



by Juan Sui*

For the past several years, U.S. officialdom has seemed to relish the role of blatant imperialist bully in Central America. The current campaign of U.S. provocations and threats of direct intervention, coming right on the heels of the U.S. embargo of Nicaragua, announced formally by Ronald Reagan with a declaration of "national emergency" that conjured up inescapable war imagery, is perhaps the most recent example. The embargo announcement came shortly after Reagan's well-publicised demand, delivered at a news conference nationally televised in the U.S., that Nicaragua's ruling Sandinistas publicly give in and "say uncle," and his accompanying near-admission that the U.S. does indeed seek the overthrow of the Nicaraguan government. Thor-

oughly documented reports of widespread murder, rape, torture and other atrocities committed by the U.S. puppet anti-Sandinista army known as the Contras are invariably followed by loving pats on the back for these state-sponsored terrorists, such as Reagan referring to them as "our brothers"; actually, it is more of a father-son relationship, but the message remains the same.

This message has also been delivered through constant threats of invasion, continuous military manoeuvres that run through invasion scenarios, deliberate sonic boom-inducing overflights of Nicaraguan territory and countless other real and threatened acts of naked imperialist aggression. In addition to terrorising the Nicaraguan masses and keeping the pressure on the Sandinistas in hopes of creating more favourable conditions for their demise, it is all calculated to maximise the image of "Resurgent America"—an arrogant mega-

power ready, willing and, most of all, *able* to roll over everything in its path.

But behind this swaggering facade lies the unprecedented weakness of the U.S. position in Central America. Despite relatively large transfusions from the U.S. and the financial institutions it leads, the dependent, debt-ridden economies of the U.S.'s Central American neocolonies are deathly ill—so much so that per capita income in the region is down nearly 25% overall since the late '70s (and much more for the poverty-stricken masses in the countryside and in the shanty-towns known as *tugurios*). Fractious infighting within the ruling classes dependent on the U.S. has intensified, often to the point of assassination. Guerrilla war continues in El Salvador and has recently started up again in Guatemala, despite the mass murder of over 100,000 and the forced relocation of a million-and-a-half people in the past six years in these two countries.

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Trouble in the Yankee Backyard

And the U.S.'s Soviet bloc rivals continue to manoeuvre throughout the region they call the U.S.'s "strategic rear," seeking to exploit the U.S.'s difficulties for their own purpose. In short, the situation in Central America is still very much out of the U.S.'s control.

Tremors in the "Backyard"

This is a far cry from the U.S.'s traditional position in the region. In earlier times, the U.S. was generally able to exercise absolute domination of its self-proclaimed "own backyard" with a relatively minimal effort. The small-scale dependent economies, with abject poverty and constant hunger and disease a way of life for the masses, were relatively manageable for the imperialists, and the requisite butchery could be carried out with a high guarantee of blood-drenching success, either through direct invasion and occupation by U.S. troops or by comprador and feudal forces installed and/or

replaced by CIA-managed coups, and trained and supplied by the U.S.

However, in the late 1970s, the U.S.'s Central American domain experienced unprecedented upheaval, including mass revolutionary upsurge throughout the region. In Nicaragua, the U.S.'s faithful butcher Anastasio Somoza Debayle, whose family and the tiny clique linked to it had ruled with an iron hand ever since their installation in power by the U.S. Marines in the mid-1930s, was overthrown and forced to flee the country, and his infamous National Guard was destroyed. Following this, rebellion in El Salvador reached such a peak that the U.S., desperately trying to forestall a similar situation, carried out a "reformist" coup, removing their exposed generalissimo and replacing him with a junta government that included not only U.S.-described "moderate" army officers but also various liberals, Christian Democrats, social democrats and

even pro-Soviet revisionist Communist Party members. Nevertheless, the upsurge continued despite massively increased repression, and the junta fell apart within three months, to be followed by the formation of a new, even more discredited and isolated junta government and the outbreak of civil war. In Guatemala, by the beginning of the new decade, the scene was rapidly developing in the same direction.

The seeds of this situation had been planted in the 1960s with the transformations associated with the U.S.'s "Alliance For Progress." The further development of export agriculture and extension (or introduction) of capitalist farming techniques along with the expansion of highly dependent industrial production greatly increased the integration of Latin America into the global imperialist system. To be sure, the level of capitalist "modernisation" in Central America was

nowhere near as high as in other, larger countries in Latin America which were, at the time, considered more strategic. Nevertheless, because the U.S. neocolonies of Central America had previously been kept in an extremely backward state, the social and political effects of the Alliance For Progress changes in the region were monumental.

For the peasantry, the situation was particularly sharp. Hundreds of thousands in the rural areas were thrown completely off the land and many more were reduced to much less land than could provide even a bare subsistence for their families. In El Salvador, for example, between 1961 and 1975, the percentage of rural families that were completely landless jumped from 12% to 41%.¹ While the governments of the region promised that the new industry would provide jobs, the very nature of that industry prevented many from finding work in the factories. Again in El Salvador (which is, along with Guatemala, the most industrialised of the countries in Central America) manufacturing grew by 24% during the 1960s, but employment in manufacturing grew by only 6% during the same period.² One result of all this was the rapid expansion of abject poverty in the countryside and of cardboard and tin shack shantytowns in every major city throughout the region.

At the same time, there was a rapid increase in the number of secondary and university students and a significant growth of the professional strata and other sections of the urban middle classes—with rising expectations of economic and political advancement. It was during this period that the Catholic Church hierarchy, in an effort to expand its influence in Latin America and keep the disenchanted from turning to more radical solutions, dispatched clerical and lay organisers throughout the region in large numbers (many of whom ended up becoming radicalised themselves by the situation they found).

By the latter half of the '70s, with the worldwide economic crisis having a major contributing effect, the U.S.'s Central American chickens were coming home to roost. The

countryside had exploded in peasant struggle and guerrilla war; the shantytowns were headed in the same direction; the universities throughout the region had become bastions of support for the armed opposition groups. The corrupt neocolonial state apparatus, especially in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador, lashed out with full fury, intensifying the murderous repression for which U.S. lackies the world over are notorious. But rather than stifling the upsurge, the state terror only deepened and broadened it. Large sections of the population—including among the better-off strata in the cities—began calling for the overthrow of the U.S.'s most-favoured Central American dictators, and there was a huge jump in the membership of mass organisations affiliated with the various guerrilla factions and groups (which were principally led by bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalist forces).

Along with the growing isolation of the U.S.'s ruling cliques came stepped-up efforts by various pro-Western "reformers" (social democrats and Christian Democrats in particular) and pro-Soviet revisionists to influence and gain control of the armed uprisings. In Nicaragua, they attempted to broker a "peaceful" transfer of power from Somoza to a compromise government that would include significant power-holding by forces dependent on the U.S.—something very much desired not only by the social democrats and their ilk, but also by the revisionists, who see such a compromise as offering the best chance for their own manoeuvring in an area firmly within the U.S.'s "sphere of influence." Their efforts failed and an insurrectionary explosion, particularly from the shantytowns, swept Somoza from power. This set the stage for the new Sandinista government to find itself in a more acutely antagonistic contradiction with the U.S. than some had bargained for. In both El Salvador and Guatemala, various pro-imperialist forces have worked overtime to prevent a repeat of the Nicaraguan experience and to turn mass struggles into bargaining chips in their efforts at negotiating with

the U.S.

El Salvador is presently the clearest example in Central America of a guerrilla struggle not led by a proletarian revolutionary line. Instead of seeking to build up the political, ideological and military strength of the masses, involving them, relying on them and transforming them in the course of protracted people's war, the aim of this war is to force the present government, or at least some of the forces within it, to allow the opposition to share power in a conventional government. The leadership of the Democratic Revolutionary Front/Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FDR/FMLN) spans a variety of forces, including Christian Democrats. While the pro-Soviet Salvadoran Communist Party does not have complete hegemony, even some of the forces who are not out to sell their country to a new imperialism in order to displace part or all of the old ruling classes do look to the USSR as a lever to open the situation for them.

While the mass upsurge that characterised the region in the '78-'81 years has ebbed for the time being, the deep-seated economic and political crisis facing the U.S. in its self-styled "backyard" is just as severe. Today, in the accelerating turmoil of the current world situation, the U.S. needs more than ever to demonstrate an unchallenged ability to rule the Central American roost. But as the U.S.'s rulers know quite well, this is easier said than done. Indeed, the Central American situation holds great risks for U.S. imperialism.

Imperialist Insecurity

As a complement to their tough talk, U.S. officials have not been shy about warning of the threat to their national security that Central America poses. A representative example of the rhetoric involved is the following from Reagan's April 1983 speech before a rare joint session of Congress (involving both the Senate and the House of Representatives, an action that apart from annual State of the Union speeches is usually reserved for something very dramatic, such as a declaration of war). The U.S. President screeched:

"If we cannot defend ourselves there (in Central America—J.S.), we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere. Our credibility would collapse, our alliances would crumble and the safety of our homeland would be put at jeopardy."³

Of course, one must translate such statements from imperial-ese into common language: to "defend ourselves" means to squash any who refuse to bow down before U.S. dictates; the "safety of our homeland" refers to the safety of the U.S. bourgeoisie in maintaining its rule (certainly those who firebomb row houses in Philadelphia and discuss the possibilities of "prevailing" in World War 3 through suffering "only 65 million dead" are not terribly worried about the safety of the land's inhabitants). However, Reagan's statement most definitely provides a glimpse of U.S. imperialism's strategic worry over Central America.

The basic problem for the U.S. is that there is a serious erosion of its power and a great deal of turmoil *so close to home*, at the very moment that, as the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* says, "All the major contradictions of the world imperialist system are rapidly accentuating.... The very logic of the imperialist system and the revolutionary struggles is preparing a new situation. The contradiction between the rival bands of imperialists, between the imperialists and the oppressed nations, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the imperialist countries, are all likely in the coming period to express themselves by force of arms on an unprecedented scale."⁴ For the U.S. ruling class, the approach of such cataclysmic times has necessitated an all-out commitment to building up its forces politically, militarily and ideologically so as to be in the strongest possible position in the period ahead. But in a number of ways, the situation in Central America presents a serious threat to that position.

First, there is the matter that Reagan referred to as "credibility." The point was developed a little more by the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America—

known as the Kissinger Commission because its chairman was Henry Kissinger, one of the U.S.'s foremost war criminals, with credentials earned in Indochina, Chile and elsewhere. In its report, the Commission fretted that "in the Central American-Caribbean region, our credibility worldwide is engaged. The triumph of hostile forces in what the Soviets call the 'strategic rear' of the United States would be read as a sign of U.S. impotence." And it added that the U.S. must prevent "the erosion of our power to influence events worldwide that would flow from the perception that we were unable to influence vital events close to home."⁵ What is this "credibility" that is of such concern to these gentlemen? It is nothing less than the ability to inspire confidence, globally and among its domestic social base, that the U.S. is capable of leading them all to victory over every adversary—something of a sore point for the U.S. following its bitter defeat in Vietnam and the overthrow of its puppets in Nicaragua and Iran. This is one reason why Reagan and Co. have gone to great pains to paint the necessary picture of "Resurgent America," and why any incident that threatens to raise doubts about the validity of this image is met with some new provocation or new act of naked imperialist aggression somewhere in the world (and often in Central America or the Caribbean) to try and stifle the questioning.

A further strategic difficulty for the U.S. in Central America has to do with the potential military consequences of continued instability in the region. America's expert geostrategists emphasize that one critical factor that traditionally (at least since World War II) has enabled the U.S. to maintain massive military operations around the globe has been the relative "security"—that is, its absolute dominance—of the region at its southern border. However, as a study done for the infamous U.S. "think tank" Rand Corporation warns, "instability and insecurity in the (Caribbean) Basin may divert the United States to an extent that constrains its ability to play its global role from a position

of strength, especially if the restoration of Basin security should require large U.S. military measures...."⁶ Furthermore, U.S. geostrategists worry over the Caribbean sea lanes, through which about 50% of U.S. resupply to troops fighting in Europe and 40% to those in East Asia would have to travel; those the U.S. considers "hostile forces" could take advantage of favourable positions in Central America to screw up some of the U.S.'s precious warfighting plans.

And then there is the potential "spillover" effect of upheaval and turmoil in certain Central American countries touching off similar activity throughout Latin America and beyond. U.S. officials have openly fretted over the consequences of anything approaching success in opposing U.S. domination throughout Latin America, where it is admitted that there is already a great deal of anti-American feeling across a broad spectrum of the population. There is particular concern over such upheaval spreading northward into Mexico, which is correctly seen as a ticking time bomb by U.S. bourgeois experts, and perhaps even up into the U.S. itself. This latter possibility is one concern that is often left unstated by U.S. officials, but there is no doubt that it is a major worry, as evidenced by the following passage from the previously noted Rand Corporation study: "Caribbean Basin politics intrude on domestic U.S. politics more than ever before and more so than for any other third-world area. Law, order, and security concerns within the United States and along its borders cannot be isolated from major events and trends in the Basin. The primary linkage is through massive immigration, refugee, and exile flows: The United States receives more immigrants and refugees than all the rest of the world combined, and most of these come from within the Basin. The extension of Central American conflicts into Mexico or Puerto Rico would thus have dangerous, uncontrollable, and unpredictable domestic consequences."⁷

The Bludgeon and the Build-Up
Facing a multitude of threats to its

empire from the situation in Central America and in desperate need to clamp down, the guardians of U.S. national security have developed a multi-pronged approach to the region. As U.S. State Department types like to say, economic, political, diplomatic and, of course, military measures are all being used. But they are all designed to bludgeon into submission, and/or "neutralize" (as the CIA's infamous assassination manual put it), all who refuse to prostrate themselves before U.S. domination, and to build up even greater U.S. capability for this in the coming period.

In El Salvador, following the mass murder of over 50,000 Salvadorans in the past six years by the U.S.'s hired military—by both the official uniformed and unofficial death-squad varieties—the U.S. is now pursuing a "new" military strategy to wipe out any real and potential supporters of the opposition. It involves counterinsurgency techniques and programs initially "perfected" in the U.S.'s losing war of aggression against Vietnam.

One aspect of the scheme is a major step-up in government air assaults against the population in areas where the opposition FDR/FMLN either controls the territory or has a great deal of support. The aerial bombardment has been facilitated by: the addition of several U.S. C-47 gunships, each capable of firing 1,500 rounds per minute for four to five hours at a time; 50 Huey 1-H helicopters, also firing at will, and transporting battalions of Salvadoran troops to their next peasant massacre; six A-37 "Dragonfly" jet fighter planes dropping 300-, 500- and 750- pound bombs, fragmentation bombs and incendiary materials such as napalm and white phosphorous; and air strikes called in by U.S. Air Force pilots flying C-130 reconnaissance flights from Palmerola Air Base in Honduras.

The other aspect of the "new" U.S. military strategy for El Salvador is akin to the U.S.'s scheme for supposedly "winning hearts and minds" in Vietnam. It involves "search-and-destroy" sweeps through contested territory, follow-

ed by the formation of "civil defense" groups (often using notorious death-squad aficionados) and "civic action" programs, including building roads (to facilitate army vehicle access), building schools (to keep tabs on the volatile youth) and building hospitals (to keep soldiers on the battlefield). This is all modeled on the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) "pacification" program developed in Vietnam, where its chief claim to fame was its use as an umbrella under which the infamous Phoenix Program operated; it resulted in the assassination and murder of somewhere between 20,000 and 40,000 civilians.

At the same time, the U.S. has resurrected the ghoulish figure of José Napoleon Duarte to give it all his "democratic" (U.S.-style, that is) blessings. Duarte, a Christian Democrat who graduated from Notre Dame University in the U.S., mouths demagogic platitudes about "democracy" and "peace" and pledges to stop the "abuses of authority" while the murder of suspected "subversives" continues unabated. This has been more than enough to "legitimise" the U.S.'s comprador regime in the eyes of U.S. liberal bourgeois forces and many of Western Europe's social democrats.

But in the past couple of years, the focus of the U.S. effort to regain its absolute mastery of the Central American scene has shifted from El Salvador to Sandinista-led Nicaragua. As an opposition in power, the Sandinistas have become a symbol of the U.S.'s difficulties in the "backyard." Again, without doing a deeper analysis of the Sandinistas which would be beyond the scope of the present article, it can certainly be said that even the small crack in U.S. hegemony that the new Nicaraguan government has opened, even if not revolutionary, is considered an intolerable danger by the U.S. under current world conditions. The U.S. has responded by bludgeoning the Nicaraguan masses, and punishing the Sandinistas with the aim of eventually either forcing them to surrender power or overthrowing them. To that end, a

number of U.S. forces and weapons have been wielded against Nicaragua.

Of course, there are America's "freedom fighters," the Contras. Virtually the entire senior officer corps of the main Contra group, the Honduras- and Miami-based FDN (Democratic National Front), consists of former Somoza National Guard officers, most of whom were running common gangster operations until pulled together by the CIA in 1981. Their civilian political directorate is made up of pro-U.S. oligarchs, businessmen and political hacks who, according to a former member of their ranks, came together at the behest of the CIA in 1982 in order to provide a non-somocista facade for the group; they are often informed of major Contra actions after the fact and instructed to take credit for them publicly. Like all the U.S.'s death squad operations, the Contras specialise in torture, assassination, rape and murder of unarmed civilians and don't fare too well when forced to fight against armed troops—something that they try to avoid as much as possible. Contra actions have done a great deal of damage to Nicaragua's fragile and dependent economy—over \$1 billion, according to the Sandinista government—but the most damaging acts of economic sabotage have been carried out by CIA contract employees. This is because, as an unnamed "intelligence source" told the *Los Angeles Times*: "There were questions about the competence of the Contras...whether they could conduct effective (sabotage) operations."⁸ Nevertheless, the Contras are quite useful for terrorising the Nicaraguan masses, a necessary component of the U.S. approach to Central America.

While many of the U.S.'s loyalists have fled to Miami and/or joined up in some way with the Contras, there are still quite a few U.S. minions operating within Nicaragua. There are pro-U.S. capitalists grouped in the CIA-connected Superior Council on Private Enterprise (COSEP), who have worked to intensify Nicaragua's severe economic problems through withholding investment,

withdrawing capital and other measures; and they can do a lot of damage considering that 60% of Nicaragua's economy is still in private hands. There is the newspaper *La Prensa*, which is basically an extension of the U.S. media (and the sleazier section of it, at that) and publishes whatever will assist the U.S. and its Contras in their attacks on Nicaragua; government censorship of its diatribes has been turned into a cause célèbre in the U.S. There is the Catholic Church hierarchy, including the Contra Cardinal, Miguel Obando y Bravo, recently promoted by the Pope for his efforts on behalf of U.S. imperialism—efforts which include turning his religious ceremonies into virtual pro-Contra demonstrations. All these forces are especially working at taking advantage of the contradictions between the Sandinistas and sections of the urban and rural middle classes that the failing economy and military draft have heightened, hoping to further destabilise Sandinista rule on behalf of U.S., and their own, interests.

Diplomatic pressure is also applied by the U.S., including through the much-vaunted Contadora Group—the foreign ministers of Mexico, Panama, Venezuela and Colombia—named for the Panamanian island on which they first came together to seek a “solution” to the Central American crisis. The “Contadora process,” as the series of negotiations involving the four Contadora and five Central American countries has come to be called, has received praise and pledges of fealty from all its direct participants, the U.S., the Soviet Union and Cuba, all the Western European countries and just about every imperialist and pro-imperialist force in the world; obviously, everyone who hopes to manoeuvre for position in Central America sees some opportunities in these negotiations. But since the U.S. is the overwhelming power in the region, and all the participants save Nicaragua are quite dependent on the U.S., it has mainly served to enhance the U.S.'s pressure on the Sandinistas.

For example, last September, when Nicaragua agreed to a draft Contadora peace proposal that the

U.S. had assumed it would reject, and the other Central American countries initially implied that they too would agree, it was generally thought that the Sandinistas had scored a diplomatic coup vis-a-vis the U.S. However, as the U.S. made it clear that the proposal was unacceptable (indeed, any pact that doesn't include at least the initial steps toward a complete Sandinista surrender will be unacceptable to the U.S.), the U.S.'s Central American dependencies quickly fell in line. The Contadora countries then went back to Nicaragua to pressure the Sandinistas to agree to changes that would be approved by the U.S., and threatening the Sandinistas with isolation in the region if they don't agree. So, despite whatever tactical differences there may be between the government of Mexico, for example, and the U.S. as to the best way to “stabilise” the region under overall U.S. domination (and these have been much exaggerated by Mexico, by revisionists who hope to manoeuvre, and by others) the result of the “Contadora process” is to add the diplomatic bludgeon to the other forms the U.S. is wielding.

All these forms play their role—but perhaps the most significant act of U.S. aggression in Central America so far consists of this one-two combination: on the one hand, constant threats of a U.S. invasion, and on the other, the transformation of Honduras into a combined U.S. battle station and practice field for just such a purpose.

For the past few years, the threats have been delivered in a variety of ways, but none so direct as the continuous parade of U.S. military exercises that take place near the Nicaraguan border in Honduras and which simulate war between the U.S. and Nicaragua. The most recent of these featured 11,000 U.S. troops in two joint manoeuvres: one involved a mock Nicaraguan tank and infantry invasion into Honduras (which the Sandinistas are not about to attempt, but which is one of a number of possible manufactured pretexts for U.S. intervention); the other involved 39 U.S. warships, including amphibious assault vehicles, staging what *Time*

magazine described as looking “like a rehearsal for an American invasion of Nicaragua.”⁹

Of course, these actions are not only threats—they are also practice for the real thing. And such an eventuality has been further prepared for through the construction in Honduras of nine invasion-ready U.S. airfields capable of handling C-130 troop transport planes, two U.S. radar stations and two munitions storage depots. In other words, the U.S. has eliminated much of the troop transport and resupply problems that an invasion and U.S. military occupation of Central America would present by turning Honduras into a U.S. fort!

The Risks of a Major U.S. Intervention

Nevertheless, there are some limitations on the U.S. in pursuing such a scenario, at least in the short run. For the risks to U.S. imperialism of such a move are indeed great.

U.S. strategists from the Rand Corporation and other imperialist think tanks have warned officials that a major U.S. escalation in Central America could bring about great turmoil in both Latin America and Western Europe (and in the U.S., they warn, with the immigrants once again being singled out as conduits for disaster). The problems for the imperialists in undertaking such an intervention, in times like the present, are magnified when it is embarked upon short of an all-out world war. And, it is certainly possible that a U.S. intervention in Central America could ultimately and perhaps quickly lead to this global confrontation.

It is precisely because U.S. imperialism's stakes—and its risks—in Central America are so great that there has been some debate within the ruling class over aspects of U.S. policy in the region. Questions of how openly to embrace the Contras, how much to emphasize the Contadora process and so forth have been *publicly* argued out principally from the standpoint of their effectiveness in achieving their united objective in the region—the relatively rapid elimination of all opposition to U.S. imperialist domination. While the precise terms of this

debate often remain hidden beneath a chorus of demagoguery, it seems that the danger of a major U.S. setback that would leave these imperialists with no choice (from their perspective) but to invade is one factor that lurks behind their infighting over Central America.

In the meantime, the social role of the liberal alternatives to the Administration's policy in Central America has been to promote a "legitimate" channel for the outrage and opposition to the U.S.'s crimes in the region, and thus keep it within manageable bounds. Reformists, revisionists and social democrats of all stripes have pushed lobbying of and reliance on U.S. Congressmen as the way to stop U.S. aggression in Central America, and they have been aided by the official representatives of the Sandinistas and the FDR/FMLN who, after all, are usually pro-Soviet revisionists (or, less often, social democrats) and whose own strategies are served by this approach. A fine example of where all this leads was provided by the recent Congressional debate over direct U.S. funding of the Contras. When the Reagan Administration proposal was narrowly defeated in the House of Representatives, all the "send a telegram to your Congressman" barkers declared it a great victory, despite the fact that many in the opposition had called for an embargo instead (for now) and that the Contras were guaranteed their funding through other, less open but nonetheless official, means. Some honest and progressive forces were apparently taken in by all this and one religious group went so far as to call off

planned demonstrations in the wake of the vote. In little more than a week, Reagan instituted an embargo of Nicaragua, declaring it "a threat to U.S. national security," and five weeks later, official funding for the Contras was reinstated by the Congress anyway. All this occurred in the midst of an overall leap in preparations for direct U.S. military intervention against Nicaragua. So much for great victories—and for the line of following the liberals to a Central American "peace."

The Prospects for Revolution

The cause of the masses in Central America has been hurt severely by the fact that there has not been, up to now, a Marxist-Leninist party to lead the revolution in any of the countries of the region. As the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* states: "The key to carrying out a new-democratic revolution is the independent role of the proletariat and its ability, through its Marxist-Leninist party, to establish its hegemony in the revolutionary struggle. Experience has shown again and again that even when a section of the national bourgeoisie joins the revolutionary movement, it will not and cannot lead a new democratic revolution, to say nothing of carrying this revolution through to completion. Similarly, history demonstrates the bankruptcy of an 'anti-imperialist front' (or similar 'revolutionary front') which is not led by a Marxist-Leninist party, even when such a front or forces within it adopt a 'Marxist' (actually pseudo-Marxist) colouration. While such revolutionary formations have led to heroic struggles

and even delivered powerful blows to the imperialists they have been proven to be ideologically and organisationally incapable of resisting imperialist and bourgeois influences. Even where such forces have seized power they have been incapable of carrying through a thorough-going revolutionary transformation of society and end up, sooner or later, being overthrown by the imperialists or themselves becoming a new reactionary ruling power in league with imperialists."¹⁰

There remains a crying need for genuine revolutionary elements to emerge and form such parties in Central America. The deep-seated difficulties for U.S. imperialism, as noted, remain. And especially in an international scene characterised by cataclysmic changes and developments, it is altogether conceivable—indeed, one might say, *likely*—that mass eruptions on an unprecedented scale can occur there in the near future. Recent experience in Peru, where revisionist domination of the mass movements seemed just as permanent a feature as U.S. domination, is an example of such an impasse giving way to revolutionary people's war. The influence of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement in the Americas may have a crucial role to play in aiding in the solution of the most fundamental problem to be solved for this to happen in Central America—the development of revolutionary strategy and organisation.

The fires in the Yankee backyard have not been and cannot be put out, no matter what the U.S. or any imperialist power does there. □

Footnotes

1. Robert Armstrong and Janet Shenk, *El Salvador: The Face of Revolution* (Boston: South End Press, 1982) p. 76, citing Melvin Burke, "El Sistema de Plantacion y la Proletarianization del Trabajo Agricola en El Salvador," *Estudios Centroamericanos* (San Salvador: UCA EEditores) no. 335/336 (September-October 1976) p. 476.
2. Harald Jung, "Class Struggles in El

Salvador," *New Left Review* (London) no. 122 (July-August 1980) p. 8, citing Melvin Burke, *The Proletarianization of Agricultural Labour in Latin America: The Case of El Salvador*, mimeographed, 1976, p. 45.

3. *New York Times*, April 28, 1983.

4. *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*, p. 6,7.

5. *The Report of the President's National Bipartisan Commission on Central America* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984), p. 111.

6. David Ronfeldt, *Geopolitics, Security, and*

U.S. Strategy in the Caribbean Basin (The Rand Corporation, R-2997-AF/RC, November 1983) p. 8 (The Caribbean Basin is a U.S. geopolitical concept that generally refers to not only the Caribbean Sea and its islands but also all the land mass that borders it, including Central America, Mexico, Panama and the northern part of South America.)

7. *ibid.*, p. 30.

8. *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1985.

9. *Time*, April 22, 1985.

10. *Declaration*, p. 32.