period of stagnation. Why? Because the defeat of January [1981] permitted the dictatorship to take political and military initiatives and to use them. With the combination of their initiatives they counted on crushing the mass movement. But they didn't achieve that and many of their policies and projects failed and fell to pieces. The military and political achievements which they have gained on certain occasion, above

all under the dictatorship of Duarte and Christian Democracy, did not manage to be articulated within a perspective of crushing [the movement] and faded in the short term, making evident the depth of the regime's crisis. In the framework of the situation of stalemate, the masses began to note this tremendous weakness and have begun anew to mobilize.

The failure of the dictatorship also shows that none of the warring sectors, nor the people, are capable of imposing themselves over the other in an immediate way and that the war is prolonged in an indefinite manner.

This reality can serve both policies, one revolutionary and the other with a reactionary character. The first consists in putting forward clearly the necessity to work together with the masses and give new possibilities for organization and development of their own mobilization to again be in condition to launch the offensive. In no way can this process be conceived in a straight line, and within it moments of relative openings, of elections, of dialog must be considered. This work must consider the political and military element, the legal and illegal element. The second [i.e. reactionary] line is, that if none of the sectors are capable of imposing themselves military, perhaps the moment has arrived to reach an agreement by other methods and political means, to arrive at a negotiated agreement. But at the same time this agreement has not been possible which is verified because, despite all the failures of the dictators in turn, imperialism is totally determined to crush the forces of our people. Any peace negotiation has disarming as a condition, and logically disarming is military defeat. The objective of war is nothing other than to violently disarm the adversary. If this objective can be achieved by peaceful, negotiated means, logically that is a defeat or a betrayal, or whatever one wishes to call it.

If one analyzes this aspect, it is because it is necessary to have the effects of the period of stagnation perfectly clear. This period is highly favorable to the masses even if they don't totally recover. The dictatorship, with the stagnation, shows that it is incapable of returning to the domination that it had in the past, reveals its incapacity to assure its own ruling class a minimum of stability and facing this instability, despite all of its efforts, the last card stays with imperialism: that is, that of its own and massive military intervention. But imperialism has many difficulties to play this card. Facing this, during a certain time in which neither the dictatorship has new alternatives to win the war in an immediate manner, nor does imperialism put into effect direct military intervention, the stalemate deepens, beginning a greater instability which feeds the mass movement.

III. THE RELATION OF FORCES CONTINUES TO FAVOR THE PEOPLE

Political errors are without a doubt the principal determining factor of the present period of stalemate, but they are not the only factor. Certain changed events in the international arena have been unfavorable to us. The change in administration in the U.S. has implied a more decisive support for the dictatorship and has committed U.S. imperialism more and more to the counterrevolutionary attempt to crush the peoples of Central America.

But neither is it correct to overestimate the weight and influence of the international factors. These do not act in a manner isolated from the national reality. Above all, it is political judgement, defermination in combat and the optimum use of all the political and social forces at the best indicated movement, which always end up also deciding the movement and the attitude of the international factors. This is particularly true in the present world situation in which we live. In this sense it would not be incorrect to note that the political errors in leadership, which were manifested in the failure of the offensive of January 10, 1981, also have acted in a sense to reaffirm the illusions which imperialism has that it is possible to crush our people.

Nevertheless, in the struggle of the Salvadoran people, and despite the errors, the national relation of forces continues to be in favor of the people.

Imperialism is sinking deeper every day in an enormous economic crisis and in a chaotic world political situation. In no place more than in the U.S. itself has the solidarity movement with the struggle of our people flourished. We remember that various years passed of massive military intervention in Viet Nam before the masses in the U.S. rose in struggle against the war. Now, differently, U.S. imperialism still hasn't intervened massively in Central America and already there exists an organized mass movement against intervention.

Another thing, on a Central American scale, the movement of the peoples continues its course at the same rhythm in that the Nicaraguan people have defended their revolution. Conditions do not exist for imperialism to act with a free hand and to be able to crush the will to struggle of the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran people. It has to limit its own play of forces.

In conclusion, we can affirm then that for the Salvadoran people in their struggle against the dictatorship the correlation of forces continues to favor the people.

The stalemate has had an affect and the dic-

tatorship has been able to retake a certain initiative in the military field and in the political field. But it has not produced any crushing defeat of the popular forces and with an appropriate policy it is possible to create anew the conditions for victory.

Obviously this is not the only eventuality. In this nothing functions automatically. As well, the present conditions of struggle of our people could deteriorate even more. New errors now could be fatal.

IV. THE STATE OF THE BOURGEOISIE AT THIS MOMENT

The political parties of the ruling class, those which have emerged and those which are emerging, are one of the products of the stalemate. Why? Because it is evident that such parties would not have emerged if there had been a victory for the masses in January 1981. Nor would they have emerged if the dictatorship had achieved the complete crushing of the masses, if it had imposed a completely controlled iron military domination of the Pinochet type, and if the bourgeoisie had put its hopes in this domination. But there hasn't been victory for the masses nor success for the dictatorship, and since February 1981 there has been stagnation. So the disjointed bourgeoisie looks for organizational forms for its forces and political positions.

The parties they have created are not the product of confidence in them, but rather the result of its disorder, its demoralization, its desperate hysteria. They are real forms of grouping of the bourgeoisie, around different forms of approach to the problem of the fight against our people. But the essential point is, if it is true that they have maintained their structures and have won some social base of support, above all among the petty bourgeoisie, they are not the center of organization of the dispossessed and exploited masses. The only thing which would permit them to have a social base of support among the masses would have been the complete defeat of the people's struggle, a defeat which has not and doesn't exist. They do not have a base of support nor are they a place for the reorganization of our people. It has to be understood that on certain occasions the masses group around the bourgeois parties, struggling for their demands and democratic aspirations. And thus we saw a large number of the masses around the PDC in 1972 and 1977. But, at the present, none of the bourgeois parties is the place for the grouping of our people. In the first place because the masses don't recognize their fight against the dictatorship there [i.e. as being with the bourgeois parties]. The masses have continued their struggle with their structures

in some cases destroyed or greatly weakened without organizers, having lost some ground since the time of the failure of January 10, 1981. But the masses always continue against the dictatorship, and to continue against the dictatorship they are in the sector where they see effective combat against the enemy and not in the parties which were born in the bosom of the bourgeoisie. For this reason such parties are not able to attract a great volume of masses.

V. REINFORCE THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP OF THE PEOPLE

The FDR-FMLN political and military combination continues to be the political and military leadership of all the forces that are confronting the dictatorship. In its ranks, in its policies and in its directives, is decided the future of the struggle against the enemy. That's how it was the 10th of January 1981. That's how it continues to be today. The organic integrity of the FDR-FMLN must be defended unconditionally, as regards the unity in action of the main organized forces of the people and as an instrument of political combat for the political and social isolation of the dictatorship. [Underlining as in the original]

This element is fundamental and primary over any other consideration. This is so, even if there is disagreement with the presence of one or another of its components, if there exist divergencies with one or another aspect of its orientations, or with the totality of its present program. In the present conditions, nothing justifies a rupture or division in the FDR-FMLN; ruptures and divisions have to be fought against. All obstacles to the strengthening of unity must be swept aside. In particular, unity has to be broadened without sectarianism or conditions to all the popular forces which fight the dictatorship.

VI. ON THE DIALOG AND THE ELECTIONS

The political themes with the most impact at this time center around the supposed dialog of the FDR-FMLN with the dictatorship in search of a political solution, that is to say, a non-military solution, to the present situation and also around the municipal and departmental elections of 1988 and the presidential elections of 1989.

It is necessary to have perfect clarity in relation to both things, given that in the necessity to express our position regarding the possible negotiations we must look to do so not by the subjective route of the intentions attributed, legitimate or not, to the parties in question.

Unquestionably, the negotiations are another

instrument of war and politics. All depends on how they are used to stimulate and create better conditions for the masses' activity and the favorable military development of the war. But in general terms both parties in conflict try to use the negotiations with proposals identically favorable to each part and unfavorable to the enemy. It is absurd then to think that one can go much further at the negotiating table than what has been achieved in the political and military field. It is grotesque to create this illusion in the ranks of the people. The terms of the negotiations are ultimately dictated by the relation of forces and their perspectives of evolution. If negotiations are opened between the warring forces, they must be utilized by the masses to pass to action reinforcing the negotiating capacity of those acting in the negotiations as representatives recognized by the popular forces.

But on one thing one must be clear: in the present situation a definitive solution is not possible except by the military path and revolutionary action of the masses. There are only two possible solutions: the crushing of the people or the overthrow of the dictatorship. Both are military. By military we mean the combination of all the forms of political struggle -- democratic, diplomatic and armed, that end in sum in a violent decisive confrontation in which one of the forces in conflict is destroyed. This doesn't exclude intermediate periods, political openings and other types of phenomena that are produced in every war. But it does exclude the coexistence of the people, democracy and national sovereignty without a total dismantling of the present state and its military machinery. The same type of reasoning can be made with relation to the supposed elections in the middle of a civil war.

When the masses consider that they have in their hands a political, legal, electoral instrument of dialog or whatever is presented, the masses will use it. If they consider that through the elections they are going to liberate themselves from the dictatorship and resolve the big problems of our country, it is because such illusions have been created among them; and the masses will take up the elections and give their support to one of the competitors, to Duarte, for example, who won the elections in 1972 and Erlich who won in 1977.

At the present the dictatorship uses the elections as a way to make revolutionary action and struggle of the masses illegitimate, to gain a social base of support, and to justify again the millions of aid that imperialism gives it every year.

This insistent motion towards elections on the part of the dictatorship and the repeated incapacity to boycott them are proof also of the relative recuperation of initiative of the regime in

the political field.

The recent arrival of Ungo and Zamora in El Salvador to see if there are possibilities to integrate themselves into the political life of the country, searching for a social pact originally with the PCN, which was not fruitful, and afterwards with the PSD, which led to the origin of the Democratic Convergence, also confirms this fact. The problem, and what is condemnable at the present moment, is not the fact of a search to take advantage of the political openings or space, to take advantage of these spaces is a responsibility and an obligation for the revolutionaries, above all when it is recognized that the regime is also retaking the initiative in this field.

What is condemnable is to try to give or to give credit to parties with a clear bourgeois orientation and who are even compromised in the repression and assassination of our people, like the PCN and the PSD. What is condemnable is to boycott and make difficult any initiative of the toilers themselves oriented at taking advantage of the political spaces in favor of the people themselves.

We don't either exclude the necessity to take advantage of the political space which comes from the "supposed democratic elections" called for by the dictatorship. We are clear that the elections are not a path for the seizure of power, not an instrument to solve the big problems of our country while the dictatorship, the bourgeoisie and the hands of imperialism continue to exist in our countries.

To seize the initiative from the dictatorship also in the political field, one can't depend on gestures, phrases, or genial proposals that it could be so.

This is a law that we must respect: The political initiative of the people lies in the revolutionary action of the people. It has to be organized and stimulated to make as brief as possible this obligatory period of retreat and recuperation of forces, tying ourselves to the perspective of popular triumph!

VII. TO STIMULATE AND ORGANIZE THE REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY OF THE MASSES

In the concrete geographic-military and political conditions of El Salvador no defensive or offensive military strategic line can be effectively maintained for an indefinite time without an awakening to action of the organized and unorganized movement of the toiling people. The effectiveness and the whole future of the struggle against the dictatorship, the bourgeoisie and imperialism continues to be decided not by the military apparatuses seen in

themselves but rather by their relation to the revolutionary activity and action of the masses. The legitimate and decisive rearguard of the armed popular forces is found not in the logistical supply centers but in the political activity of the masses.

The line with which the FRD-FMLN confronted the general offensive of January left a formidable vacuum of popular cadres, a vacuum of political presence and of leadership in all of the organized sectors of the people. Since then it has been essential to fill that vacuum with an organized, broad, centralized and renovated line centered in the national, anti-imperialist, patriotic, democratic, and revolutionary aspirations of the people -- combining local initiative with national campaigns skillfully conceived on the basis of those elements of the national life which most push forward the masses towards action.

The reanimation of the masses' activity depends on multiple factors, and in this sense also on military activity. But never exclusively on that. It is also necessary to retake all the forms of or

ganization and of struggle of the people, to act in the ranks of the masses as an instrument of their self-organization in all fields of social life, in a firm and obstinate manner despite and against all the limitations imposed by the present conditions. The political, democratic and economic battles must be pushed forward. All organizational forms that gather anew the people must be stimulated and strengthened. It is necessary to centralize and give form to the expression of all the dispersed forces of the masses to regroup after being practically abandoned.

Pass from simple forms of mass action to more complex, combine them with the course of the war itself in an active and conscious process for the recuperation of forces. Give genuine political battle, deploy resources and cadre so that the masses again pass to action in the urban zones, alleviate the military pressure that is exercised against the military units of the people in other zones, contribute to the creation of new conditions for victory. <>

RACISM, SEXISM, AND CARPAL TUNNEL AT BOEING AIRCRAFT

From a Sept. 11 leaflet of the MLP-Seattle:

One can tell the labor grade (wage rate) at any Boeing shop or work area by simply walking in and looking at the color and sex of the workers. If a quarter or more of the workers are black or Asian, or more than half are women, then the shop is most likely grades one through three (lowest pay). If there is a handful of blacks, Asians and women, then it will most likely be grade four. If the shop is almost entirely white male, then it is grade six or higher.

The No. 2 building (composite shop) at Auburn is an example of this policy. Over three quarters of the workers are women and more than a quarter are black or Asian. Most workers are grades one, two or three. It is typical of the sweatshops that exist at every Boeing plant. These shops and areas have the lowest wages. Boeing fills them with minorities and women and won't let them transfer out. It usually imposes a "plantation-style" management--predominantly white male. These overseers apply a higher level of harassment than is typical company-wide and especially ride the blacks and women.

The 2 building shows that Boeing not only forces the black, Asian and women workers into

lower-paying jobs, but also into dangerous ones. Moreover, the vast majority of minorities and women at Boeing are assigned to repetitious, tedious and stultifying work. This is often the case even with the handful of blacks and women in upper labor grades, who usually have the most menial work assignments reserved for them.

Carpal tunnel syndrome

Another example of both tedious and dangerous work assigned to minorities is the wire shop at Renton. It has high percentages of women and minority workers and low wages like the Auburn 2 building. Much of the work there (wire assembly) requires fine hand movements and of course at a rapid pace. This causes a large amount of workers to eventually develop carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS).

CTS is a big scandal at Boeing that is being kept under wrap. Heavy riveters, electrical assemblers, computer terminal operators and others have high risk of developing it. Untold numbers are already disabled to one degree or another. Besides redesigning tools and procedures, the general solution to this problem are simple: 1) Slow

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CARDENAS AND THE MEXICAN ELECTION CRISIS

Continued from the front page

general, have refused to accept this. There is also widespread disgust among the masses. The outrage against PRI's rule and methods is at a fever pitch. Many people who had voted for the opposition feel cheated. There are rumblings of protest. A number of rallies have drawn tens of thousands of people into the streets to protest the PRI electoral fraud.

The elections have created a more fluid situation in Mexican politics than has been seen for some time. There is a political crisis. The political monopoly of the ruling sections of the bourgeoisie, grouped around PRI, has developed some cracks.

However, the bourgeois opposition candidates do not represent hope for the masses: PAN represents another, more rightist wing of the bourgeoisie; and Cardenas wants to restore popular confidence in a more traditional type of PRI government. But so far both the official PRI and the opposition have proved unable to direct the situation as they would like. The crisis may bring results different from what either PRI or the bourgeois opposition wants. For now, the instability of the political system provides room for the development of the class struggle.

Meanwhile the opportunist forces in the opposition vacillate in deciding which of the bourgeois opposition forces to trail behind. The lack of an organized revolutionary force truly independent of the Mexican bourgeoisie limits the possibilities for the Mexican toilers. It is a crucial task facing the class conscious workers to make use of this political crisis to develop revolutionary organization, and a Leninist proletarian party in particular, as they push forward the mass struggles. Such organization, and the development of the class struggle, could provide a rallying point for all Mexican toilers.

How did this state of affairs emerge in Mexico this year?

Workers and Peasants Against Austerity

Overall the mass movement in Mexico has been rather low for some time. This had allowed even the right-wing party of the wealthy, PAN, to gain credibility as the champion of the masses in certain parts of Mexico because not much else was going on.

Nevertheless, the increasing painful economic

situation for the masses has led to anger building up among the toilers. The backdrop for the present electoral crisis is the growing discontent among the workers and poor, which threatens to break out into class battles.

Millions of toilers have become disenchanted with the PRI during the last six years, as President de la Madrid launched one austerity drive after another against the masses. Mexico went into deep financial crisis when the capitalist oil boom went bust, and de la Madrid's response was to take it out of the hides of the toilers.

In conjunction with the International Monetary Fund, de la Madrid has closed state-run plants, cut back on subsidies, and held down wages. More than four million workers lost their jobs, and unemployment is now estimated to be around 50%. The government cut back subsidies for transport, food, and education. It also pressured public and private sector workers to accept wage freezes. As a result real wages have declined by 50% as the peso has fallen through skyrocketing inflation and devaluation.

The workers have not accepted this lying down. There have been militant strikes by auto workers, garment workers, teachers, etc. Student dissent has increased. Toilers in the countryside are in turmoil. Large contingents of government employees have waged some short strikes.

Many strikes have been met by official terror. Dozens of strikers and working class activists have been murdered, and many more have been "disappeared".

The overall size of these struggles is still limited. A major negative factor has been the influence of the trade union bureaucrats of the CTM, the main trade union center. The CTM is a key bulwark of PRI rule. Last fall, in response to a nationwide agitation for a general strike against

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PRI's austerity policies, CTM leaders signed an "Economic Solidarity Pact" with the government. This pact committed the CTM unions to support for a wage freeze. The pact ostensibly also included a price freeze, but this has proven hollow in practice.

In the face of savage austerity measures, however, such a lid on the workers' movement cannot be maintained forever. Some of the top PRI politicians could see the writing on the wall. Something else was needed by the ruling class to calm down the masses.

A Dissident PRI Faction

In this situation a reformist faction emerged within the PRI and ended up challenging the official PRI slate in the July 6 national elections.

In the fall of 1986 Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, a leading PRI politician, formed a group inside PRI, called the Democratic Current, to lobby for PRI selecting Cardenas as their presidential candidate. Cardenas advocated that the government suspend interest payments on its huge international debt, and that some reforms should be instituted within PRI and the electoral system generally. The main thrust of his campaign however was reforms within the PRI candidate selection system; he did not say much about changing the social conditions of the toilers. His strategy was to have PRI allow some political room to those bourgeois and reformist sectors that have been shut out by the political monopoly of the dominant PRI factions. The hope of the Cardenas faction was that such a face-lift for the PRI would cut short mass disenchantment with the party in these troubled times.

Cardenas presented himself as a more orthodox adherent of PRI than the present PRI administration. And his plan to reinvigorate PRI has many parallels to the work of his father, General Lazaro Cardenas, who was president of Mexico from 1934 to 1940. By the early 1930's, during the world depression, discontent was rising in Mexico and the National Revolutionary Party (PRI's predecessor) was losing its grip. The PNR faced the danger that the toilers might shake the edifice of the nationalist bourgeoisie. So the PNR turned to a popular general from the revolution, Lazaro Cardenas, for the presidency.

Cardenas senior gained a populist and nationalist reputation by carrying out a number of reforms. He distributed more land to the peasants than had been done previously (the bourgeoisie had failed to carry through on this and other promises of the revolution). He nationalized the oil industry in an attempt to make foreign investors obey Mexican law.

But he aimed at ensuring the domination of the

national bourgeoisie. He sought a capitalist development of Mexico and more room for the local bourgeoisie. He sought the cooperation of even conservative capitalist groupings in Mexico, and he welcomed foreign capitalists if they would go along with the Mexican government and the local capitalists. He kept the toilers from organizing independently of the bourgeoisie. And he vastly strengthened the PNR apparatus, including its subordination of trade unions and peasant organizations. (During his term the PNR became the Party of the Mexican Revolution, or PRM, in 1938. Later, in 1946, it was renamed PRI.)

Thus Lazaro Cardenas boosted the nationalist and populist reputation of what was to become the PRI. He used his reforms to gain mass support for consolidating the rule of the national bourgeoisie. He was a major architect of the political system of tight rule by the dominant bourgeoisie that exists to the present. After his term, the next presidents undercut the reforms that benefited the masses while preserving the system of political monopoly for the ruling PRI clique.

In recent years, his son, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, has been governor of the state of Michoacan. But the PRI leadership snubbed Cardenas and selected as its presidential candidate Carlos Salinas Gortari, who has been Minister of the Budget in the de la Madrid administration. A Harvard-trained technocrat like de la Madrid, Salinas was the man in charge of the austerity program. He is known to the masses as Carlos Recortari ("Charlie Cut-backs"). Salinas vowed to run on a platform of full-speed ahead with the program of austerity and privatizations (selling off state-owned firms to private companies).

The left wing of PRI knew that this was a formula for disaster; this would only fuel the fires of mass unrest. They realized that there was urgent need for a safety valve. Thus Cardenas then split from PRI. He first planned to run on the platform of a small "loyal opposition" party that is one of several that have functioned as a left fringe of PRI. Later he launched his own electoral grouping, the National Democratic Front (FDN). Cardenas brought with him, as co-leader of FDN, a former president of PRI. And in addition, he continued to have support from other politicians and officials who remained within PRI.

His plan now was to get elected to the presidency and reestablish popular confidence in the traditional bourgeois nationalist and populist politics of PRI. He hoped to carry out this plan by either using his election to return to a leadership position in the old PRI itself, or if this proved futile, he would consolidate his own new grouping. He was quite cautious not to burn his bridges with PRI; indeed it appears that this is why he initially

didn't consider launching his own electoral grouping, and even when he did, he tried not to make it look like a political party proper.

But no matter what his intentions were, the fact that the struggle within PRI had led to a major split was to have its consequences.

Reformists in the Left Prettify Cardenas

Thus the stage was set for an electoral confrontation between PRI and a section of PRI which went over to Cardenas. This changed the focus of mainstream Mexican electoral politics. In recent years this has mainly involved a contest between PRI and the National Action Party (PAN), a right-wing pro-U.S. imperialist party which campaigns on Reagan-style, capitalist themes.

Cardenas gained the support of much of the PRI "loyal opposition". These are several small parties which have traditionally functioned as left-sounding appendages of PRI. He also won over the PMS (Mexican Socialist Party). PMS is the main reformist grouping in the Mexican left. PMS was founded a year ago by a merger between various groups, including pro-Soviet revisionists, Eurorevisionist-types, and nationalist social-democrats.

The PMS signed a 13-point accord for a "long-term political, programmatic alliance" with Cardenas. This showed on what basis it gave up the presidential campaign of its own candidate, Heberto Castillo. Far from showing the masses what was wrong with the PRI-style rhetoric of Cardenas, it prettified Cardenas before the masses and identified its goals with those of Cardenas. The accord is essentially a national-reformist document with some reactionary ideas laced in as well. It calls for improved police and defense and a "mixed economy" (which is meant to imply some opposition to PRI's privatization program). It also includes suspension of interest payments on the foreign debt.

Cardenas continued to focus his campaign on the question of political reform, but his reformist allies added a dose of social demagogy to his image.

The trotskyite Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) split over supporting Cardenas in the elections, with one section going whole hog for Cardenas. The main bulk of this party had its own separate candidate, but as has become clear in the post-election period, the PRT too has placed itself in the general orbit of Cardenas.

At bottom, the stand of the reformists towards Cardenas is based on their lack of faith in building an independent class movement of the toilers. They cannot see any progress without lining up behind a wing of the Mexican bourgeoisie. Indeed,

before Cardenas came along, various forces of the reformist left, including the PMS and the PRT, were shamefully swinging back and forth between collaboration with the forces of PRI and those of the right-wing PAN.

Cardenas and the Masses

The Cardenas campaign did succeed in drawing a response from sections of the masses, which the usually boring Mexican elections rarely do. Cardenas was supported not just by reformist parties like the PMS, but also by many community organizations and labor unions outside the CTM fold. This included the September 19 union of garment workers, which has a militant following. Many workers who hate PRI believed that Cardenas represented an alternative.

At the same time, there were other workers who did not go along -- they had had enough experience with decades of PRI rule not to trust a reform-spouting politician who had been loyal to the PRI for so long. They don't trust a politician who is committed to defending capitalism in Mexico and merely promises some political reforms.

The existence of these leftist workers is a most important feature of Mexican politics. Whether or not the present crisis in Mexico will develop the class independence of the workers' movement depends very much on whether these forces can influence the situation and move towards building a truly revolutionary party.

To accomplish their tasks, the leftist, class-conscious workers also must be able to reach out to, and help move forward, the other sections of the masses who are in ferment. They must find the way to approach toilers who are discontented and angry but have illusions in Cardenas, toilers who feel cheated by the PRI election fraud and those who are coming out in marches and protest demonstrations. Their illusions in Cardenas do not mean that they are hopeless. Rather among these people can be found workers and other toilers who want to fight PRI but have yet to learn of the need to break with traditional PRI-style views. This is the reason they still have illusions in Cardenas. The leftist workers who are clear about Cardenas have the responsibility of assisting these other workers and toilers break free of the influence of Cardenas and adopt more revolutionary conclusions.

This was an issue in the elections and remains an issue today. We will come back to this after we finish our account of the elections.

PRI Scrambles to Steal Victory

The July 6 election itself was a shock to PRI,

which had not lost a single presidential, gubernatorial or senatorial election for half a century. Though the government will not admit it, most likely Salinas actually lost the vote count.

The government promised first-night election returns. After counting the votes from Mexico City, however, it suddenly declared that the computers had malfunctioned. Later it changed the story to "bad weather". What actually happened was that the PRI leadership went into crisis after it realized that Cardenas had won in Mexico City and the surrounding states, and it refused to issue any bulletins. Election results were not made public until July 13, a week after the election.

The PRI leadership was determined to declare a victory in the election regardless of the vote count. But there was a split in the leadership over how big a victory to claim. The so-called "dinosaurs", the old guard of PRI corruption, insisted on claiming a normal PRI victory, 70% of the vote. But the new-style technocrats grouped around Salinas thought something more realistic, only around 50%, would be more acceptable. Eventually Salinas prevailed; the official count gave Salinas 50%, Cardenas 30%, and Clouthier the PAN candidate 17%.

This is probably nowhere close to the actual votes cast. The election was beset with corruption by local, regional, and national PRI officials. Even before election day "ballot factories" were discovered churning out ballots already marked for PRI. Afterwards, tons of ballots marked for FDN or PAN were found dumped in rivers and empty lots. Election day brought a heavy voter turnout, yet the number of votes counted was much lower than in previous years.

Cardenas himself was receiving secret reports of vote counting from sympathetic PRI officials; these reports led him to claim that he had won the election, getting 38% of the vote, with 35% for Salinas and 21% for PAN. In the aftermath, Cardenas claimed victory and launched a campaign to get the election results changed.

The Protest Against the Fraud

Cardenas launched a protest tour, but contradictions broke out between him and his supporters, many of whom initially camped out at election board offices. Cardenas insists on keeping his protests within legal bounds and carrying his grievances through the government's bureaucratic machinery, while in many cases his supporters are agitating for more militant protests.

Cardenas wanted desperately to prevent mass rebellions in the face of the PRI cheating. Thus he refuses to concede defeat but at the same time keeps his opposition within legal channels. He is

trying to throw cold water on militant struggle.

Repeatedly however one sees the masses want to take things further than Cardenas. For example, on August 31, 75,000 people turned out for a Cardenas protest rally in Mexico City on the day before president de la Madrid delivered his last State of the Nation speech. The people who turned out were not just satisfied to go home after the official speeches or to listen to the mariachi bands afterwards. Tens of thousands took to the streets to march instead. They carried their homemade signs, they paralyzed traffic, they chanted and sang, and they set off fireworks. When the marchers gathered at the Zocalo, the city's main plaza, troops showed up. Then official organizers from the Cardenas campaign, who had accompanied the crowd, urged them to disperse in the name of avoiding provocations.

The electoral college is currently deliberating on the presidential race. The PRI has a majority here, and its decision is a foregone conclusion. At the end of October, the final result is due to be announced. On December 1 the new president will officially take office.

Cardenas is pursuing legal appeals within the electoral college process. The mass rallies he holds are merely meant to keep up a pressure--he is not seriously interested in developing the mass struggles. And the reformists, of both the PMS and the PRT, are also trailing along in pursuing justice through the "constitutional framework". This means that they are undermining the possibility of the masses taking their outrage against the electoral fraud into directions beyond Cardenas' aims and limitations.

Meanwhile the PRI leadership has not settled on a uniform approach towards Cardenas. Within the party, two attitudes towards Cardenas have emerged. A section of the diehards, such as Fidel Velasquez, the head of the CTM labor federation, is demanding that the fist be brought down on Cardenas and other "traitors" of his ilk. They demand more use of government repression. Meanwhile, others in PRI have been trying to negotiate a deal with the Cardenas camp, whereby Cardenas would stop challenging the outcome of the presidential elections in exchange for concessions within the legislature and the PRI party apparatus.

And it's not clear what policy Cardenas himself will follow. He is caught between the carrot-and-stick approaches of PRI, his own underlying loyalty to the bourgeoisie and the PRI system, and the expectations of his supporters. His camp has been involved in negotiations with PRI, but so far there's no deal. The masses at many of his demonstrations have made clear their contempt for deals with PRI. Meanwhile, Cardenas has also an-

nounced a proposal to move his camp towards more of a political party proper. Undoubtedly this threat is useful to him as a bargaining chip for negotiations with PRI, but what the result will be is not settled yet.

The reformist PMS has supported Cardenas' proposal for a new party which would bring together the various trends who support him. The PRT is vacillating over it, but does not appear to rule it out.

For A Revolutionary Class Struggle

From the days when Cardenas emerged as a dissident faction within PRI to the present when he's considering a new party, there is a single thread. Cardenas' role is to keep the masses within the general framework of PRI's bourgeois nationalist politics. If possible, he wishes to refurbish the PRI leadership itself.

But the needs of the toilers are something else. They need to fight hunger, exploitation and never-ending austerity. They need the class struggle, and Cardenas wants no part of it.

Cardenas offers minor tinkering with the system, a renovated PRI-style system. He has no solution to the problems of the masses. As long as the Mexican bourgeoisie rules, and the imperialist bankers lord it over Mexico, the masses will be forced to bear the burden of the economic crisis. A Cardenas victory wouldn't change that. Only an organized class struggle that breaks the toilers away from the bourgeoisie can provide real improvement in their conditions at present, as well as preparation for revolution.

Tasks of the Class-Conscious Workers

Despite Cardenas' aims, the electoral crisis has, for the time being, created a more lively political situation in Mexico. PRI is beset with splits, and its monopoly has cracked. At this point PRI cannot restore its political stranglehold, and Cardenas is not in a position to impose a renovated PRI-style government in power. For the time being, neither PRI nor Cardenas can master the situation.

The fact that a left-sounding opposition to PRI is now the biggest opposition to the PRI leadership, rather than the rightist PAN, is significant. This is a situation marked by both the danger of big pitfalls (such as being swallowed up by the Cardenas campaign) and also by possibilities for revolutionary action.

The political crisis in Mexico today provides room for revolutionary activists to organize mass struggles. It is true that there are mass illusions in Cardenas, and these pose a major pitfall for the

movement. But this would not justify writing off the actions of the masses and the importance of the political crisis. On the contrary, this political crisis creates favorable conditions for the revolutionary activists, if they take advantage of it.

The importance of this political crisis does not stem from the program or aims of Cardenas. His aims and goals are so mild that they hardly amount to anything. He does not pose the crucial social problems. He is trying to divert the toilers from taking action on them. And, in the final analysis, he just wants to put a new coat of paint on PRI-style politics or, preferably, PRI itself. This means strengthening the chains binding the Mexican toilers to the bourgeoisie.

But, for the time being, the political crisis is stirring the masses despite the aims of Cardenas. The anger of the masses against the miserable economic and social conditions is manifesting itself. The legitimate hatred of the most conscious workers and activists for PRI-style hacks like Cardenas, a hatred that must be cherished and encouraged, must not lead to an abstentionist attitude to the mass struggle. On the contrary, these activists face the task of striving to deepen the crisis. The point is to break the bounds which Cardenas wishes to impose on the political activity of the masses.

Revolutionary activity in the present situation requires that revolutionary activists must keep up the fire at PRI. There must be hatred against PRI-style politics as well as the discredited PRI apparatus itself. Not only should mass militancy be encouraged, but the activists should put forward to the masses, from amidst the mass struggle, a deeper criticism of PRI. This criticism should not be allowed to remain on the level of minor tinkering as Cardenas would wish. Instead the political crisis should be used to discredit the traditional phrases and bourgeois nationalism that have enchained the Mexican masses. The path of the class struggle, the path of independence from the Mexican bourgeoisie, the path of revolutionary action against the rotten social conditions, must be set against PRI-style politics.

Revolutionary activity in the present situation demands the left-wing, activists should fight for the class independence of the movement against the bourgeois opposition. They must oppose not only the right-wing PAN but also tell the truth about Cardenas as well. There must be open criticism of the PRI-style politician Cardenas and of the bourgeois opposition as a whole. Cardenas and the bourgeois opposition would utilize the mass passions of the crisis to forge new chains to bind the masses. Criticism of Cardenas is necessary to encourage the development of truly proletarian organization and to create conditions for the

masses to go beyond Cardenas. This criticism prepares the conditions for the masses to take action when they see the inevitable betrayals by Cardenas of their demands and aspirations.

It is necessary to be able to combine this criticism with working among the toilers who have illusions in Cardenas but whose class interests and whose actions are opposed to those of Cardenas. Undoubtedly there are masses of toilers who flocked to Cardenas because they saw him as a challenge to the PRI which they hate bitterly. Partly this reflects the influence of reformist lying, but that's not all. Above all, support among toilers for Cardenas shows that these masses have only begun to break politically from the PRI influence. They haven't yet sorted out the problem with PRI-style politics.

In approaching these masses it is necessary to unite with their rising anti-PRI sentiment and actions. The experience of PRI's austerity drive and of the recent elections should be used to roundly attack the whole PRI system. This should be a springboard for the criticism of Cardenas as well, since he merely disagrees with some features of the PRI while upholding the history of PRI and the main features of PRI-style rule.

The opportunist and reformist section of the left showed how not to work in the present political crisis. They have refused to rally the workers and the toilers as a whole to an independent class stand. For years they have served as a left-sounding fringe for one or the other bourgeois force, from circulating on the fringes of PRI to even tailing behind PAN. In the election, they prettified Cardenas. They used their own "leftism" to make it sound as if Cardenas himself were taking up various social concerns of the masses.

In the circumstances of the last election, the key to their treachery was probably not whether

they voted for Cardenas or not. The crucial point was that they prettified Cardenas and PRI-style politics. They have turned left phrases into wallpaper for Cardenas and other bourgeois politicians. They are hiding the actual class struggle from the workers and toilers, and given Cardenas a red coloring that he cannot give himself. They don't undermine faith in Cardenas and help the masses onto an independent path. The opportunists of the PMS have openly established a "long-term programmatic alliance" with Cardenas, and the PRT is tying the masses into Cardenas' legalistic framework in the post-election situation.

Revolutionary activity requires that the class-conscious activists work not only to build up mass struggles, but to build up a revolutionary organization and, in particular, a Leninist proletarian party. The reformist slavishness towards Cardenas emphasizes that the reformist groups are not revolutionary parties of the working class. It shows once again that Mexican workers need a new revolutionary party.

Revolutionary organization is needed if the working class is to step forward not just as the numbers in the political struggle, but to direct and lead the political struggle. It is needed if the class struggle is to be consistent and if it is lead to a revolution.

To build up such a party requires that many of the traditional phrases in the left must be abandoned. These ideas are influenced by bourgeois nationalism and PRI-style politics. They must be replaced with the ideas of revolutionary Leninism.

Revolutionary Leninism shows the path to breaking the chains on the working class. It shows how to build up a party that is indissolubly linked to the ongoing struggle while maintaining the class independence of the toilers and the revolutionary mission of the working class. <>

BOEING: Continued from page 18

down the barcharts. Much of the problem is caused by the feverish pace of the tasks. 2) Rotate job assignments during the day to reduce time spent doing CTS-causing tasks. 3) Rotate workers out of the high risk shops. A maximum time period should be established for working those jobs, followed by transfer out with no loss of pay. Workers who show symptoms should be immediately transferred.

Boeing refuses to allow these measures. Instead, it is trying to cover up the causes of CTS and blame the workers for it. For example, an article on CTS in the Pacesetter (newspaper of the Boeing Fabrication Division) had the audacity to declare CTS a women's disorder. "CTS victims are usually women, and many factors contribute to the

demographic: women have smaller wrists than men; a woman's physiology will change during her monthly cycle, a hormonal shift occurs and body fluids build creating pressure on the nerve; and people with excess body fat seem to have more problems than those with normal levels. Many opportunities are available to lessen the risk of CTS: adjustment of hormones..." (Pacesetter, 10-30-87)

Imagine that! On pain of unemployment, Boeing forces large numbers of women to work dangerous jobs that cause CTS. Then it turns around and says that the statistics show more women get it...must have something to do with "change during her monthly cycle." Yeah, that's it.

This is a glimpse of the neanderthal mentality of top corporate Boeing. Is it any wonder that the lower level supervisors are most often bigots and male chauvinists? <>