

"WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!"

TRUTH



A BULLETIN FOR SOCIALISM AND TROTSKYISM

NO. 221 SEPTEMBER, 1987 \$0.50

For their freedom and ours ...

U.S. OUT OF NICARAGUA!

"No nation can be free that oppresses another."



MARCH AND RALLY
AGAINST U.S. INTERVENTION
IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND
SUPPORT TO APARTHEID
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4 12 NOON
KENNEDY SQUARE DETROIT
SEE PAGE 3

STOP THE PLANT CLOSINGS!

SOLIDARITY AGAINST GM & FORD

STRIKE!

SEE PAGE 6

Truth: No. 221, September, 1987
Bulletin for Socialism and Trotskyism

Initiated by the Trotskyist Organization,
Fraternal Section of the Fourth International

Published by the Editorial Board

Editorial Board for this issue: Margaret
Guttshall (Editor), David Mark, Steve
Mestl, Fred Michaels, Barbara Putnam

Truth's Editorial Board is open to all in
favor of a Trotskyist Congress. If you
would like to participate, contact the Editorial
Board. Call 542-7445 or write P.O. Box
32546, Detroit, Michigan 48232.

The Editorial Board will meet to discuss the
October issue on Saturday, September 19 and
Saturday, September 26. September 26 is
the final deadline for all articles.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

U.S. OUT OF CENTRAL AMERICA . . . 3

STOP ALL U.S. INTERVENTION IN
CENTRAL AMERICA AND SOUTHERN
AFRICA NOW! 5

OPPOSE THE CONGRESSIONAL
RESTRICTION ON TRAVEL TO
NICARAGUA 5

BIEBER'S POLICY IS: FIGHT IMPORTS!
WORKERS POLICY IS: FIGHT GM AND
FORD! 6

"JUNTA" WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT. . 9

WHO WILL REPRESENT THE MOVEMENT
IN THE 1988 ELECTIONS? 11

AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE DEMOCRATIC
PARTY 12

THE TASKS TODAY AND THE
TROTSKYISTS 14

THE TROTSKYIST CONGRESS AND
TRUTH 16

REPRINT FROM SOCIALIST ACTION ON
GORBACHEV'S REFORMS 17

Subscribe to Truth

\$3.00 for 6 issues/\$6.00 for 12 issues/\$15.00 supporting subscription

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

For their freedom and ours -- U.S. out of Central America!

By Fred Michaels

The Reagan administration is trying to recover from the Contra aid-Iran hearings.

Congress banned further support to the contras in April, 1985, when it passed the Boland Amendment. From then until the end of last year, the hearings revealed that the Reagan government secretly funded the contras by illegally selling guns to Iran and giving the profits to the contras.

Who are the Contras?

The contras are an army inside Nicaragua led by ex-officers of Anastasio Somoza. His dictatorship was overthrown by millions of Nicaraguans in 1979.

Today a majority of Americans continue to be against aid to the contras. In spite of this opposition, the Reagan government along with the Democrats in the House of Representatives, led by Jim Wright of Texas, have a plan to get more aid for the contras through Congress.

The proposal says that the U.S. will give more aid to the contras unless Nicaragua does what the U.S. wants: hold another set of elections because the U.S. thought its last elections were not fair; negotiate a cease-fire with the contra armies, even though they have no support among ordinary Nicaraguans after 8 years; send away all the people that have come to Nicaragua from Cuba to help them rebuild their country after it was ruined by the dictator Somoza.

The plan has a very good chance to get through Congress because most Congressmen agree with the Reagan government's goal in Central America: to overthrow the freely elected Nicaraguan government.

U.S. troops occupied Nicaragua against the desires of the Nicaraguan people from 1912 to 1933 to defend American plantations. The United States placed the father of Anastasio in power in 1933 after crushing a revolt of the poor people against American troops. The U.S. created the National Guard which murdered and tortured Nicaraguans for 46 years. Finally, the people could take no more and they overthrew the dictatorship with a revolution. Somoza killed 50,000 people and wounded

100,000 to defend American interests, but he was defeated.

The U.S. organized the contras in 1980. They found a former Coca-Cola businessman to be their spokesman, Adolfo Calero. The U.S. has given at least \$190 million to the contras, not counting money raised from wealthy American businesses, other governments and the illegal tax money mentioned above.

What Kind of Country is the United States?

As long as our government oppresses another country, we can never be free. Why? Because the oppression of Nicaragua, the oppression of countries around the world, has changed the kind of country we are, the kind of government we have.

The U.S. has created the biggest and most powerful military apparatus in the history of the world in order to oppress countries. The U.S. not only oppresses Nicaragua. It has placed in power and supported with our tax dollars and the lives of American youth, dictators around the world since the end of World War II. The dictators most recently overthrown -- Somoza in Nicaragua (1979), the Shah of Iran (1979), Fernando Marcos of the Philippines (1986), Claude Duvalier of Haiti (1986) -- were all supported by the U.S. and the U.S. alone of all 150 countries in the world.

Even though there is not a country in the world that threatens the U.S., we have an army of 2 million soldiers plus reserves and National Guard. The U.S. military budget is 300 billion dollars a year. It has been one-third of the total federal budget for many years. The military budget is the reason for the large U.S. debt, which costs an additional 140 billion a year in interests payments alone. At least \$.44 out of every tax dollar is used to oppress the rest of the world.

This means that while the U.S. is 1st in military strength, it ranks 10th among the nations of the world in spending for public education for each student; 17th in the number of babies that die at birth; 22nd in the number of doctors for our population.

It means that each day 30 children die of poverty. According to the Children's Defense Fund, all child poverty in the U.S. could be

eliminated by spending 14 billion dollars per year. But our government will never do it because it is a government that is designed to oppress the world.

That is why today there are so many countries that are trying to throw out U.S. bases and U.S.-sponsored dictatorships. In the last year alone, New Zealand and The Netherlands refused to allow U.S. missiles in their countries; the Phillipine government wants to renegotiate the U.S. bases there now that the U.S.-backed dictator Marcos has been overthrown; now that the Greeks have thrown out a military regime they too are demanding that U.S. bases be removed; and after getting rid of the U.S.-backed dictator Franco, the Spanish people almost voted to throw out U.S. bases.

The U.S. has been this kind of country for over 50 years and it has really affected how the people of the U.S. relate to one another. Being raised in a culture that says "We're #1" in everything, is one of the main reasons that we have not been able to overcome the racist attitudes from the past. We have a culture that does not really accept Black people or any people of color as citizens equal to the white citizens.

There are more young Black men in prison than in college. The income of Black people is not even two-thirds that of whites. And almost 50% of all Black children live in poverty.

How Can We Stop the Government's Plans?

We must dismantle the military machine, call all the troops home, and stop supporting the

dictators. Then the people of the world can be free. The first step is defeating this government's plans. We must speak with one voice: U.S. Get Out of Central America! This means:

1) End all forms of aid to the contras.

No humanitarian aid, no secret aid, no private aid. No aid to the contras leaves the U.S., under penalty of prosecution.

2) Remove all U.S. troops, advisers and equipment from the countries around Nicaragua -- Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador.

These advisers actually go into battle with the contras to kill Nicaraguans. They must all be brought home.

3) Remove the American blockade of Nicaragua so that it can freely trade with the world again. End the boycott from the international banking funds that the U.S. controls.

Winning these demands means building a powerful movement. A movement that operates in every place it can find.

The local demonstrations this fall must be a first step in a fight for a national action next spring.

For their freedom and ours, US out of Central America!

August 29, 1987



**Stop all U.S. intervention
in Central America
and Southern Africa now!**

The Detroit coalition against U.S. intervention in Central America and support to apartheid has finally decided to go ahead and build a demonstration for these demands on Sunday, October 4, at 12 noon, in downtown Detroit.

This decision represents an important step forward for the struggle in Detroit. It is the first time in a long time that such a large number of organizations have decided to continue to make an independent struggle against U.S. intervention in Central America.

An all out fight to build this demonstration and make it a first step in a fight for a national action against U.S. intervention next spring is necessary. The pro-Democratic Party forces in the coalition are not concerned with mobilizing the working class and will most certainly try to dissolve the coalition after the rally, as they did in 1984 and 1986.

At the same time, it is necessary to fight for immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all forms of aid to the contras and apartheid, including direct aid, the blockade, and U.S. forces in the surrounding countries. To support the so-called "Arias Peace Plan," which calls for national reconciliation with U.S. puppet dictatorships in Central America, can only create illusions that peace with the U.S. in Central America is possible, and undermine the struggle for independent, mass action to drive the U.S. out.

The Trotskyist Organization urges all working class organizations to join us in building the demonstration and coalition on this basis. Whether or not the Democratic Party succeeds in its goals or not depends on our struggle.

M.G.

August 29, 1987

**Oppose the Congressional restriction
on travel to Nicaragua**

On the heels of the murder of Ben Linder by contras, and all the problems that it has caused congressional supporters of the contras, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to restrict travel to Nicaragua on June 23. In a 212 to 201 vote, the House called for barring any travel that is "for the purpose of helping military operations of the Sandinista government." The vote must now go to the Senate before it becomes law. While congress has allowed the conspirators behind the arms peddling operation to the contras to go free, it wants to restrict the flow of volunteers who defend Nicaragua against US intervention. This law must be opposed. Unionists, workers, and young people should not only do everything in their power to stop the Senate from passage of this law, they also should heed the call of Ben Linder's brother to volunteer to defend Nicaragua. This is especially important now that the USSR has cut off oil for Nicaragua.

D.M.

August 29, 1987

Bieber's policy is: Fight Imports!

Workers policy is: Fight GM and Ford!

By Fred Michaels

The contract between the United Auto Workers Union (UAW) and Ford Motor Co. and General Motors expires on September 14. The contract affects directly 102,000 hourly workers at Ford and 370,000 at General Motors. In addition, for each autoworkers' job there are six supplier jobs. So millions of workers are affected by the results of this contract.

The Company's Proposals

GM's proposal as of August 31 is: 1) "allow local unions to depart from the national wage pattern and accept wage cuts in an effort to keep GM from closing a plant; 2) end cost of living adjustments for 120,000 workers in parts plants . . . and change COLA adjustments for assembly plant workers by excluding health costs; 3) a 2% lump sum payment in each of the 3 years of the contract." Ford proposals are quite similar. (Detroit Free Press, August 29, 1987).

Finally, as a Detroit Free Press writer states: "General Motors and Ford say their No. 1 goal is more flexibility on the factory floor, a touchy topic that both sides agree can't be hashed out in national negotiations because work rules and classifications vary widely among plants." (Detroit Free Press, August 8, 1987).

The UAW Demands

"A provision that GM maintain the same number of UAW workers it has now. A provision that no executive bonuses be paid unless workers receive profit-sharing checks. A substantial increase in the attendance bonus award, currently \$500 per year for perfect attendance. A new national hiring pool giving preference to laid-off workers on the basis of seniority. A requirement that GM pay stiff financial penalties for scheduling overtime beyond agreed-to levels." (Detroit Free Press, July 30, 1987)

On the question of local work rules: "UAW President Owen Bieber said he is disturbed by 'the attitude that workers should jump into the teams system without thinking twice about the protections against management abuses that

are traditionally afford by job classifications and bidding rights in conjunction with seniority."

Seventeen of GM's 164 local contracts are settled. None of Ford's 89 are.

Strike Ford and GM!

We agree with these demands, most especially the first one. And, there must be no changes in work rules or classifications agreed upon nationally. Otherwise the workers in different plants will be divided against each other when the managers bid for work, etc.

The only way to win these demands, limited as they are, is with a national strike of both companies. Otherwise, these demands will be negotiated away.

Autoworkers must start the strike to actually get a strike going. Now that Ford is picked as the target (what about the 12 plants GM is closing this year?) Ford workers must make plans now to walk out on September 13. The more plants that walk out the greater will be the chance of a national strike of Ford. Mass pickets should form and groups of picketing workers sent to inform GM workers. Only by the autoworkers taking action is any strike possible.

Making a strike is really the beginning of fighting back against the vicious attacks of the last 7 years. The whole reason why the trend of the last years, the worst in 50 years of union history, is continuing, is because the UAW has a bad program.

The Program of the UAW

The UAW program is to keep the auto companies alive (no strikes, concessions, allowing plant closings and layoffs) and in this context hope that the jobs left will be American.

This is what Owen Bieber, president of the UAW, stated in the opening negotiations with GM. He said that UAW members are "well aware of the voices both within and outside of GM that say that the answer to GM's current problems is to slash the payroll, send as much work as possible to outside suppliers, run abroad for cheap labor, and forget about

market share as long as the profit margin is high enough on every unit that does eventually get sold." We're saying to GM that you can't run and you can't hide from your obligations to this country and to your workers and their families."

"We want to make sure the so-called 'heartbeat of America' keeps on beating here and not in Korea and Mexico and Japan and Canada and all the other places GM goes for vehicles and parts while it puts tens of thousands of American workers on unemployment lines."

What's Wrong with the UAW Program?

The UAW program supports the basic drive of the auto companies: maximum profits. Today this drive is expressed in the policies to "be competitive." The most concentrated expression of this policy is the anti-import campaign. It has been this pro-auto company policy that has created the most confusion in the workers' ranks. It has been this confusion that has prevented the autoworkers from successfully defeating the rest of the UAW's pro-company policies on plant closings and layoffs.

The UAW demands that the government pass laws to stop the flow of imports into the U.S. This only increases unemployment and in fact leads to war. The steel industry has had such laws for years and there are now 50% less steel workers than before. And when the other countries restrict imports even more than now, there will be further protectionist action by the U.S. Such trade wars were one of the main causes of World War I and World War II.

Second, the UAW leadership wants to make a fight against the corporations of other countries. But they are not closing plants in the U.S. GM and Ford are. And the UAW is in fact attacking the workers of the other countries and their jobs, too. And not fighting GM and Ford!

Both Ford and GM count on the high profits they get from factories in Korea, Mexico, Japan and Canada. By siding with Ford and GM against these workers, we support this vicious exploitation.

The UAW leaders hope to negotiate with the U.S. capitalists to maintain some jobs in the U.S. under worsening conditions but better than the workers in other countries. In this way, American workers will always think that they

are better off, even as their standard of living continues to fall.

The results of the UAW program? American workers no longer have the highest standard of living in the world. Auto workers benefits have been reduced; a two-tier wage system is in place with newly hired workers receiving substantially less money and benefits than those currently working. Ford has reduced employment from 190,000 in 1978 to 104,000 today; a 43% decrease. Ford has made the largest profits of its history including 1.5 billion dollars in profits for one three month period. General Motors has not made as much money so it is in the process of cutting back its production by closing 12 assembly plants losing jobs for 30,000 workers by 1990, 17,000 of them in Michigan. Two plants, the St. Louis, Missouri and Norwood, Ohio plants closed this month.

The Fight Has Started

American autoworkers have begun to fight back with local strikes that have fought against attacks on work rules and working conditions. These strikes have raised demands against GM's national policy, such as the strike a few months ago at Pontiac Truck and Bus where workers raised the slogans of "No More Takeaways, No More Givebacks."

Autoworkers have started to fight against the plant closings with demonstrations in Detroit, Michigan and Norwood, Ohio. They have supported a plant moratorium by Congress.

But the biggest obstacle to the success of these fights has been linking these efforts to the UAW's bad program.

The demonstrations that have taken place, the rallies, all have mixed the slogans of stopping the plant closings and stopping imports. And, the Right to a Job Committees has issued leaflets and T-shirts that mix these two slogans as well.

This confuses the workers' interests and the capitalists' interests. It makes success impossible.

A New Program

The UAW needs new program that places the American workers on the side of workers in oppressed countries; a program that places the future of the American workers in their own hands and not that of the capitalists.

The first thing is to strike. There can be no advance of the autoworkers without strike action against the companies.

With this kind of struggle we can make a fight for a new program:

1) Stop the anti-import campaign -- support the workers of other countries.

2) 30 hours work for 40 hours pay -- bring back all the laid off workers, reopen the closed plants.

3) Workers control of the auto factories -- the workers must decide the working conditions, production quotas and the rules. The "team" (workers and management together) approach has meant no workers control at all.

Strike Ford and GM to win UAW demands!

Not a Fight Against Imports, but a Fight against GM and Ford!

A "junta" within the government

By David Mark

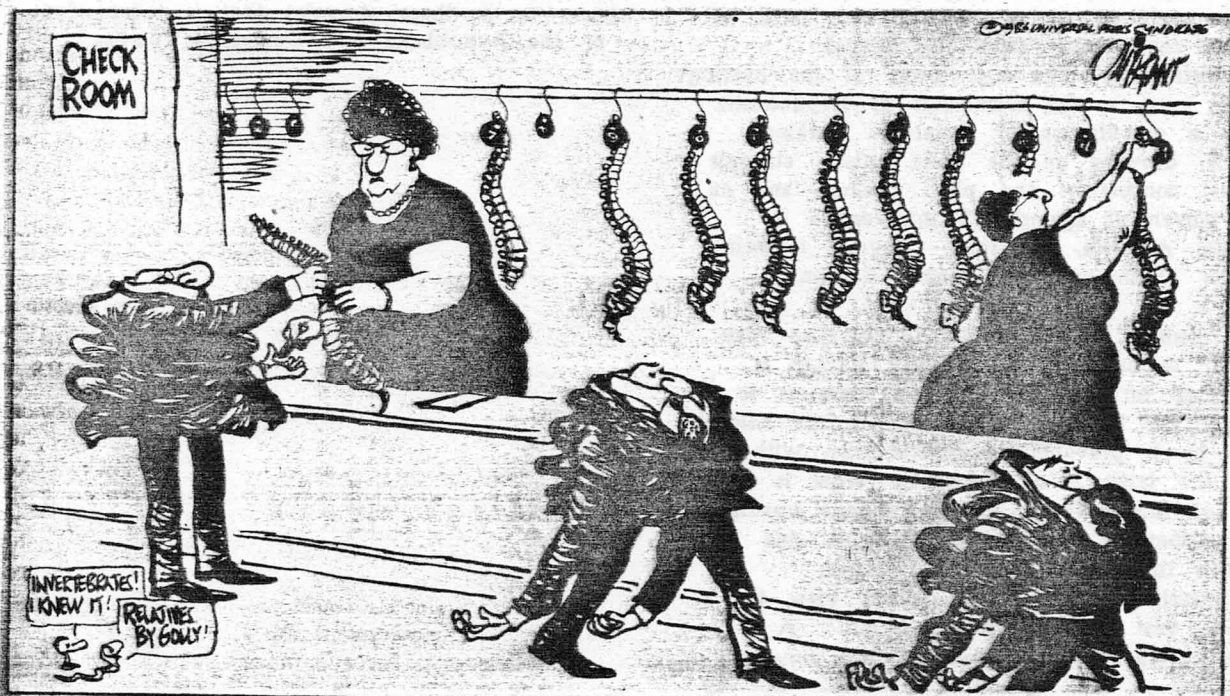
In the midst of congressional hearings this summer, Senator Paul Sarbanes (Democrat-Maryland) exclaimed that "a coup in effect had occurred in the White House" and that "...there was a junta within the government of the U.S." Such a statement aptly describes the form of the secret network of para-military operations established by Ronald Reagan and his cohorts, but does not describe very well the process by which it came about. That is not surprising, the Democrats also have a vested interest in hiding from the American people the true nature of this government.

House Speaker Jim Wright (Democrat-Texas) issued a statement after the hearings concluded, detailing seven violations of laws by the Reagan administration. These broken laws included the National Security Act, the Arms Export Control Act, and the Boland amendment. Undoubtedly, this is a paltry list. But even worse, while the leader of the Democrats in the House of Representatives admits full well that the Reagan administration has broken the law many times in its secret operations, the Democrats refuse to invoke articles of impeachment against the President. While Democrats, in particular, have talked tough in the national media, at the congressional hearings they "checked in their spines" as the cartoon below shows.

The secret network did not come about because of a "coup" in the White House. In reality, wide circles of government leaders in and out of congress were aware that a secret network of arms peddling to the contras had been set up, long before the congressional hearings even began. Only the public was kept in the dark about the details. The congressional hearings did their best to hide the most onerous aspects of the "secret government" from the American people and the world, particularly the aspects of the operations that detailed preparations for dealing with opposition within the United States.

... In April 1984, fully two years before "contragate," Ronald Reagan issued a National Security directive authorizing a nation-wide "readiness exercise" code named "REX 84," as the Christic Institute has documented. The exercise was designed to prepare for a direct military US intervention into Nicaragua.

... In this exercise, members of the armed forces at the national and state level were to be deputized as civilian law enforcement personnel and to round up more than 400,000 undocumented Central American refugees



House members checking their vertebral columns before doing battle with the president on contra aid in Nicaragua

throughout the U.S. and place them in ten military detention centers.

.. The directive proposed that state legislatures establish State Defense Forces, essentially right-wing vigilante squads, which would be provided with small arms and ammunition by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. These State Defense Forces, together with the deputized armed forces were to provide law and order during a presidentially declared State of Emergency in the U.S.

.. The State Legislatures of Louisiana, Alabama, and Texas subsequently actually passed laws establishing State Defense Forces. Members of right-wing survivalist groups and mercenaries were recruited to these forces and, according to one source, the Texas National Guard actually had to expel one of the units of the Texas State Defense Forces for being too radically right-wing.

Impeachment .. the process by which the House of Representatives may remove from office, and then bring to trial the president and members of his cabinet .. is still a valid demand. The problem is that the House itself has attempted to prevent articles of impeachment from being raised.

Even the left-wing Democrats (John Conyers, Henry Gonzales) who have drawn up articles of impeachment to be introduced into Congress, are not about to push this demand until they are sure that the public will be behind them. And then, they would try to use the articles of impeachment as a mere pressure tactic to extract compromises from the Reagan administration. The first lesson of the hearings is no trust in the Democrats or Republicans. Only a mobilization of American working people, drawing on the trade unions' struggle against concessions and plant closings, and on the movement against US intervention in Central America, can force Congress to bring articles of impeachment against Reagan.

The crisis of the Reagan administration may appear to have ended. Already Reagan is scheming for ways to convince congress to supply aid to the contras, and in the Middle East he is provoking a confrontation with Iran. But the crisis is not over, for what is at the root of this crisis is the tremendous upsurge of the masses in the oppressed nations, and linked to this the necessity for the Reagan administration to hide from public view the agenda that it wants to carry out. A necessity that was dictated by the growing opposition to this agenda in the U.S. and by

the revolution in the oppressed countries themselves.

The quandary for the American rulers still remains .. how to carry out a bloody attack on the revolution in the oppressed nations and on workers in the U.S. while maintaining the facade of "democracy". It is no small problem. The system of capitalist democracy in the United States depends on the two party system. The Democratic Party has played a key role in preventing the emergence of a genuine party of working people independent of the capitalists. Its influence is present not only in the trade unions but also in the anti-intervention movement, and has been historically responsible for keeping a lid on the class conflicts within the U.S.

The Congressional hearings have damaged the credibility of both parties of capitalist rule in the U.S., Democrats and Republicans. The Republicans are linked to the illegal and right-wing plans of the Reagan administration, and the Democrats have been completely cowardly in bringing those responsible to trial.

This brings up the need for organizations that claim to represent the working class, and especially those that are already conscious of the need for a Labor Party, to put forward an alternative to the Democratic party in the 1988 elections (see related article). It is crucial for workers who are fighting concessions and plant shutdowns, like the autoworkers, and young people who are opposing US intervention in Nicaragua, to have a political alternative to turn to in these struggles that is independent of the Republican and Democratic parties.

Who will represent the movement in the 1988 elections?

By David Mark

The anti-intervention movement as well as the movement against concessions in the trade unions, can ill afford to allow the Democratic Party to represent their views in the 1988 elections.

Historically, the Trotskyists were the only current in the American working class to fight for a Labor Party. But in today's situation -- the Trotskyist Party still needs to be rebuilt -- it is necessary to formulate a tactic to unite the organizations that favor a Labor Party in common action, in order to build a credible alternative of any proportion for the 1988 elections.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) which once did represent the Trotskyist Party, cannot be expected to provide an answer in 1988. Its recent educational conference in Oberlin, traditionally the place where its presidential candidates would be put forward, failed to nominate any candidates. In the last elections in Detroit, it didn't even try to get its candidates on the ballot. And even in the last presidential elections, it did not make an effort in many states to appear on the ballot and it didn't counterpose its program to the Democratic party in the anti-intervention movement and the trade unions.

Certainly, the general forces outside of the Trotskyists in the working class will not provide an alternative. The trade union officials will support the moderate wing of the Democratic Party, the radical milieu will in large part support a left Democrat like Jesse Jackson (even Jackson wants to appear more moderate according to a recent interview with him in Time magazine).

It remains to the organizations that claim Trotskyism outside of the SWP to be the spark for a common candidate representing the interests of the movement of the working class and youth today in the 1988 elections. Socialist Action, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, the Internationalist Workers Party, and the forces regrouped by the Coordinating Committee for an open Trotskyist conference, which includes our own organization, have the basis to launch a common campaign. What is important is that this campaign, even though it will begin from a small minority, really express the class independence and the fight of American workers and youth today. It is

in this sense that we think it appropriate to call this a campaign for a labor candidate, rather than a socialist candidate, though we will not make the name a barrier to a common campaign.

In the past issue of Truth we put forward a call for a national conference to nominate a candidate of labor. We retain that call because ultimately it expresses the unity against the capitalists that is necessary. But it is also true that the groundwork for any sort of large campaign will have to come from leadership, and that only the organizations that claim to represent Trotskyism are in a position to provide that leadership.

Therefore we propose now, with urgency, that the discussion begin among all those that claim Trotskyism, and among wider layers of workers and youth that are in the movements and organizations fighting concessions and US intervention, on uniting forces behind a candidate that expresses their fight -- independent of the capitalist parties.

For an Alternative to the Democratic Party

We are reprinting a statement from Detroit Democratic Party Congressman George Crockett "welcoming" Reagan's so-called "proposal for peace" in Central America and supporting "some positive aspects" to it. We are also reprinting a letter to the Detroit Metro Times criticizing Mt. Clemens Democratic Party Congressman David Bonior's position.

That in this critical moment, even the most left-wing Democratic Party leaders, give support to Reagan's plan, shows that we cannot rely on them, either to lead the struggle against U.S. intervention, or even to support it.

The Democratic Party originated in the American ruling class and it has evolved in accordance with the interests of a certain sector of the American working class, particularly the Southerners, from defense of "Jeffersonian democracy," to defense of slavery, to Roosevelt's so-called "liberal-labor alliance" in the 1930s, in which labor leaders, in exchange for certain concessions in the North, agreed not to organize workers in the South. The Democratic Party is an imperialist party; it supported U.S. intervention in World War I, II, Korea, Vietnam, countless other attacks on the peoples of other countries, and supports U.S. intervention in Central America today. Its leadership and its spokesman have been selected on the basis of their loyalty to American imperialism and its policies and their capacity to double-talk their constituents into thinking that there is really no alternative and that, in any case, it's in their best interests. Crockett's and Bonior's double-talk is just the latest example of this art.

There have been several attempts to build alternatives to the Democratic Party -- the Peace and Freedom Party, the Citizen's Party -- but to date they have all failed because they have originated in, been based on, and oriented toward, the middle classes. The American middle classes are incapable of leading a consistent struggle against American imperialism and its parties because they are not organized in opposition to American imperialism. In fact, many sectors -- doctors, lawyers, account executives, etc. -- are dependent on it, economically, socially and politically.

The American working class is the only class capable of leading a struggle against U.S. imperialism because it's the only class organized in opposition to it. This is manifest in the

existence of the American unions which, in spite of their leaderships, remain in daily conflict with the imperialist bosses. We have to fight for the unions to break politically with the Democratic Party, fight for immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Central America, and build a labor party to lead this fight.

All groups in favor of a labor party can advance the fight for a labor party today by fighting for a labor party in the unions, for labor candidates in the 1988 elections, for an alliance to lead this fight in the unions. They can also put forward their own candidates on the basis of such a platform to help get this fight under way.

The American labor movement has more power in its baby finger, as the saying goes, than all the left liberals in Congress thrown together will ever dream of having. Now is the time to fight for it to use it.

M.G. August 29, 1987

Washington, D.C. -- Congressman Geo. W. Crockett, Jr. (D-Michigan), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, today released the following statement in response to the Central American peace plan released by the Reagan Administration:

"There are some positive aspects to the Reagan peace plan, announced by the Reagan Administration on Wednesday and promulgated as a joint bipartisan effort. Most of these positive aspects are things that a majority in the Congress has been pressuring the Administration to do for years -- the deferral of contra aid in favor of bilateral discussions with the Nicaraguan government; regional negotiations on the removal of all foreign advisers; the signing of non-aggression treaties; and the offering of incentives for aid and trade for the Nicaraguan government after moves towards a democratic opening.

"Unfortunately, the positive aspects of the plan as written are overshadowed by Assistant Secretary Elliot Abrams' interpretations, which interpose totally unrealistic preconditions. The plan as presented calls for a cease fire "acceptable to the parties involved." Mr.

Abrams says this means the Nicaraguan government must negotiate directly with the contras -- which they have steadfastly refused to do for the last 6 years. This interpretation, if true, (and the State Department has not denied it) is clearly a precondition for failure.

"We think the plan means what it says; that the terms of any cease fire must be acceptable to the contras.

"The plan also includes a deadline of September 30 for completion of the "negotiating process." The Administration cannot realistically expect that the nations of Central America will reach agreement on all of these very sensitive issues in 45 days, particularly with the Administration's Damoclean sword -- contra aid -- hanging over the negotiating table.

"If one reads the September 30th deadline to mean the negotiations involved in bringing about a cease-fire only, then that date could be a realistic goal for their completion. However, if the Administration's proposal calls for all issues in conflict to be resolved before that date, it is doomed to failure.

"The September 30th date was not an arbitrary one. It is the expiration date of the present contra aid program. Thus far, the Administration has not put aside the notion of contra aid in favor of peace talks -- the contras already have U.S. assistance until September 30th -- it has merely delayed requesting further assistance until after September 30th.

"This proposal can be, and should be, used as a vehicle to resume direct discussions between the United States and Nicaragua. It is an opportunity that should be seized by the Administration to create a framework for real negotiations that could have credibility and acceptability with the Central American nations, with the Congress and with the American people."

[Letter to Editor of Metro Times, August 26-Sept 1, 1987]

Final Frame

Jules Feiffer's cartoon (MT, Aug. 12-18) wryly details the Joint Committee's limp investigation of the Iran-contra defendants and seems to be pinpointing the dangerous ambivalence of congressional opposition to aid for the contras. The last frame of the cartoon asks, "How are the Democrats going to blow this one?"

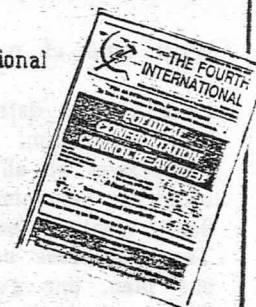
An article in the Free Press (Aug. 7) recounted Rep. David Bonior's (D-Clinton Twp.) decision to support the Reagan-Wright peace initiative, despite his strong and long-held resistance to the administration's obstructionist tactics in the area of peace negotiations. He came to this decision because he did not want to cast aspersions on team-player Wright's efforts by continuing to oppose what he knew to be wrong.

Since this article on Bonior appeared, reluctance has been voiced to the idea of challenging Bonior because "he's a good guy and his instincts are good" or similar sentiments. I propose a final frame for Feiffer's cartoon showing Bonior and supporters on one side of a scale and Wright on the other. The caption: Two wrongs don't make Wright right!

Fran Miller

Ferndale

Subscribe to Fourth International



Six issues for \$3.00 Twelve issues for \$6.00
 Make checks payable/send to: Truth
 P.O. Box 32546, Detroit, MI 48232

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

The Tasks Today and the Trotskyists

By Margaret Guttshall

Young working people and students in America today have a tremendous opportunity. In the last two decades, one country after another has risen up against American imperialism and its outposts around the world -- Vietnam, Iran, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Haiti, Korea; the list is endless. And one imperialist government after another, in its efforts to put a stop to this trend, has run head into the opposition of the American people and started to crumble -- Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, and now Reagan.

We have to take advantage of this situation -- the world-wide opposition to our government, the weakness of our government before this opposition -- to fundamentally change the character of American society itself.

America is supposed to be the greatest country in the world, the richest, the free-est, etc. Yet millions of people live in total poverty. The Black people, whose slave labor provided American businessmen with profits they needed to begin to industrialize this country, still cannot get decent schools for their children, free from racist abuse.

None of this has to be. All these problems can be resolved. It is simply a question of a political fight, a political fight against the powers that be, the people who profit from this whole situation, who grow rich at the expense of others, the "sixty families" that run this country.

What kind of political fight?

Unconditional defense of all struggles against U.S. imperialism. Immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. forces from all foreign countries beginning with Central America. We don't want to be the cops of the world. The U.S. does not have the right to send one man, one gun, or one penny anywhere. The rest of the people who live on this planet have a right to do whatever they want with their lives without being bullied or bribed by the U.S. And none of the problems of this planet are going to be solved until this problem is solved. U.S. intervention, U.S. imperialism, is the biggest problem on this planet, because everytime people rise up and try to come to grips with their problems themselves -- poverty, oppression, etc. -- the U.S. puts them down, with guns and blood.

For the independent political organization of working people. Working people in America, especially young Black working people, women workers, industrial workers, are the only ones who can solve this problem. They are the only ones who can build a real alternative to the imperialist state, they are the only ones who can reorganize the economy on the basis of what working people need rather than on the basis of what the imperialists want. And they are the only ones who can disarm the imperialists and their inevitable resistance to these changes in American society. Organized workers must take the lead in building a workers government based on an independent, mass mobilization of the whole working class. Working people in the factories, offices, schools, and neighborhoods need to meet and discuss what they want, what they think should be done, and elect their own representatives to make this happen. And anyone that workers select to work full-time in such a capacity shouldn't be paid any more than the average worker and should be recallable at anytime, so they are not able to distance themselves from the workers and become oppressive.

But in order to do this, working people need their own political party based on their own organizations. And the only organizations that working people have in America are unions. That's why the fight has to begin with a fight in the unions, in the labor movement, for the labor movement to build a labor party that represents the interests of the masses of working and oppressed people in America. Working people cannot rely on people from other classes, middle class people (doctors, lawyers, professors, social workers, teachers, etc.) to lead this struggle. As a group, these people simply do not have the understanding or stamina necessary to lead such a struggle. Working people are do.

Trotskyists are the only ones who have fought for and continue to fight for these basic principles in the working class -- for unconditional defense of all struggles against imperialism, for the political independence of the working class, for a workers party to lead this fight.

The trade union leadership and the Social Democratic party in America (Democratic Socialists of America) have consistently supported American imperialism. They supported World War II, the Vietnam War

and some even support the war on Nicaragua today. All of them are ever ready to reach compromises with American imperialism leaving its outposts in Central America intact. The Stalinist party (Communist Party/USA) has also capitulated to American imperialism. It supported World War II and the no-strike pledge; it opposed the fight for immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Vietnam and it opposes this fight with respect to Central America today. Like the Social Democrats, it seeks compromises with American imperialism aimed at maintaining its institutions in tact.

This is why it is essential for all young working people and students who agree with these basic principles to fight for a Trotskyist Congress, to clarify what these principles mean in the class struggle today, to map out plans to fight for them, to build Trotskyist forces in the working class, to rebuild the Trotskyist party.

And those who claim to be Trotskyist in America today must lead that fight.

The Socialist Workers Party, which has abandoned the fight for Trotskyism in the American working class, says that there is no basis for such a Congress, that those who claim to be Trotskyist in America today really have nothing in common, that most Trotskyists are "hopeless, irredeemable sectarians."

"... a substantial number of organizations that label themselves Trotskyist are hopeless, irredeemable sectarians," says Jack Barnes, SWP National Secretary. "Probably 80 percent of those on a world scale who present themselves as Trotskyists -- maybe it's 70 percent, maybe 90 percent -- are irreformable sectarians." (Jack Barnes, *Their Trotsky and Ours: Communist Continuity Today*, p. 69)

This is a lie. Those who claim to be Trotskyist in America today are the only forces in the American working class today that are in any way politically independent of American imperialism and Stalinism. They are the only ones that have made a relentless struggle against U.S. intervention in Central America. They are the only ones that have fought for the political independence of the American working class in opposition to the imperialist Democratic Party. All the other tendencies in the movement against U.S. intervention succumb to the Democratic Party's twists and turns -- "mobilize" when it wants to mobilize, "wait" when it wants to wait.

Thus gathering together Trotskyist forces, building Trotskyist forces, is essential to strengthen the struggle against U.S. intervention and for the political independence of the American working class. It is a point of departure for resolving the political problems of the American working class, for preparing it to seize the opportunity that exists today and fundamentally transform American society forever.

This is why the Trotskyist Organization is for a Trotskyist Congress, open to all young workers, students, militants, groups, tendencies, etc., in favor of socialism and Trotskyism, without any preconditions.

We think this Congress should clarify Trotskyist principles, what they mean in the class struggle today, map out a plan to fight for them and rebuild the Trotskyist party in America as part of an international struggle to build the Trotskyist International, the Fourth International. We think it should base itself on the Fourth International (rebuilt)'s principles, methods, and traditions which we think represent the most consistent struggle for Trotskyism on an international scale.

But these are our perspectives. They are not preconditions.

Trotskyists have to make a common fight for Trotskyism in the working class, to resolve the problems of Trotskyism.

U.S. out of Central America now!

For a workers' government!

For a labor party!

Build a Trotskyist Congress!

August 29, 1987

The Trotskyist Congress and Truth

The Trotskyist Organization has decided to begin to change the character of Truth, beginning with this issue.

As a result of their experiences, young people are becoming increasingly interested in socialism and Trotskyism (which is the fight for socialism in our time). And Trotskyist groups, tendencies, organizations, etc., are becoming increasingly aware of the necessity to come to grips with the problems of Trotskyism and build Trotskyism in the working class.

The Trotskyist Organization aims to use Truth to gather together these forces in a Trotskyist Congress to clarify Trotskyist principles, map out plans to fight for them, and rebuild the Trotskyist party.

We have decided to change the symbol at the top of the front page. Many young people and workers are prejudiced against the "hammer and sickle" because of their pro-imperialist education. They think it stands for "communist totalitarianism" and they do not know anything about the positive contributions of the revolution in the USSR and the importance of defending it in opposition to both imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracy. We want to convince American youth and workers of this. And if we have to make certain concessions to their prejudices to get a hearing, we are prepared to do so.

We have also decided to make Truth a "Bulletin for Socialism and Trotskyism" and to begin to establish an independent editorial board for Truth open to all groups of young workers, students, militants and to all Trotskyist tendencies, that want to make a common fight for socialism, Trotskyism and a Trotskyist Congress to lead this fight. To date, Truth has been only a publication of the Trotskyist Organization and its editorial board has been open only to the Trotskyist Organization. We have also decided to make editorial board meetings themselves open to young workers, students, other tendencies, etc., interested in the struggle.

Finally, and most importantly, we have decided to change the contents of Truth itself, to focus on the problems of the class struggle today and take up the problems of building the Fourth International in this context.

In the next weeks we will be contacting sympathizers and tendencies that we have been working with and meeting with them to discuss these changes and see if they would like to become involved in this struggle.

We urge you to join the fight for a Trotskyist Congress and help build this editorial board.

M.G. August 29, 1987

We are reprinting an article by Alan Benjamin from Socialist Action, the name of the organization (and its newspaper) which arose in a struggle against the SWP leadership for Trotskyism. This article shows that Gorbachev's reforms are designed to provide more freedom for U.S. businessmen, not workers in the USSR, or the workers and peasants of Nicaragua.

Two recent policy decisions by the ruling Soviet bureaucracy provide new insight into the reactionary character of the "reforms" promoted by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The first decision concerns economic restructuring (or perestroika); the second concerns Soviet policy toward Nicaragua.

In late June, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union announced plans to partially dismantle central economic planning and radically modify the nation's subsidized pricing system.

The goal of these economic measures, according to Soviet economists closely allied to Gorbachev, is to increase productivity of the workforce by promoting inter-factory competition, unemployment, and market-pricing mechanisms.

According to the new law, which will go into effect next January, the country's 48,000 state enterprises must henceforth fund their operations from their own profits. If they are "unprofitable," they will no longer receive government subsidies to keep afloat and will go bankrupt.

It is estimated that 13 percent of Soviet factories ran a deficit in 1986. If all these plants are closed, high levels of unemployment will inevitably result.

Under the new law, moreover, workers are to get pay raises, or cuts, based on performance. In his speech to the Central Committee, Gorbachev stated: "It is particularly important that the actual pay of every worker be closely linked to his personal contribution to the end result, and that no limit be set" (emphasis added).

This measure is bound to increase social inequalities in a nation where bureaucratic privileges already set millions of Communist Party functionaries apart from the rest of society.

Another aspect of the new law is the decision to lift retail price controls on food,

clothing, and housing. At present, government subsidies on such items run to \$114 billion a year.

According to leading Soviet economists, the cost of living for the average worker will increase sharply within two or three years, as the government subsidies are gradually phased out.

Resistance from workers

Leonid I. Abalkin, a Soviet economist who helped draft the new economic guidelines, conceded in an interview with The New York Times (July 4, 1987) that "the idea of market prices goes against the sentiment of the Soviet people."

Abalkin noted that persuading the Soviet people to give up their job security and their low-cost, subsidized housing and food will be "a most formidable problem."

Already there are signs that Soviet workers are uneasy with Gorbachev's economic plans.

A woman living in a working-class housing block near Moscow is quoted in magazine (July 27, 1987), as saying:

"Whenever meat is available, the price is too high. If they raise the rent on this apartment, we will not be able to afford it. The authorities cannot raise prices because the people would have even less."

A 63-year-old teacher from the Ukraine is quoted in Time as follows. "I don't want life to turn into a race for rubles. How can they call that communism? This democratization smells like capitalism to me."

Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the Russian Revolution, explained in the 1930's that the fundamental tendency of the bureaucracy that usurped power under Stalin is to sap the foundations of the Soviet workers' state.

In the "Transitional Program," the founding document of the Fourth International, Trotsky wrote:

"Either the bureaucracy, becoming more and more the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the bosom of the workers' state, will overturn the new property forms and precipitate the country towards capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and will open a way out towards socialism."

Trotsky's words ring truer today than ever before.

Applause from Imperialists

Meanwhile, the ruling classes in the imperialist nations loudly applauded the new Soviet law on economic restructuring.

A New York Times editorial (July 1) stated: "The Communist giant now sets out to undo the Revolution of 1917 with the Revolution of 1987 ... Western leaders can welcome such a trend... They can even encourage the process with agreements, where interests coincide."

A good indication of what the U.S. ruling class means by "common interests" was spelled out by Peter G. Peterson, a one-time U.S. secretary of commerce and now the chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations.

In an article in the New York Review of Books (June 25), Peterson wrote: "I believe it is in our interest for the Soviets to concentrate on domestic reform and on ways to create links with the international economy."

By "links," Peterson was referring to decrees on foreign trade and investment adopted by the Soviet government during the last year.

One decree, adopted in September 1986, granted 20 industrial ministries and 70 large-scale enterprises the chance to directly trade with the capitalist nations. This measure opened the first significant breach in the state's monopoly of foreign trade.

Another decree, adopted in January 1987, authorized joint-ventures with U.S. corporations, thereby opening up the borders of the Soviet Union to imperialist investment capital. [See June 1987 Socialist Action.]

Time magazine (July 27, 1987) put its support for the Gorbachev "reforms" in similar terms:

"Gorbachev may represent the West's last chance, at least in this century, of better integrating the Soviet Union into the world economy. There is could come under pressure to behave like a Western country, competing for capital and markets, lowering the barriers to foreign investment, and even making its currency convertible."

Peaceful coexistence*

For Mikhail Gorbachev, the goal of economic restructuring is closely tied to the Soviet Union's foreign policy. At a recent forum on peace and disarmament in Moscow, Gorbachev stated:

"Before my people, before you, and before the world, I state with full responsibility that our international policy is more than ever determined by domestic policy, by our interest in concentrating on constructive endeavors to promote our country. This is why we need lasting peace, predictability, and constructiveness in international relations."

Gorbachev then went on to spell out what this policy of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism meant in concrete terms:

"Settlement of regional conflicts is a dictate of our times. We say, "Let us search and act together. This applies to the Iran-Iraq war, the Central American crisis, the Afghan problem, and the situation in the South of Africa and Indochina."

A revealing example of Gorbachev's commitment to "search and act together" with imperialism was the Soviet Union's decision in late May to sharply reduce its shipments of oil to Nicaragua.

On May 30, Nicaraguan Cooperation Minister Henry Ruiz said the Soviet leadership had told the Sandinista government that it would henceforth provide Nicaragua with only 40 percent of its crude oil needs—a reduction of 40 percent from its previous shipments.

A Mexican newspaper, Excelsior, reported on June 3 that the Soviet ambassador to Mexico, Rostislav Sergueev, had told journalists that the Soviet move to reduce Nicaragua's dependence on Moscow for oil would "demonstrate that [the conflict in Nicaragua] is a conflict within the American continent, and not an East-West dispute."

The Washington Post reported on June 4 that Nicaraguan Vice President Sergio Ramirez had informed top Mexican officials that the Soviet reductions would leave Nicaragua virtually with no oil by the end of June. Mexico had suspended oil shipments to the Nicaraguan government in 1985 after the Sandinistas fell behind in payments. Nicaragua reportedly owed Mexico \$250 million.

'Good-will' gestures

On June 6, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega announced that the government was cutting oil consumption by 5 percent and raising the price of gasoline by 177 percent to 500 cordobas (or \$7.14) per gallon. Due to the need to increase the price of gasoline, Ortega said, it was necessary to raise the price of 54 basic consumer goods. The yearly inflation rate is currently estimated at 777 percent.

According to Nicaraguan economists cited in the U.S. press, the move to cut fuel consumption came immediately after the Soviet Union said it was cutting oil shipments to Nicaragua. (Facts on File, June 15-22, 1987).

Another "good-will" signal by the Soviet bureaucracy to the U.S. government came in May, when Gorbachev told Mexican Foreign Minister Bernardo Sepulveda that he disclaimed any interest in encouraging "socialist revolutions" in Latin America. Gorbachev, according to *The New York Times* (May 25, 1987, "took pains to say he did not want to meddle in Latin American relations with the United States."

A dramatic demonstration of this approach was the announcement that Gorbachev would make a long-awaited tour of Latin America this fall that would not include a visit to Cuba or Nicaragua.

The New York Times reported that Gorbachev is expected to use this visit to "curry favor with moderate countries [Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay] and show greater willingness to rein in Moscow's troublesome clients."

These highly significant gestures by the Soviet bureaucracy can only make the Nicaraguan Revolution more vulnerable to the continued attacks and pressures from U.S. imperialism and its "moderate" capitalist allies in Latin America.

