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The Sandinistas: Menace to Democracy

By HERB MAGIDSON

Mr. Magidson is a Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers, and the Secretary-Treasurer of the New York State United Teachers. He wrote the following letter in response to a newspaper article praising the Nicaraguan government. We thought our readers would find it of interest.

This is in response to the April 17, 1983, Albany, N.Y., *Times-Union* article by Lanny C. Walter in which he characterizes the U.S. as being a bully toward Nicaragua. Mr. Walter is one of a number of writers who hope to convince the American public that Nicaragua is a peace-loving country which wants only to get along with its neighbors—something it cannot do because of the U.S. In addition, he suggests that the Nicaraguan revolution is an internal matter that has the popular support of "... the vast majority of people of Nicaragua." Nothing could be further from the truth.

Fortunately, because the United States—unlike Nicaragua—has a free press, most readers in this country are aware that under the Sandinista government there has been an unprecedented build-up of military forces far in excess of what is needed to defend Nicaragua against neighboring states. According to its own government, Nicaragua currently has 138,000 men in uniform. This includes 25,000 on active duty; 25,000 in reserve; 80,000 in the militia, and 8,000 police and security agents.

Nicaragua has the largest army in the history of Central America! Costa Rica, which lies on Nicaragua's south-

ern border, has no army! Honduras to the north—a country of four million—has an armed force of 12,500 with an additional 5,000 police and security. While three percent of Honduran males over eighteen are in uniform, Nicaragua has thirty-nine percent of its over-eighteen male population in uniform.

This, of course, does not take into account the annual training in Bulgaria of Nicaraguan pilots to man the new Soviet Migs or the training of Nicaraguans by East Germans in secret police tactics. For those, like Mr. Walter, who choose to ignore these facts, we have only to look at a recent headline announcing that three Soviet-built transports and one American-made C-130 from Libya were seized by Brazilian authorities because they carried tons of arms and explosives bound for Nicaragua. Colonel Qaddafi, the Libyan dictator, upon hearing that his "medical supplies" had been intercepted, released a statement defending his military support for Nicaragua so that it could continue its attempt to "revolutionize" other Caribbean countries.

As to the assertion in Walter's column that the U.S. should befriend Nicaragua with aid, let's not forget that during the initial period of the Sandinista take-over, the U.S. provided Nicaragua more assistance than any other country in the hemisphere. It was only as a result of the Nicaraguan support of guerrilla "revolutionary" actions in El Salvador that the U.S. government decided to withdraw this aid.

Still, Nicaragua has continued to use the supplies it receives from the Soviet Union, Libya, the PLO and

other terrorists—let's call them what, indeed, they are—to attempt to foment armed revolution in the countries of its neighbors. Nicaragua freely admits it. For the last few years, we have been told by some that the war in El Salvador is an "internal" conflict—reflective of the peoples' civil war. But within the last month the Nicaraguan government proudly admitted its intention to continue to train and arm guerrillas in El Salvador for the triumph of their "revolution."

Nicaragua, of course, has used the phrase "revolutionary triumph" as if it were a positive force, a public relations tactic that has worked in the past so well for other leftist totalitarian states such as Cuba, Angola, the Soviet Union, etc. Walter's article states, "Some 40,000 people were killed to achieve the revolutionary triumph in 1979...."

Let's analyze the results of the Nicaraguan "revolution." Perhaps the result is so supportive of human rights and "neighborly" feelings that we should thank the Sandinistas for attempting to export their revolution.

The following actions are quite well documented:

- Upon assuming power, the Sandinistas closed down all but the state-supported news media. Mr. Walter, had he been in Nicaragua, and written critically of the government's actions, would have found no newspaper willing to publish his article. Dissent in Nicaragua has been eliminated.
- The Sandinistas have renounced the electoral process as a basic right of their citizens. It is curious

that so many of those who criticized El Salvador's constitutional elections last year and criticize their upcoming elections this December are strangely silent concerning Nicaragua's decision to do away with free, democratic, representative government.

- In 1979 and 1980, the Sandinistas refused the offer by teachers in Costa Rica to volunteer their help in a literacy campaign for Nicaraguan citizens because, in the words of the Sandinistas, the Costa Rican teachers did not have the correct political views in order to properly teach the Nicaraguan people!
- Mesquito Indians by the thousands have fled their Nicaraguan country because the government has determined that they must be relocated and re-educated "for the good of the revolution." These poor, unfortunate people, subject to arrest and imprisonment, are voting the only way they will ever be able to vote in this totalitarian state—with their feet.
- The Sandinistas in Nicaragua have claimed that they are respectful of religion, even that they are a model for the integration of Christianity and Marxism. They have also argued that they stand for such dem-

ocratic values as freedom of religion, free expression of one's ideas, free assembly, and so forth.

The following are excerpts from a statement by Humberto Belli, a former editor of *La Prensa*, and a former supporter of the Sandinistas until he broke with them over their dictatorial acts:

For the concerned observer the government's handling of [Pope] John Paul's visit is enlightening. The list below presents only reports published in major newspapers, in particular *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, and the major television networks.

That the following events occurred is reliably established:

1. The Sandinistas did not allow Nica-

raguans the freedom to assemble to greet the Pope. Traffic was halted throughout most of the country. Only the Sandinista Defense Committee were entitled to transportation to the meeting places. Thousands of the faithful had to walk great distances from the surrounding cities if they wanted to see the Pope. Many could not make it. John Paul, aware of the circumstances, greeted "the thousands of Nicaraguans who have not found it possible to come to the meeting places as they might have wanted."

2. The Sandinistas prevented people from gathering ahead of time at the sites where the Pope was scheduled to appear. In Managua

(Continued on Page 8)

A Letter from El Salvador

"Distorted Version of Our Movement"

Dear Brother Brown:

I have read Brother Lane Kirkland's letter to all state organizations of the AFL-CIO in reference to various so-called Salvadoran trade union leaders traveling in the United States.

Because of the social convulsions confronting our country it is noted that many Salvadoran citizens have sought the United States as a refuge. In some cases they are ex-trade unionists who left because of threats against their own lives or those of their families, caused possibly because of their trade union activities or because of the bad luck of being involved in the indiscriminate campaign of terror that is plaguing our country.

Unfortunately some of these brothers, taking advantage of the political freedom offered them in the United States, representing small trade union organizations which traditionally have opted to support the armed guerrillas of the extreme left, pretend to speak in the name of the Salvadoran working class and present a distorted version of our trade union movement.

The FESINCONSTANS, which I have the honor of representing, is the largest urban trade union organization in El Salvador, and together with the Salvadoran Communal Union, which has more than 100,000 agricultural workers, belongs to the Popular Democratic Unity (UPD),

Our labor group, which also includes the Confederation of Workers of El Salvador (CTS) and the Association of Integrated Agricultural Cooperatives (ACOPAI), is the most representative in the country and is dedicated to the creation of a democratic and representative government in El Salvador, to the restoration of all human and trade union rights, to the successful continuation of the land reform and to the formation of an economically and socially just society.

In the struggle to achieve our goal we in FESINCONSTANS, affiliated to the ORIT and ICFTU, have requested and have received the support of the AFL-CIO in the United States and also other democratic trade union organizations. We have decided, as did the democratic trade union leaders of Poland and Chile, that we can better effect these changes pacifically inside our country.

Consequently, we ask you to treat very carefully those exiles who (as it seems) speak more in the name of the Marxist-Leninist guerrillas than of legitimate trade unions. Whenever we of the FESINCONSTANS seek the support of the U.S. trade union movement we always first get in touch with you of the AFL-CIO to better coordinate our efforts.

Fraternally,
Salvador Carrazo
Secretary General

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A Survey of Red Chinese "Trade Unions"

A great deal of attention has been focused recently on the status of trade unionism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Less attention has been directed to the "trade unions" of Communist China. The author of the following article, because he lives in China, cannot be identified.

1. Foreword

The Chinese Communist Party calls itself a political party of the working class. Its proclaimed aim is to organize the proletariat class revolution to overthrow the capitalist regime, destroy capitalism, and establish a communist society. Therefore, since the birth of the party in 1921, it set up the "Chinese Labor Organizations Secretariat" to engage in organizing trade unions and in planning and leading the labor movement. Established in 1925, the General Federation of Trade Unions has held six national congresses.

2. Trade Union Work from the Birth of the Chinese Communist Regime to the Period before the Cultural Revolution

The Chinese Communist regime was founded in October 1949. In the following year, a Constitution of the Trade Unions of the People's Republic of China was enacted, and the 7th Congress of Chinese Trade Unions was held in Peiping in May 1953. Although its nature had been changed, the claim was made that the tradition of the six previous congresses would be continued. Prior to the establishment of the regime, the trade union organization and the workers' movement mainly served to help the Communist party seize power. Afterward, it aimed at solidifying the party's mass foundation, as well as mobilizing the laborers to work for industrial reconstruction. In December 1957, the 8th Congress was convened. Its proclaimed mission was "to review four years of experience to welcome the second five-year plan." Emphasis was still placed on

squeezing out the workers' labor to speed up production. At the time of the 7th Congress, it was announced that there were 10 million organized trade union members. For the 8th Congress, the number of members was announced as 16.3 million.

Up to the time of the Cultural Revolution, the central organ of the trade unions included one chairman, six vice chairmen, 28 members of the presidium, and eight secretaries in the secretariat. Included were 16 units: administration, organization, cadres, propaganda, women workers, wages, production, finance, international liaison, labor insurance, labor protection, living quarters, sports, the Worker's Daily publication, worker cadre school, and research in the history of the workers' movement.

On the local level, the principle of uniting regional (local) and industrial organizations was adopted. The regions covered provinces, municipalities, and counties. The undertakings included the national committees of the heavy industries, mechanical industry, coal, water and electric power, petroleum, textiles, light industries, railroad, maritime workers, highway transportation, postal and telegraphic workers, finance and trade, education, construction, agriculture and forestry, and geological unions.

The regional unions were under the dual leadership of the General Federation of Trade Unions of the respective regions and the higher-level industrial unions. The basic trade union organization is known as the primary committee. Under the industrial primary committees are separate workshop committees with the lowest level unit known as a union section. The functional units under each primary committee include production, organization, cultural and education, daily life, mass invention, and proposal for rationalization. Each of these units has several members who are selected from among the members of the primary committee or workshop committees. They are responsible for day-to-day operations. At that time, the union work was focused on infusing the

workers with political-ideological education, as well as to implement the production contests in the industrial plants.

3. Suspension of Trade Union Work during the Cultural Revolution Period and Resumption after Reorganization

When he launched the Cultural Revolution in 1966, Mao began by using young students to "stop classes in order to make revolution," and by organizing the Red Guards to launch an offensive against his political enemies. Conversely, his political enemies organized the workers to offer resistance. Consequently, all over China there were cases of student Red Guards clashing with workers' groups. Workers in Nanking formed the "Red Defenders," initiated the "three stoppages" (electric power, water, and traffic), and stood in opposition to the Red Guards under the "Central Cultural Revolution Group."

Workers at Wuhan formed the "Million Brave Soldiers" and detained such important persons as Wang Li and Hsieh Fu-chih of the "Central Cultural Revolution Group." Later, the Maoists also organized the workers. They first set up the All-China Red Revolution Association; then, on December 27, 1966, they announced the take-over of the Federation of Trade Unions. Mao's followers accused the trade unions of having been of the black-line rule in the 17 years prior to the Cultural Revolution, and their leaders of being of the black gang of the Liu-Teng capitalist roaders. They called for "smashing the old trade unions" and waged criticizing-and-struggling tactics against the union cadres, ruthlessly suppressing model workers and aged workers. The work of the trade unions came to a full stop. Workers of industrial and mining enterprises formed "rebel factions" under various names. The trade union organization remained in name only.

In 1967, most of the Red Guards, composed largely of educated youths, turned anti-communist and no longer obeyed Mao's orders. Mao then coined the slogan, "the working class leads everything," used the workers to form "Mao Thoughts Propaganda Teams," and marched into the schools and political offices of all levels. Under the command of the Cultural Revolution Groups, they seized power and issued orders. During the latter part of the Cultural Revolution, the worker "rebels" became the Maoists' main force for seizing and holding power. Those workers not only participated but, in

many areas, were in actual control.

In June 1968, Mao planned to rehabilitate the worker rebels. He ordered that trade union congresses be convened in different places to substitute for the functions of the unions. However, the internal split in the workers' organizations thwarted unification, and the work progressed very slowly.

In 1973, Mao again ordered the re-establishment of the Federation of Trade Unions. The work on all levels was not completed until the end of the year. Although the personnel of the newly-reorganized, provincial-level trade unions comprised some old union cadres, basically the "rebels" were still in the majority. In ideological guidance, when the union's main duty was production, the union was considered as a "productive union." When unions permitted educated elements to join, they were appraised as "all people's unions." Compared to the periods of the 7th and 8th Congresses, the nature and functions of the trade unions showed significant changes.

In 1975, Mao formed the "preparatory section for the 9th Congress" in preparation for the establishment of another All-China Federation of Trade Unions. However, serious internal differences and struggles, the lack of any uniform "trade union line" prevented the actual convening up to the time of Mao's death. At that time, the Cultural Revolution elements even advocated that the "trade union is the command headquarters of the working class," attempting to place the trade union above the party. Even Mao did not dare to express agreement with such a view.

4. The Convening of the 9th Congress and Struggles

After Mao's death, Hua Kuo-feng staged a palace revolt to overthrow the Gang of Four and grasp the Communist party leadership. He was in a hurry to eradicate the remnants of the Gang of Four from among party, political, military, workers, peasants, youth and women's organizations in order to solidify his power and position. Therefore, right from the start he waged an expose-criticize-check campaign. Using as an alibi the need to ferret out those connected with the usurpation of power by the Gang of Four, initial steps of rehabilitation were taken to get rid of Gang of Four elements from the organizations at all levels.

Under the guise of rehabilitation of grievances and false charges, large numbers of old cadres who had been

persecuted during the Cultural Revolution were returned to power and position. From October 1977, when the Kiangsu provincial federation of trade unions was reorganized under new leadership, such reorganization struggles continued through the regional trade unions. But because in the past the trade unions had been used by the Gang of Four as an important tool of power struggle, and such unions were places where the Gang of Four factions concentrated their power, the struggle was undertaken with great difficulty.

In May 1978, the Chinese Party issued the notice for the convening of the 9th Congress, set up a preparatory framework, and at the same time sped up the process of readjustment of the regional unions. The CCP also turned around the direction of the trade union work. In October, the 9th Congress was convened.

Teng Hsiao-ping, representing the CCP Central Committee, addressed the plenary session of the 9th Congress. He cited the future policy direction of the trade union program. He first repudiated the theory of black-line rule advocated by the Cultural Revolution faction, and affirmed that before the Cultural Revolution the Maoist line had dominated the trade union movement and its work. He further reaffirmed that the trade union movement line, policy, and missions, as prescribed by the previous eight congresses, had been correct. At the same time, he condemned the Gang of Four for having paralyzed the trade union program, as well as for allowing bad elements to dominate the unions, thus turning them into tools of the power struggle against the party. This was tantamount to a total repudiation of Mao's trade union line. The nature of the trade unions was restored to that which followed the time of the 8th Congress.

As to their future mission, Teng cited eight points:

- Help the workers to "grasp modernized technical and management knowledge."

- "Educate workers to safeguard industries, institute highly centralized administrative leadership, safeguard the high authority of the production command system."

- Organize the workers to "participate in industrial management." The industrial trade unions are to be turned into operating organs of the representatives as well as the membership of company staff and workers themselves.

- "Trade unions must safeguard the workers' rights."

- Trade unions must "closely coordinate with the masses."

- "Trade unions must struggle for the workers' democratic rights."

- "Educate the workers to struggle hard, to be unselfish, to strictly obey discipline, to obey transfer orders, and to love the factories as they love their own homes."

- "Intensify the unification with all the working class and revolutionary peoples of the world."

In addition to those new directions cited by Teng, important changes reflected in the newly-adopted Trade Union Constitution included the following:

- Trade union nature: Trade unions are mass organizations of the working class under the CCP leadership. They are the transmission belts for the Communist party to the masses, the supporting columns for the regime, and the schools of the staff and workers for learning to manage, to run the economy, and to learn about communism.

- Work policy: Under the leadership of the Communist Party, policy must follow the CCP 11th National Congress line; unite, educate and attract the staff and workers to elevate their political consciousness; allow workers to grasp scientific technology, to participate in industrial management, to undertake labor contests, to increase labor productive rate, to improve their material and cultural life on the basis of developing production, and to struggle for the realization of the general mission in the new era.

- Membership: Membership in the trade unions shall be open to all workers whose wages constitute their sole or main means of living.

- Organization: The Trade Union Congress elects the Executive Committee which in turn elects the chairman, vice-chairmen, and members of the standing committee. The standing committee then selects the personnel of the secretariat, which shall carry out the day-to-day work under the leadership of the standing committee. Units under the secretariat remain largely the same as before.

- Tasks of the primary trade union organizations are to: (1) Study Marx, Lenin, Mao, and current events in order to engage actively in political movements under the leadership of the party. (2) Operate after-duty schools, so that "staff and workers may learn science, technology, culture, economics, and management." (3) Participate in industrial management and carry out the functions of the operational units. (4) Develop labor contests and assist the administrative staff

in safeguarding wages and labor. (5) Improve the well-being in the daily life of staff and workers, launch mutual aid movements, organize off-duty cultural, recreation, and sports activities, organize the staff and workers' dependents for agricultural by-products production and service enterprises, and (6) Train active members of the trade unions and recruit new members.

Obviously, the 9th Congress has greatly changed the unions from what they were during the Cultural Revolution. But it still affirms the Cultural Revolution, holds to Mao's "continuous revolution" as guiding ideology, emphasizes "class struggle" and "politics is in command." It even calls for "political movement" as its chief mission. Among its leadership are some remnants of Cultural Revolution and extreme leftists. All these portend future conflicts and struggles.

5. Current Problems

Since the 9th Congress, the struggle around the trade union issue has taken two directions. One is the conflict between the left and right factions of the Communist party. Another is the conflict arising out of the contradiction between the workers and the Communist party. All problems which emerged after the 9th Congress can be attributed to these two factors.

A. Rehabilitation of the staff and worker ranks

In this area the prime problem is that of strengthening labor discipline.

During the Cultural Revolution the rebels among the workers behaved in an outrageous manner. They "smashed" all rules and regulations, and ignored all discipline, knowing that no one would dare to interfere. In the factories, tardiness, early departure, absences, and disobedience of work discipline were commonplace. Quarrels, fights, and felonious acts occurred widely and frequently.

With the "Four Modernizations" now serving as the framework, weak work discipline would not only impair production, but might even undermine the security of the regime. Among the more important measures are these:

(1) In March 1982 the "Regulations Governing, Rewarding and Punishing Staff and Workers" were promulgated. Under the rules, rewards would be given to those who fulfill production duties, improve product quality and quantity, invent and create, protect public property, and struggle against bad elements and evil things. Conversely, punishment (including fines and

AFL-CIO Endorses Scowcroft Commission Recommendations

Acting on the advice of the AFL-CIO defense committee, AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland endorsed key recommendations for development of the MX missile made by the President's Commission on Strategic Forces.

Specifically, the AFL-CIO endorsed the "recommendation for limited deployment of the MX in Minutemen silos and shelters" and called on the U.S. to begin designing a new, small, single-warhead missile.

The committee said the basing modes for the new missile could be either in hardened silos or hardened mobile launchers. It noted that if both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. shifted to one-warhead missiles, "the nuclear balance would be more stable."

Kirkland accepted the defense committee report which was adopted at a meeting held April 20. John H. Lyons, President of the Ironworkers International and an AFL-CIO Vice President, is chairman of the defense committee and was a member of the President's Commission. Brent Scowcroft, chairman of the commission, met with the AFL-CIO committee.

"In its key elements, the commission report is consonant with the views expressed by the AFL-CIO defense committee in its interim report to the Executive Council in February," Kirkland pointed out.

The AFL-CIO committee, formed in February 1982, reiterated its recommendations that "increases in defense spending in the coming years can and should be held within the range of 5 percent to 7 percent a year in real terms without being detrimental to national security," and that such increases "should be fully financed by a progressive surtax on income."

"The burden of defense must be borne equitably and not fall disproportionately on the backs of the workers and the disadvantaged," the committee said. "We shall continue to oppose financing higher levels of defense spending by cutting social programs while providing tax breaks for the wealthy. In pursuing this policy, the Administration has already damaged the consensus for a strong national defense which it enjoyed on assuming office."

dismissal) would be meted out to those who arrive late for work, leave early, are absent from work, stage slowdowns, fail to complete productive duty, disobey orders or refuse to transfer, violate operational procedure, and undermine operational procedure.

(2) On May 2, 1982, a symposium held by labor models and advanced elements proposed the formulation of "Staff and Workers Pledges." The eight articles required the workers to fervently embrace communism, to love and protect public property, to raise production quality and quantity, to practice efficiency, to elevate political, cultural, technical and operational standards, to obey laws and discipline, to respect teachers and love students, as well as to cultivate uprightness and boycott depravity.

The trade unions naturally are expected to see that the rules and regulations are observed. However, the Communists' own records show that the measures have not been effective and the situation shows no improvement.

Next is the question of the thoughts of the workers, particularly their loss of faith in communism. The New China News Agency reported on Jan-

uary 8, 1983, conditions existing in the Peking Third Chemical Factory. Some workers openly questioned the cadres:

"Socialism is good. But why is our economy still so backward? Why is our standard of living still relatively low?"

"We agree when you compare the new China with the old China. But do you dare to compare us with prosperous capitalist countries?"

"In capitalist countries, the workers can go on strike. That's a lot more democratic than us!"

A young woman worker, Ku Chun-fei, stated: "From movies and television I've seen skyscrapers and high-speed highways in the cities of many developed countries. How can you say that socialism is superior to capitalism?"

Liu Hsiao-tung, a young worker, said: "Talk about capitalism being no good, how do you explain the fact that in the workers' homes in capitalist countries there are private automobiles, refrigerators and color television sets—much better than ours?"

To such doubts and questions, the communists find answers difficult. So they adopted a resolution calling for the intensification of "ideological po-

litical education" as a possible solution.

Early in January 1983, the Chinese Communist Party convened an extensive "All China Conference on Staff and Workers Ideological Political Education Work." The communists admitted that "workers cannot acquire socialistic consciousness on their own. Only through education and infusion can they accept socialistic ideology."

There are repeated occurrences of workers' strikes creating incidents and frontal clashes with the Chinese Communist Party. Workers on the Chinese mainland detest communism, and desire democratic freedom under capitalism. Spurred by the Polish workers' revolution, many fighters for civil rights have emerged. Due to news black-outs, such events do not often get reported outside China. According to a Peiping dispatch of the *Asahi Shimbun* of Japan, dated January 16, 1981, strikes have occurred in Shanghai, Szechuan, Shensi and Heilungkiang provinces. Some strikes were called because the workers' problems were not solved or were unjustly solved. Others were caused by political problems. The Chinese Communist Party employed suppressive measures to arrest the instigators (fighters for civil rights, such as Lu Chin-sheng, were all workers), and even amended the PRC Constitution to deprive workers of their right to strike. At the same time the CCP also charged trade unions to "be brave in facing conflicts; nip the bud of elements for unrest so as to solve the problem at its primary source; expose to the masses those individual trouble makers so as to isolate them thoroughly."

In these respects, the trade unions actually cannot be expected to be of any practical service. The CCP seems determined to use suppression. Suppression, however, can only widen the differences between the CCP and the workers.

B. Problems of strengthening education of the staff and workers

Besides their parting of the ways with CCP on political ideology, workers on the mainland also do not accept the Four Modernization demands. On April 1, 1981, the *People's Daily* revealed: "The 1979 survey of 20 million staff and workers showed that 80 percent did not have cultural standards equivalent to that of junior high school. Out of that number, illiterates and semi-illiterates comprised 7.8 percent. The workers' actual operational standards are very low. Most of them are graded below Class 3 in technical

standard. Management personnel lack modern industrial management know-how. Industrial technicians comprise only 2.8 percent of the total number of staff and workers and quite a lot of them have never received any higher education." Therefore, without speedily raising the cultural and technical standards of the staff and workers, the Four Modernizations will be only empty talk.

In February 1981, the CCP resolved to intensify the work of educating the staff and workers. In March, a national work conference was held and a number of measures were devised. On April 13, the *People's Daily* reported: "At present there are 3,669 schools operated by the regional trade union organizations (including regional industrial unions), with 1,130,000 staff and workers attending the middle and higher levels of institutions." Never previously had the CCP paid so much attention to these schools which have the dual responsibility of elevating cultural and technical standards, as well as of infusing communist ideology.

C. Dispute about the trade unions' position

The 9th Congress had designated the trade union as an organization of the masses under the leadership of the CCP. It is also a CCP tradition to have the party cadres wield and exercise all the controlling authority. But the Teng faction ballyhooed about reforms after the 11th plenum of the CCP Third Central Committee. Following Teng's August 1980 speech, which the CCP insiders called the Keng-Sheng Reform Plan, the *Workers' Daily*, on October 7, published an article entitled: "Trade Unions Must Speak for the Workers" in which it said: "Some leading cadres act on their own without regard to the opinions of the masses. . . . Demand that the trade unions represent the interests of the worker masses and work for the workers' welfare. . . . If the trade unions do not speak for the workers, what do we need the trade unions for?"

On October 24, the paper published another article entitled: "Must Recognize the Trade Union's Independent Nature," which stressed the different nature of the trade union and the party. The article stated: "The Communist Party is the vanguard of the working class. The trade union is a voluntary organization of the working class. The Communist Party must lead the mass organization of this class but cannot substitute for the mass organization of this class. To substitute the party for the trade union can only

cause losses to the revolutionary enterprise."

It further stated: "During the latter part of the 1950's some people were of the opinion that in order to accept the party's leadership the trade union must give up its independent nature. They seem to think that the party's leadership and the trade union's independent nature cannot co-exist, otherwise it would be 'opposing the party's leadership' and syndicalism."

"Thus the trade union's unique function and its unique mission are totally uprooted, thereby causing the trade union to lose its realistic basis for existence. Only when the trade union, on the basis of its special characteristics and on the basis of the masses' demands and wishes, actively takes the initiative and independently shoulders its responsibility in its work can it fulfill its role of being the representative of the staff and workers as well as being the party's helping hand. The trade union's cadres must rightfully and boldly begin to engage in activities which befit the worker's own special characteristics. By so doing they can better safeguard the staff and workers' democratic rights and democratic interests, speak for the workers, and become an organization worthy of the trust of the vast staff/workers masses."

However, in the same year there occurred within the Communist Party leftist countermoves. The leftist force with old military cadres as their mainstay broke through with Pai Hua's drama, "Bitter Love," in its attack against the Teng Hsiao-ping faction. The Teng followers were forced to retreat from the standpoint of the "Keng Sheng Reform Plan." They had to admit and again emphasize the party's leadership position over the trade union. This standpoint has also influenced the nature of the Teng faction's insistence on total reorganization of the staff-and-workers representatives' assembly.

D. The question of Workers' Congresses

In July 1981, the Chinese Communist Party formulated the "Provisional Regulations for Workers' Congresses of State-Operated Industrial Enterprises" which prescribed the trade union as the operating organ of the workers' Congress. The CCP organized workers' congresses even before the Cultural Revolution, but they had no authority. Although after the Cultural Revolution some factories and mines did reactivate such organs, they played only a walk-on role—in the manner of "the secretaries formulate plans, the direc-

tors prepare reports, the workers clap their hands, and the trade unions pace through their walk-on roles."

During the 9th Congress, Teng had emphasized that the workers' congress be turned into an authoritative organ. In August 1980, when Teng brought up the so-called Keng-Sheng Reform Plan, he suggested that the old "system of the factory director being responsible under the party commissar" be changed into a "system of the factory director being responsible to the workers' congress."

In September of the same year, Hua Kuo-feng formally announced when he addressed the fifth meeting of the Third Peoples Congress: "As an authoritative organ, the federation of representatives of staff and workers has the right to discuss and decide upon important questions within its authoritative limits. It has the right to elect, recall or suggest appointments, and propose the recall of the administrative leadership (factory director or manager) of the unit itself."

The People's Daily on October 27, 1980, carried an article about five big industries in Peiping, including the In-

ternal Combustion Factory, experimenting with the system of the factory director being responsible to the federation. However, the Workers' Daily editorialized on February 17, 1981, that: "the system of the factory director being responsible to the workers' congress at present under experimentation belongs to a higher-standard category. Its extension will have to wait until after a general review of the merits of the experiment. All other industries not experimenting with the reform must simultaneously employ both systems, and the trade union is to be considered the operative organ of the workers' congress."

Thus, not only was the federation's authoritative position nullified, it was placed under the dual control of the party commissar and the trade union. The so-called "workers' participation in management" lost its meaning. The set of "Provisional Regulations" has manifested that kind of spirit.

According to the "provisional regulations," although the nature of the workers' congress is still labelled an authoritative organ with staff and workers participating in policy and

management and supervising the cadres, it can only "exercise its authority under the party commissar's leadership," and its duty is to "guarantee the fulfillment of the national plan."

Its so-called authority is merely to "investigate," not to decide, the factory director's productive plan and program. In other words, the authority is to "suggest" to the superior level, but not to decide any punishment or to recall the leadership cadres. Furthermore, the regulations called for workers' congresses to support the factory director to exercise his executive power, and to protect the high authority of the production command system. If the superior-level office should not accept its views, the workers' congress is still required to carry out the relevant decision and directive of the superior office. Compared to the past, there is now only the right to inquire and probe, but there is still no decision-making power. With the trade union as its operative organ, the workers' congress would be "afraid to offend the leadership but not afraid to offend the masses." Consequently, it would follow the party commissar's directive and protect the factory director's rights and interests. It would certainly not clash with the party commissar or the factory director in the interest of the staff and workers.

Kirkland Meets with Surinamese

Dr. Henk Chin-a-sen, Chairman of the Council for the Liberation of Suriname, and Glenn Tjongakiet, head of the Council's Trade Union Affairs, met with AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland to report on the activities of the Council, which was created to foster return to constitutional democracy in Suriname.

Dr. Chin-a-sen was President of Suriname from February 1980 to January 1982, and Mr. Tjongakiet is the former General Secretary of De Moederbond, the largest democratic workers' trade union federation in the country. Both now live in exile in Holland, following the massacre of 15 opposition leaders in December 1982. Among those killed was Cyril Daal, President of De Moederbond and a leading opponent of the Colonel Bouterse dictatorship.

The Council was formed in January 1983, and Council members report that human and trade union rights continue to be violated and that all news media are controlled by the government. Several Surinamese have been shot in the last two months for curfew violations. The trade union federation's headquarters, along with the ABC Radio and newspaper offices, were destroyed the same day in December by Bouterse troops using grenade launchers and heavy caliber automatic weapons.

Dr. Chin-a-sen also informed President Kirkland that while repression continues within the country Colonel Bouterse has been seeking support from Fidel Castro in Cuba and Colonel Qaddafi in Libya. A Libyan aid package is currently being discussed.

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions has launched a formal complaint to the ILO against the violation of trade union rights and an ILO Commission is expected to visit Suriname in May to investigate the charges. The OAS Human Rights Commission is also scheduled to make an investigative visit in June. Permission to visit Suriname by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions has so far been denied by the Bouterse regime.

President Kirkland stated that the AFL-CIO will continue to protest in all national and international forums the repression of free trade unions and to oppose any military or economic aid by the U.S. to the Bouterse government. He also stated that he supports the initiatives of the Council for the Liberation of Suriname to achieve a return to a democratic constitutional government. Mr. Kirkland reaffirmed the policy of the AFL-CIO to closely coordinate with the Caribbean Congress on Labor with respect to trade union developments in Suriname.

E. Organize labor contests and popularize technical reforms

The All-China Federation of Trade Unions in April 1980 passed the resolution to "mobilize for establishing merits for the Four Modernizations, and deeply extend the increase-production thrift campaign." The campaign included two main goals: to organize labor contests (including inter-factory contests), and to encourage the workers to propose the rationalization of technical reforms.

Because of anti-communist feelings, most of the workers were unwilling to cooperate with the Communist Party. Consequently, many model laborers were ridiculed by the masses, and they encountered setbacks. The CCP's "Chung Pien Fa 1982 No. 14" document revealed: "Some advanced elements caused jealousy because they made more contributions. Some were isolated because they upheld principle. Some met setbacks because they resisted incorrect trends. Some were isolated because they were ready to help others. Some got in trouble simply because they were diligent in invention and creation."

"Survey shows that out of 126 skilled

textile operatives throughout the country, 66 (or 52.4 percent) were ridiculed and condemned. Such a trend under which advanced elements are isolated or set upon has brought suppression upon advanced people. Seeing such circumstances, the general masses are reluctant to emulate those who are advanced, and are afraid of being considered advanced elements."

To counteract this depraved trend, the CCP in May 1982 held a "Symposium of All-China Model Laborers and Advanced Elements" to encourage the cultivation and creation of model laborers and advanced elements, one of the most important programs of the Communist Party trade unions. It can be seen that this kind

of work is not welcome or supported by the workers.

F. Reorganize the leadership, prepare to convene the 10th Congress

During the 4th plenum of the 9th Executive Committee of the Federation of Trade Unions held in August 1982, the leadership was reorganized. Sixteen vice-chairmen, secretaries, and reserve secretaries lost their positions. It was decided also that the 10th Congress be convened in the latter half of 1983 to amend the Constitution of the Trade Unions of the People's Republic of China and to completely reorganize the leadership group, because both the personnel and constitution of the 9th Congress were products of the Hua

Kuo-feng era. There are extreme leftists among the personnel and extremely leftist regulations embodied in the constitution. Now that the Teng faction is in power, all those undesirables have to be eliminated.

Of the sixteen who lost their jobs, a few retired due to old age, but the majority were considered by the Teng faction as dissidents and fired. As the constitution of the 9th Congress does not reflect the labor movement line of the Teng faction, major amendments can be expected in the constitution of the coming 10th Congress.

All in all, during the time before the convention of the 10th Congress, there will be sharp conflicts and struggles within both the Chinese Communist Party and the trade unions. ■

NICARAGUA

(Continued from Page 2)

police fired automatic weapons over the heads of worshipers who attempted to get any early place. Sandinista partisans were thus enabled to pack the front rows in the plazas.

3. An ABC-TV crew was detained and roughed up, and their video tapes confiscated by the police.
4. The Church and the government had agreed that papal appearances in both Managua and Leon were to be wholly religious and apolitical. The Church itself warned parishioners against politicking and exhorted them not to carry partisan symbols or placards. Sandinista political supporters, however, carried political banners and posters, and even chanted political slogans through megaphones.
5. John Paul was interrupted during his sermon, and then for the remainder of the Mass, by heckling and the chanting of slogans. The police who were assigned to control the crowds frequently led the chants. Members of the papal entourage later stated that they had never before seen such behavior on a papal tour.
6. During the celebration of the Mass, all nine members of the Sandinista National Directorate — including Tomas Borge and Daniel Ortega — joined the crowd in waving their left fists and shouting "popular power."
7. Government technicians connected microphones distributed among progovernment groups to the main loudspeaker system, amplifying the cry of "popular power" so that the

Pope's words were often drowned out. Several times he called out "silence."

As can be seen from all these antics, Sandinista behavior and Sandinista claims regarding respect for religion and basic liberties are poles apart. Such contradictions, however, are not new. During the past two years many reports have described the harassment of the Catholic Church, as well as other Christian denominations, including physical attacks against bishops and the public defamation of a priest. What is new is that the Sandinistas have now dared to go to such lengths before the whole world.

Finally, Nicaragua's supporters make suggestions which, on their face, certainly seem to have merit. Let's get the parties to negotiate a resolution to the problems in the Caribbean, they say. Certainly most reasonable people will subscribe to such an approach. Unfortunately, the result of negotiations between the U.S. and totalitarian countries has resulted, all too often, in the enforced dislocation, imprisonment, and "re-education" of untold hundreds of thousands of people. "Thousands died in Vietnam before the protagonists sat down to negotiate a resolution of that conflict," says Walter. Unfortunately, more than twice as many died after we completed negotiations in Vietnam.

What resolution resulted from those negotiations—the internment of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese—including leaders of the Viet Cong—in "re-education" camps? The forced march of more than one million Cambodians from Phnom Penh because the

Communist Pol Pot regime decided that the Cambodian cities should become ghost towns? The spectacle of tens of thousands of boat people—we will never know how many perished—who risked their lives in order to flee the Vietnamese "victory for the people?"

The sad fact is that the Sandinistas are another in a long line of stifling totalitarian governments which use the words of a democratic state in order to enslave their subjects. It is understandable that Nicaraguans cannot and do not criticize their government at home because to do so is to risk internment and death. It is not understandable, frankly, that those of us who live in a country where we can express our views freely are so easily taken in by the propaganda of the repressive, inhuman, Nicaraguan government.

Certainly the question of what measures the United States should take in attempting to strengthen the middle-of-the-road forces for democracy in Caribbean countries is a debate worth our active participation. The quest, as an example, for land reform and the development of free trade unions for the workers in El Salvador is a worthy endeavor. But to suggest that the Sandinista government is a peace-loving, neighborly government which the United States should support is an insult to the thousands who have been imprisoned, driven from the land, or silenced forever. Only when we are ready to deal with the world as it really is, rather than as we wish to romanticize it, can the U.S. again be a world leader in the quest of human dignity for all. ■



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AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR FREE LABOR DEVELOPMENT

TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE CONFERENCE ON

"THREATS TO DEMOCRACY IN CENTRAL AMERICA"

SPONSORED BY

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GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL LABOR PROGRAM

LABOR DESK OF THE U.S. YOUTH COUNCIL

AND

SOCIAL DEMOCRATS U.S.A.

HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA

SEPTEMBER 30, 1983

INTRODUCTION:

IT IS A VERY GREAT PRIVILEGE FOR ME TO BE ALLOWED TO ADDRESS THIS AUDIENCE ON THE SUBJECT OF "ECONOMIC THREATS TO DEMOCRACY IN CENTRAL AMERICA". AS TRADE UNIONISTS AND TRUE DEMOCRATS, THERE IS NOTHING WE DESIRE MORE THAN TO WORK TOWARD A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM AND REAP ITS BENEFITS OF DIGNITY. THE WAY IN WHICH THE ECONOMICS OF OUR COUNTRIES ARE FUNCTIONING IS INTIMATELY TIED TO THE PROSPECTS OF DEVELOPING DEMOCRACY AND, UNFORTUNATELY IN SOME CASES, OF PREVENTING IT.

WE IN THE AFL-CIO HAVE LONG BEEN CONCERNED WITH THE CHALLENGE OF SOLVING THE PROBLEMS OF POVERTY AND ECONOMIC HARDSHIP WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS. SINCE THE FOUNDING OF OUR MOVEMENT, LEADERS SUCH AS SAMUEL GOMPERS, A. STRASSER, J. L. McGUIRE AND OTHERS, HAVE SEARCHED FOR THE ANSWER AS TO HOW OUR WORKERS MIGHT GET A BETTER SHARE OF WHAT WE PRODUCE AND, AT THE SAME TIME, TO NURTURE THE TRULY DEMOCRATIC TRADITION OF OUR SOCIETY. WE REALIZED FROM THE BEGINNING THAT HIGHER WAGES AND ECONOMIC ACTIONS WERE NOT ENOUGH: WE NEEDED TO EXERCISE THE DEMOCRATIC RIGHT OF ELECTING OUR REPRESENTATIVES. WE NEEDED TO PROVIDE THE SOCIAL FABRIC—EDUCATION, SOCIAL LEGISLATION, RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS AND TRADE UNION RIGHTS—WHICH OUR NATION REQUIRED, TO BECOME NOT ONLY RICH AND PROSPEROUS, BUT A COUNTRY WHERE ALL THOSE WHO WERE SEEKING A PLACE TO LIVE IN FREEDOM AND WITHOUT OPPRESSION COULD COME.

THUS, I BELIEVE OUR EXPERIENCE GIVES US SOME RIGHT TO DISCUSS ISSUES WHICH AFFECT OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE WHO ARE CONFRONTED, LIKE WE WERE ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, WITH THE PROBLEM OF PROVIDING A BETTER STANDARD OF LIVING FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME FIGHTING BOTH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL OPPRESSION AND TRYING TO KEEP ALIVE THE IDEAS OF THE GREAT LIBERATORS OF THE AMERICAS, BOLIVAR, MORELOS AND SAN MARTIN.

I WILL OUTLINE SOME OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS WHICH ARE AFFECTING THE ECONOMIC DESTINIES OF THE WORKING PEOPLE OF CENTRAL AMERICA, AND MAKE SOME SUGGESTIONS WHICH MIGHT BE DISCUSSED IN THE PLENARY SESSION.

I. CENTRAL AMERICA: ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

PERHAPS IT WOULD BE NOT AN OVERSTATEMENT TO SAY THAT CENTRAL AMERICA IS FACING ITS MOST SERIOUS ECONOMIC CRISIS SINCE THE DEPRESSION OF THE 1930's. DURING THE 1960's, THE AREA EXPERIENCED A RAPID AND SUSTAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH WHICH WAS WITHOUT PRECEDENT IN THE HISTORY OF THE AREA. DURING THAT DECADE, INDUSTRIALIZATION BEGAN CHANGING THE TRADITIONAL PATTERNS OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY. BEFORE THAT PERIOD OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE REPRESENTED 2/3 OF THE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION. AT THE PRESENT TIME THE PERCENTAGE HAS DECREASED TO LESS THAN A HALF. INDUSTRIES, WHICH WERE ALMOST NONEXISTENT BEFORE, NOW EMPLOY 20% OF THE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION. GROWTH IN STATISTICAL TERMS WAS SUSTAINED THROUGH THIS PERIOD, FUELED BY THE CREATION OF

THE CENTRAL AMERICAN COMMON MARKET (CACM) AND ITS PROCESS OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION. GROWTH RATES OF 5% TO 7% PER YEAR OUTSTRIPPED THE RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH. HOWEVER, DURING THE 1970's, THE DOUBLING AND TRIPLING OF THE PRICE OF OIL IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, THE LIMITATIONS OF IMPORT SUBSTITUTION AS A MEANS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND THE LACK OF AN INTEGRATED POLICY OF AGRARIAN DEVELOPMENT, COMBINED TO LOWER THE PACE OF THAT GROWTH. FURTHER DETERIORATION OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MARKETS, NEW OIL PRICE INCREASES AND THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH SERIOUS FINANCIAL SHORTAGES HAVE PRODUCED THE CRISIS SINCE 1980. THUS, WHILE IN 1981 PER CAPITA INCOME IN CENTRAL AMERICA WAS AVERAGING \$1,025, IN 1982 THE FIGURE WAS LOWER, \$982, ONLY \$929 FOR 1983 AND IT IS EXPECTED TO REACH THE BOTTOM OF \$920 IN 1984 BEFORE, HOPEFULLY, STARTING TO GO UP AGAIN.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS HAS DEEPEENED AS A RESULT OF TWO BASIC PROBLEMS: 1) ECONOMIC GROWTH WHICH OCCURED WITHOUT REGARD FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND 2) THE WORLD RECESSION. WITH REGARD TO THE FORMER, THE DOMINANT ELITES FOSTERED ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGHOUT THE 60's AND 70's BUT WITHOUT CARING ABOUT THE SOCIAL NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE. THUS, THE RICH PROSPERED AND THE POOR SIMPLY GOT POORER. SOCIETIES REMAINED UNDER THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTROL OF AN OLIGARCHY WHICH ONLY SOUGHT DEVELOPMENT FOR THEIR OWN PERSONAL ENRICHMENT. THE PROMISED PROCESS OF THE BENEFITS OF DEVELOPMENT FILTERING DOWN TO THE WORKING CLASSES SIMPLY DID NOT TAKE PLACE. RESULTANT SOCIAL UNREST PROVIDED A FERTILE GROUND FOR EXTREMISTS FROM THE LEFT WHO STARTED GUERRILLA WARFARE WITH THE

GUIDANCE, THE TRAINING, AND THE EXPERTISE OF TOTALITARIAN COUNTRIES SUCH AS THE SOVIET UNION AND CUBA. THE POLITICAL CENTER--FORMED BY THE LABOR MOVEMENT, THE EMERGING MIDDLE CLASS AND THOSE WHO WERE PRESSING FOR REFORMS WITHIN A DEMOCRATIC FRAMEWORK--WAS CAUGHT BETWEEN THOSE WHO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE HORRIBLE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION TO SUPPORT MARXIST-LENINIST REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS AND THE RIGHT-WING EXTREMIST POLITICIANS WHO SOUGHT TO PRESERVE THEIR PRIVILEGES BY RESORTING TO TERROR AND PERSECUTION. GUERRILLA WARFARE AND RIGHT-WING REPRESSION HAVE RESULTED IN WIDESPREAD DESTRUCTION OF THE ECONOMY, AND HAVE POLITICALLY POLARIZED THE POPULATIONS OF CENTRAL AMERICA.

A SECOND SERIES OF PROBLEMS RESULTED FROM THE WORLD RECESSION IN THE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES, THE NEW OIL PRICE INCREASES OF THE PERIOD OF 1979-80, THE DECLINE OF INTERNATIONAL PRICES FOR BASIC EXPORT COMMODITIES SUCH AS SUGAR AND COFFEE, THE INCREASED FINANCIAL BURDEN OF FRAGILE ECONOMIES STRIVING TO AVOID BIG FISCAL DEFICITS, PROBLEMS IN THEIR BALANCE OF PAYMENTS, AND THE EXHAUSTION OF FUNDS FOR INTERNATIONAL BORROWING AS A MEANS TO AVOID THE FINANCIAL DISASTER.

THESE ARE THE BASIC PROBLEMS WHICH CENTRAL AMERICA IS FACING TODAY. THE QUESTION IS: HOW ARE THESE PROBLEMS AFFECTING THE POSSIBILITIES FOR DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT? AND ADDITIONALLY, IS IT INEVITABLE THAT THESE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WILL REQUIRE AN AUTHORITARIAN OR TOTALITARIAN SOLUTION? I WOULD LIKE TO CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS WITH REFERENCE TO THREE MAIN AREAS:

- 1) POPULATION GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT, 2) ECONOMIC INDICATORS, AND
- 3) LAND TENURE.

POPULATION GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT

IN 1980, THE POPULATION OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REGION WAS ESTIMATED AT 22.2 MILLIONS, ALMOST DOUBLING THE FIGURE OF 12.3 MILLION FOR 1960—ONLY 20 YEARS EARLIER. FOR THE YEAR 2000, TOTAL POPULATION COULD REACH 38.1 MILLIONS. WHILE THE GROWTH RATE OF THE POPULATION HAS DECLINED FROM AN EXPLOSIVE 3% TO 2.7%, THE PRESENT RATE IS HIGH ENOUGH TO PRESENT A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR ANY PROCESS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: POPULATION GROWTH HAS THREE MAIN CONSEQUENCES: 1) THE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION—THOSE WHO ARE WORKING OR LOOKING FOR WORK—HAVE TO SUPPORT A LARGE SECTOR OF THE POPULATION WHO IS NON-PRODUCTIVE BUT NEVERTHELESS REQUIRES SERVICES IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND HOUSING. SINCE THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA DO NOT ADEQUATELY PROVIDE SUCH SERVICES, THE RESULTS ARE EVIDENT: ILLITERACY, WIDESPREAD POVERTY, AND MISERY. 2) THE REGION'S ECONOMIES HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO GROW FAST ENOUGH TO ABSORB THE NEWCOMERS TO THE LABOR FORCE AND BY THAT GROWTH TO PRODUCE THE ADDITIONAL JOBS REQUIRED TO ALLEVIATE INCREASED UNEMPLOYMENT. THE SITUATION CAN BE SEEN IN THE FIGURES PROVIDED BY GOVERNMENT STATISTICS FOR THE OPEN UNEMPLOYMENT:

COSTA RICA:	7%
EL SALVADOR:	30%
HONDURAS:	10.8%
GUATEMALA:	12%
NICARAGUA:	17%
PANAMA:	17%

IF ONE COUNTS THE UNDEREMPLOYED--THAT IS TO SAY THOSE WHO ARE WORKING ONLY PART-TIME BECAUSE THERE ARE NO FULL-TIME JOBS AVAILABLE, THOSE WHO REMAIN OUTSIDE THE LABOR FORCE BECAUSE OF LACK OF OPORTUNITIES (UNPAID FAMILY MEMBERS, HOUSEWIVES), AND THOSE WORKING BELOW THEIR TRAINING AND ABILITY--THE FIGURES PROBABLY WILL AMOUNT TO BETWEEN 35% AND 50% OF THE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION. 3) THE STRUCTURE OF THE POPULATION WITHIN THE PROCESS OF URBANIZATION IS ANOTHER FACTOR TO BE CONSIDERED. THIS PROCESS HAS AGGRAVATED THE PROBLEMS FOR GOVERNMENTS TO PROVIDE NEEDED SERVICES TO THE POPULATION. IF THERE IS A RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH OF 2.7% TO 3%, THE RATE OF URBAN GROWTH IS GENERALLY DOUBLE THAT AMOUNT. IN PRACTICAL TERMS, URBAN DWELLERS ARE GROWING AT A FASTER PACE THAN THE OVERALL POPULATION AND WITHOUT ADEQUATE HOUSING. SLUM AREAS HAVE TENDED TO PROLIFERATE. MIGRANT WORKERS, ATTRACTED BY EVEN THE MEAGER POSSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE URBAN AREAS, NORMALLY HAVE NO MARKETABLE SKILLS AND HAVE, THEREFORE, BECOME PART OF THAT SECTOR OF THE WORK FORCE LIVING IN MISERABLE SLUM CONDITIONS. MANY TIMES THEY ARE FORCED TO WORK FOR LESS THAN THE ALREADY LOW MINIMUM WAGE SCALE. THIS SECTOR REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST POLITICALLY EXPLOSIVE ELEMENTS IN THE SOCIETY. THEY ARE ECONOMICALLY OPPRESSED AND A CONTINUOUS SOURCE OF POLITICAL DISCONTENT AND INSTABILITY.

THE SOLUTIONS TO SUCH DRASTIC PROBLEMS WILL REQUIRE MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF AID - MOST PROBABLY FROM OUTSIDE THE REGION. THE HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPED AREAS OF THE WORLD HAVE SHOWN THAT POPULATION GROWTH WILL BE VOLUNTARILY CURTAILED BY POPULATIONS

ONLY WHEN STANDARDS OF LIVING HAVE INCREASED SUFFICIENTLY AND PEOPLE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BETTER THEMSELVES. THIS IS THE LONG TERM EXPECTATION. MEANWHILE, PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO CREATE EMPLOYMENT WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ATTACKING SOCIAL PROBLEMS MUST BE ATTEMPTED. TO DO LESS IS TO INVITE POLITICAL EXTREMISTS TO SUGGEST (AND ACT ON) THEIR OWN TOTALITARIAN SOLUTIONS.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

THE SITUATION OF THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA IS NOT HEARTENING. FIGURES FOR THE GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT--WHICH MEASURES THE TOTAL OF GOODS AND SERVICES PRODUCED IN EACH COUNTRY IN A YEAR--SHOWED IN 1982 A DECLINE, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF PANAMA, AND EVEN THERE THE INCREASE AMOUNTED TO ONLY 1% WHILE THE POPULATION GROWTH WAS 2.4%. WITH THIS AMOUNT OF POPULATION GROWTH, THE PAUPERIZATION OF THE PEOPLE IS THE NET RESULT, AS CAN BE UNDERSTOOD FROM THE PER-CAPITA INCOME FIGURES MENTIONED BEFORE.

INFLATION, WHICH HAS NOT BEEN A MAJOR PROBLEM IN THE REGION PRIOR TO THE PRESENT CRISIS, HAS NOW BECOME A SOURCE OF CONCERN IN COUNTRIES SUCH AS COSTA RICA WHERE THE PRICE INDEX ROSE AN ESTIMATED 90% IN 1982. NICARAGUA'S INFLATIONARY RATE WAS 23.5%, AND EL SALVADOR HAD A 12.5% INCREASE IN THE LEVEL OF PRICES. RISING PRICES, GROWING UNEMPLOYMENT AND A GENERAL DECLINE OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY HAS COMBINED TO MAKE THE LIFE OF AN AVERAGE WORKER IN CENTRAL AMERICA MISERABLE.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION HAS DETERIORATED TO A POINT WHERE THE FOREIGN DEBT BURDENS HAVE FORCED THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL

AMERICA TO SEEK HELP FROM THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND. UNFORTUNATELY, THE IMF RELIEF PLANS HAVE FURTHER COMPLICATED THE PROBLEM BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENTS HAVE TO COMPLY WITH STIFF CONDITIONS. THE GOVERNMENTS, UNDER THESE CONDITIONS HAVE TO PROMOTE EXPORTS, LIMIT AND/OR CUT PUBLIC EXPENSES WHICH CURTAIL SERVICES FOR THE NEEDY, AND TO LIMIT IMPORTS. THE IMPACT OF THE BURDEN OF FOREIGN DEBT ON THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA CAN BE SEEN IN THE FIGURES, WHICH SHOW THE PERCENTAGE OF EXPORTS WHICH HAS TO BE ALLOCATED FOR DEBT SERVICE FROM A LOW OF 7.9% IN GUATEMALA TO A MAXIMUM OF 29.8% IN COSTA RICA. WHAT IT MEANS FOR A COUNTRY WHICH HAS A BIG FOREIGN DEBT IS THAT THEY MUST USE THEIR EXPORTS TO PAY THE FOREIGN DEBT. SINCE THEY NORMALLY CANNOT MEET THE DEADLINES, THEY HAVE TO RENEGOTIATE THE TERMS OF THEIR DEBT. COMMONLY THE RENEGOTIATION RESULTS IN A HIGHER FEE OR RATE, WHICH ONLY INCREASES THE BURDEN OF DEBT SERVICE IN THE TROUBLED ECONOMY. THE BANKS ARGUE THAT THEY NEED THESE EXTRA FEES TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM BANKTRUPCIES. LET ME TELL YOU HERE AND NOW HOW THE AFL-CIO VIEWS THE IMF POLICIES. THE AFL-CIO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, AT ITS MEETING THIS PAST FEBRUARY, MADE A POLICY STATEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND IN WHICH IT SUPPORTS THE U.S. PARTICIPATION IN AN EXPANSION OF U.S. CAPITAL FUNDS, BUT ONLY WITH THE PROVISION THAT LEGISLATION BE ENACTED TO ACCOMPLISH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE FOLLOWING:

1. TO INCREASE THE SURVEILLANCE OF THE U.S. FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD ON U.S. BANK FOREIGN LENDING AND TO RESTRICT SUCH LENDING WITH DUE CONSIDERATION OF THE IMPACT OF CREDIT AVAILABILITY, THE COST ON THE U.S. ECONOMY, AND THE CAPABILITY OF THE RECIPIENT GOVERNMENT TO REPAY THE LOAN.

2. TO REQUIRE THE BANKS TO HAVE RESERVES TO PROVIDE FUTURE U.S. CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMF FUND EXPANSION.
3. THAT PRIVATE BANKS WHICH HAVE EXTENDED LOANS TO FOREIGN BORROWERS SHOULD SHARE IN BURDEN OF ANY "RESCUE" EFFORTS.
4. TO REQUEST THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY TO SEEK A CHANGE IN IMF POLICIES TO REDUCE THEIR EMPHASIS UPON HAVING THE AIDED COUNTRIES REDUCE IMPORTS AND INCREASE EXPORTS, AND TO PLACE MORE EMPHASIS UPON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR OWN DOMESTIC MARKETS. THIS, IT SEEMS TO THE AFL-CIO, WOULD BENEFIT WORKERS IN THE COUNTRIES RECEIVING THE LOAN AS WELL AS WORKERS IN THE UNITED STATES.

CUTTING PUBLIC EXPENSES HAS BECOME A CLICHE WHICH MEANS DEPRIVING THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION OF BASIC SERVICES WHICH THEY NEED TO OVERCOME THE HARDSHIP OF THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS. LIMITING IMPORTS IS THE CLICHE WHICH MEANS THE LIMITING OR CURTAILING OF THE INTRODUCTION OF MATERIALS, MACHINERY AND PARTS WHICH INDUSTRY NEEDS TO FUNCTION AND PROSPER. AS A RESULT, FACTORIES ARE CLOSED, UNEMPLOYMENT GROWS, AND THE COUNTRY'S OUTPUT DECREASES. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE POLICY OF FOSTERING EXPORTS HAS BEEN VERY DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN. SINCE THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION EXPORT MAINLY COMMODITIES WHICH ARE SUBJECT TO GREAT FLUCTUATIONS IN WORLD MARKETS, A DROP IN COFFEE PRICES, A REDUCTION OF THE QUOTAS FOR SUGAR, AND THE RECESSION IN THE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES IN GENERAL HAVE SEVERELY HURT THE ECONOMIES OF THE REGION. THE POLITICAL TURMOIL IN THE AREA AND THE

DESIRE OF EACH COUNTRY TO PUT THEIR HOUSE IN ORDER FIRST HAS RADICALLY ALTERED THE POSSIBILITY OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSUMER MARKETS WHICH CAN ABSORB BOTH LOCAL AND REGIONAL PRODUCTION AND THUS SUSTAIN ECONOMIC GROWTH. THE COMBINATION OF UNFAVORABLE TERMS OF TRADE, THE FINANCIAL BURDEN OF A HUGE FOREIGN DEBT, AND THE DECLINE OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION HAVE RESULTED IN TREMENDOUS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. WORKERS CANNOT BE ASKED TO PAY FOR THE COST OF THE ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION IN TERMS OF REDUCED SALARIES AND LIVING STANDARDS. THEY DO NOT HAVE THE ABILITY, AS THE RIGHT-WING OLIGARCHS HAVE DONE, TO SEND CAPITAL ABROAD AND THUS PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM ECONOMIC FLUCTUATIONS.

IF THESE ARE THE RESULTS OF IMF "HELP", GOD SAVE US FROM THE HELPERS. WHAT IS NEEDED IS MORE FLEXIBLE AND HUMANE SUPPORT - ON MUCH SOFTER TERMS - FOR GOVERNMENTS IN THE REGION WHO ARE INTERESTED IN THE WELFARE OF THEIR CITIZENS.

LAND TENURE:

AGRICULTURE REMAINS THE MOST IMPORTANT SECTOR IN THE ECONOMIES OF THE REGION. IN 1981 AGRICULTURE AMOUNTED TO 23% OF THE TOTAL REGIONAL GDP, AND IT PROVIDED FOR 49% OF THE EMPLOYMENT. MOREOVER, THE REGION'S ECONOMIES DEPENDED ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AS MAIN SOURCES OF EXPORTS. COFFEE, SUGAR, AND BANANAS ARE BASIC COMMODITIES WHICH HAVE A PREPONDERANT INFLUENCE ON THE BALANCE OF TRADE OF THE AREA.

AGRICULTURE BEING SO IMPORTANT IN THE REGION'S ECONOMIES, LAND TENURE IS PERHAPS THE MOST CRUCIAL CURRENT ISSUE IN CENTRAL

AMERICA. AGRICULTURE IS PLAGUED BY A DUAL SYSTEM OF EXPLOITATION: a) COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE ORIENTED TO THE EXPORT COMMODITIES AND NOT PRODUCING FOOD TO FEED THE POPULATION; b) SUBSISTANCE AGRICULTURE WHERE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF SMALL FARMERS, SHARECROPPERS AND LANDLESS PEASANTS BARELY SURVIVE. THE STRUCTURE OF LAND OWNERSHIP IS APPALING AS THE STATISTICS REVEAL.

	<u>Year</u>	<u>% of Land</u>	<u>% of Land Ownership</u>
Costa Rica	1973	35.9	1.0
El Salvador	1971	49.5	1.5
Guatemala	1964	62.5 (36.0)*	2.1 (0.2)*
Honduras	1966	47.9	2.4
Nicaragua	1963	41.2	1.5
Panama	1971	45.7	3.3

*) Figures - 1979.

THIS PATTERN OF LAND TENURE HAS RESULTED IN CONCENTRATION OF LAND OWNERSHIP IN THE HANDS OF A FEW WEALTHY FAMILIES. NOT ONLY THAT, THEY HAVE THE BEST LAND AVAILABLE AND, AS A RESULT, THIS SMALL MINORITY OF RICH FAMILIES OWN THE AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES OF CENTRAL AMERICA. AS AN EXAMPLE, IN GUATEMALA 78% OF ALL FARMS ARE UNDER 3.5 HECTARES AND OCCUPY ONLY 10% OF THE NATION'S FARM LAND. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE CONCENTRATION OF LAND OWNERSHIP IS EQUALLY DRAMATIC BECAUSE ONLY 0.2% OF THE FARMS REPRESENT 36% OF THE FARM LAND. EVEN IN COSTA RICA THE PATTERN OF OWNERSHIP CONCENTRATION IS GREAT, WHERE ONLY 1% OF THE NUMBER OF FARMS REPRESENT 36% OF TOTAL FARM LAND.

THE STRUCTURE OF AGRICULTURE IN CENTRAL AMERICA HAS CREATED AN EXPLOSIVE PROBLEM FOR THE REGION. LAND TENURE PATTERNS HAVE CREATED A VAST CLASS OF TENANT FARMERS AND SHARE CROPPERS WHO USE A PLOT OF LAND TOO SMALL TO MEET THEIR BAREST NEEDS AFTER THEY HAVE GIVEN THE LION'S SHARE OF THEIR PRODUCTION TO THE OWNER OF THE LAND. THEREFORE, THERE IS NO INCENTIVE TO IMPROVE THE AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM. LANDLESS PEASANTS AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS ARE SUBJECT TO THE EXPLOITATION AND DEPRIVATION OF THE OWNERS OF BIG COMMERCIAL FARMS.

LAND REFORM EFFORTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF EL SALVADOR THE EFFORTS TO DEVELOP SOUND PROGRAMS IN THE AREA OF AGRARIAN REFORM HAVE BEEN INADEQUATE. IN GENERAL THOSE EFFORTS HAVE BEEN DIRECTED TOWARD LAND COLONIZATION PROGRAMS WHICH HAVE BEEN PROVED TO BE BOTH COSTLY AND INEFFICIENT DUE TO A LACK OF FINANCIAL CAPITAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS. THE FACT THAT THE LAND TO BE DISTRIBUTED HAS TYPICALLY BEEN MARGINAL OR UNDERDEVELOPED HAS CONTRIBUTED TO A LARGE EXTENT IN THE "SHORTCOMINGS OF THE PROGRAM." GUATEMALA, COSTA RICA AND MOST RECENTLY HONDURAS HAVE FALLEN INTO THIS CATEGORY. IN NICARAGUA THE SANDINISTA LAND REFORM HAS NATIONALIZED THE FORMER SOMOZA LANDS AND HAS MADE COLLECTIVE FARMS OF THEM IN WHICH THE EMPHASIS HAS BEEN STATE CONTROL OF FOOD PRODUCTION.

THE ONLY MAJOR EFFORT TO FACE THE COMPLEXITY OF THE AGRARIAN PROBLEMS IN CENTRAL AMERICA HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN IN EL

SALVADOR. THE GOVERNMENT BEGAN IN 1980 WITH A SERIES OF DECREES ON LAND REFORM WHICH BASICALLY EXPROPRIATED LAND HOLDINGS MORE THAN 500 HECTARES AND DISTRIBUTED THEM TO NEWLY FORMED COOPERATIVES. THOSE COOPERATIVES WERE FORMED BY FORMER AGRICULTURAL WORKERS WHO WERE ALREADY WORKING ON THE BIG FARMS. THE LAND-TO-THE-TILLER PHASE OF THE LAND REFORM PROGRAM GIVES TITLE TO THOSE WHO WERE TILLING THE LAND: TENANT FARMERS AND SHARECROPPERS.

THE FACT THAT THE LAND REFORM HAS CREATED SUCH A TURMOIL IN EL SALVADOR SHOWED THE NATURE OF THE AGRARIAN PROBLEM IN CENTRAL AMERICA. THE OLIGARCHY BASED ITS POWER ON THE CONTROL OF THE BEST LANDS AND THE REVENUES WHICH IT DERIVED FROM THEM. THE LAND REFORM ATTACKED THAT POWER BASE AND THREATENED THE OLIGARCHY. NO WONDER THAT THE EXTREME RIGHT OF EL SALVADOR OPPOSES THE LAND REFORM! THE EXTREME LEFT ALSO OPPOSES IT BECAUSE IF THE REFORMS ARE SUCCESSFUL, THE CAMPESINOS AND THEIR COOPERATIVES WILL BECOME THE BACKBONE OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY. LAND REFORM AND DEMOCRACY ARE INSEPARABLE ELEMENTS IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PICTURE OF CENTRAL AMERICA.

ECONOMIC THREATS AND OUR GOALS

DURING THE PAST THREE DECADES, THERE HAS BEEN PROFUSE LITERATURE PUBLISHED WHICH DEALS WITH DEVELOPMENT. GOVERNMENTS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND SPECIALIZED AGENCIES HAVE DEVELOPED STRATEGIES TO FOSTER ECONOMIC GROWTH TO MEET THE RISING EXPECTATIONS OF THE GROWING POPULATION. THE CURRENT ECONOMIC

FAILURES OF CENTRAL AMERICA PROVIDE PROOF THAT THESE STRATEGIES HAVE NOT WORKED. IN MY OPINION, THERE HAS BEEN A COMPLETE LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT DEVELOPMENT REALLY MEANS.

DEVELOPMENT CANNOT BE VIEWED SOLELY AS A MATTER OF MEASUREMENT - GNP, GDP, PER CAPITA GDP, ETC., BUT AS AN INTEGRATED PROCESS. NOT ONLY DOES IT DEAL WITH THE FUNCTION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, BUT WITH THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS REQUIRED TO MAKE THE WHOLE PROCESS WORK. THE SAME MISTAKE CANNOT BE REPEATED--THE ONE WHICH OCCURRED DURING THE 1960's WHEN ECONOMIC PLANNERS WERE SATISFIED WITH ACHIEVING GROWTH TARGETS MEASURED IN STATISTICAL TERMS. THE PROBLEM IS TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE IS ESSENTIAL TO MAKE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVE THE POPULATIONS OF CENTRAL AMERICA. AND, I HASTEN TO ADD, TO MAKE THE ECONOMIC STRUCTURES INTO A VIABLE INSTRUMENT TO SUPPORT DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PROCESSES.

AT A MINIMUM, THE GOVERNMENTS OF CENTRAL AMERICA MUST:

- o RESPECT AND EFFECTIVELY ENFORCE WORKERS RIGHTS. THESE INCLUDE THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE, BARGAIN COLLECTIVELY, AND PARTICIPATE IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.
- o DEVELOP AN INTEGRATED POLICY BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT. AGRARIAN REFORM IS THE BASIC PREREQUISITE FOR THE ENTIRE AREA. LAND REFORM WILL MAKE PROPRIETORS OUT OF LANDLESS FARMERS AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS. A PROGRAM OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT MUST ENCOURAGE THE CREATION OF COOPERATIVES, AND PROVIDE EXTENSION FACILITIES TO TEACH

AGRICULTURAL TECHNIQUES TO THE CAMPESINOS. CAMPESINOS MUST BE TRAINED IN THE MARKETING OF THEIR PRODUCTS AND PROVIDED WITH CREDIT IN ORDER TO BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT AND MORE PRODUCTIVE.

I MUST CONCLUDE BY EMPHASIZING THAT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT PROVIDES A BASIS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE WELL-BEING OF THE POPULATIONS OF CENTRAL AMERICA. IT DOES NOT GUARANTEE SUCH WELL BEING. BUT THE LACK OF ECONOMIC PROGRESS, ON THE OTHER HAND, PRESENTS AN ACTUAL THREAT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL DEMOCRACY BECAUSE POVERTY AND IGNORANCE AND ILLITERACY AND UNEMPLOYMENT (ESPECIALLY UNEMPLOYMENT) ARE THE BREEDING GROUNDS OF TOTALITARIAN SOLUTIONS OF THE EXTREME RIGHT AND THE EXTREME LEFT. PROGRAMS WHICH ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ARE NECESSARY, BUT MUST CONTAIN ONE ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENT WHICH HAS BEEN ABSENT FROM PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS. THEY MUST BE ACTIVELY DESIGNED TO PROMOTE AND ENHANCE THE INFLUENCE OF CENTRIST DEMOCRATIC FORCES. ONLY IF THIS CAN OCCUR WILL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESULT IN POLITICAL DEMOCRACY.



FEDERATION OF LABOR, AFL-CIO

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September 23, 1983

Douglas A. Riggs
Associate Director for the
Office of Public Liaison
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20006

Dear Mr. Riggs,

I am in receipt of your mailing of September 15, 1983,
dealing with the suppression of the free trade labor move-
ment in Nicaragua by the Sandinista Government.

I would be interested in receiving any information
that you have dealing with the suppression of the free
trade labor movement in the United States. Specifically
I am interested in any information or papers you may have
that deal with PATCO.

I am looking forward to your response.

Cordially,

Mark L. Smith
Secretary-Treasurer

MLS:smb
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Council on Hemispheric Affairs

November 1, 1983

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Douglas A. Riggs
Associate Director for the Office of Public Liaison
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W. 20006

Dear Mr. Riggs:


A number of trustees of this organization who happen to be presidents of major U.S. national unions, have forwarded to us copies of a document titled Nicaraguan Repression of Labor Unions (dated August 24, 1983) which was sent out under your name.

While we found this document to be very informative and well researched, we would be equally interested, as would our trustees, to receive comparable documents on the far worse trade union repression that has been experienced by the Guatemalan and El Salvadoran trade union movements at the hands of the authorities in those countries. We hope the fact that the Reagan Administration has cordial relations with these regimes will not interfere with its indefatigable efforts to communicate to the U.S. trade union movement the grim fate of some of its Central American colleagues.

We find a disturbing trend occurring when this administration's Assistant Secretary for Human Rights Elliot Abrams communicates his profound concern to the U.S. religious community over the repression of the church in Nicaragua where no priests have been killed, but is raptly silent about the treatment of the church in Guatemala and El Salvador where at least 24 priests have been murdered. Do we not have something of a double standard here?

Before we publicize your Nicaraguan communication to our trustees, we would like to also report on comparable documents that your office might be distributing on the trade union situation in Guatemala and El Salvador. If no such reports are being contemplated on these two countries we would also like to be in a position to inform the public of this fact.

Sincerely,


Laurence R. Birns
Director



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REGARDING THE WORK OF THE

COUNCIL ON HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS (COHA)

The Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA), a non-profit, tax exempt research and information organization, was founded at the end of 1975 to promote the common interests of the hemisphere; raise the visibility and increase the importance of the inter-American relationship; and encourage the formulation of rational and constructive U.S. policies towards Latin America. In 1982, COHA's Board of Trustees voted to expand its mandate to include U.S.-Canadian relations. Over the past years, COHA has become one of the most active and broadest-based U.S. private organizations dealing with the entire spectrum of issues and challenges confronting the nations of this hemisphere.

COHA's Board of Trustees consists of the leadership of some of this country's most important trade unions, professional organizations, and religious groups, as well as distinguished civic and academic figures, who have joined together to advance their common belief in representative governments and pluralistic institutions. The organizations represented on COHA's Board account for a significant percentage of the U.S. population.

COHA subscribes to no specific political credo nor does it maintain partisan allegiances. It supports open and democratic political processes, just as it condemns authoritarian regimes that fail to provide their populations with even the minimal standards of political freedoms, social justice, personal security, and civic guarantees.

In addition to COHA's Board of Trustees, the organization consists of a professional staff supplemented by volunteer graduate and undergraduate students, who often receive academic credit from their home institutions for the experience gained through their work. A number of retired government employees and international lending agency personnel also cooperate with COHA in preparing surveys on political

and economic developments and specialized reports on regional trade policies, technology transfers, practices of multinational corporations in the region, and commodity pricing policies. This staff is assisted by some ten COHA Senior Research Fellows from the United States and Latin America, who are generally considered to be leaders in their respective fields of expertise.

COHA findings have been cited in official publications of the U.S. government, as well as in national and international publications, such as Time, Newsweek, The Atlantic Monthly, The New Yorker, New York, The New Statesman, Penthouse, Barron's, and Macleans. On almost a daily basis, the results of COHA's work appear in the press of Latin America, the United States, and Europe. COHA has also been cited on numerous occasions in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, The Christian Science Monitor, The Boston Globe, The Boston Herald-American, The Baltimore Sun, The Miami Herald, The Toronto Globe and Mail, and The Manchester Guardian, among many other newspapers. Representatives of COHA are frequently interviewed by national network television and radio programs, as well as by the BBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and other television and radio networks in a number of countries.

COHA provides two streams of information. The first is the Washington Report on the Hemisphere, a biweekly newsletter that interprets current political, economic, and social issues concerning Latin America. The annual subscription price is \$45 for individuals, \$50 for media and religious organizations, and \$65 for institutional subscribers. A subscription to Country Reports which is mailed approximately every ten days and contains recent COHA-related newspaper articles on hemispheric issues and an average of six COHA political and economic analyses, costs \$35 per year. These materials are available to foreign subscribers for an additional annual charge of \$8 for Canada and Mexico and \$22 for other countries. Specimen copies of the Washington Report on the Hemisphere and Country Reports are available upon requests.

Those individuals who make a tax-deductible contribution of \$100 or more become COHA Associates, automatically receiving a one-year subscription to the Washington Report as well as COHA's new in-house newsletter, the Inner Workings, and a variety of analyses, occasional papers, reports, reprints of COHA-related news articles in addition to special research memoranda.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 15, 1983

Dear Mr. Birns:

I have your letter of November 1 regarding our White House Digest paper, "Nicaraguan Repression of Labor Unions." Your description of it as informative and well researched is typical of the comments we have received.

We differ with you as to your conclusion that there is "far worse" repression of labor unions by government authorities in the non-Marxist-Leninist countries of Central America. In Nicaragua there are massive, systematic official government programs which were designed to destroy free labor unions and replace them with organizations misnamed "unions" but which exist to discipline workers in the interest of a Marxist-Leninist regime.

We do not believe that non-Marxist countries have imposed an unyielding regime that has eradicated the free labor movement. For instance, in El Salvador there are three forces at work:

1. Marxist-Leninist dominated insurgents, complete with left-wing death squads determined to impose a totalitarian government on the Soviet-Cuban model.
2. A freely elected coalition of elected parties ranging from center-left to conservative, committed to human rights including political and economic freedom.
3. Extreme right-wing elements complete with clandestine death squads, opposed to the U.S.-supported social reforms.

The one issue which the right and left extremes share is opposition to free labor unions. The U.S. government, through public statements and private communications, is strongly encouraging the government of El Salvador to bring to justice the perpetrators of political violence, left and right. The left-wing death squad murder in El Salvador of Lt. Commander Albert A. Schaufelberger is as deplorable as the right-wing death squad murder of the AIFLD people. These events have been vigorously condemned by the U.S. government and have received major publicity in most major U.S. news media.


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In contrast, the story of the persecution of free labor unions in Nicaragua has not received significant coverage and the reason why we devoted a White House Digest to the topic. The Digests are limited in number, and intended to provide information and insights not adequately available elsewhere, not to provide general coverage.

As to your intention to distribute copies of the Digest to your Trustees, I encourage you to do so. In addition, you might want to distribute to your Trustees copies of the White House Digest, "The PLO in Central America," and the related text of the remarks to our White House Outreach Working Group on Central America by your Trustee, Rabbi Morton Rosenthal. We have enjoyed working with Rabbi Rosenthal and share his concern over the Sandinista threats and terrorism which forced almost the entire Nicaraguan Jewish community out of their country.

Thank you for writing.

Sincerely,



Douglas A. Riggs
Associate Director
Office of Public Liaison

Mr. Laurence R. Birns
Director
Council on Hemispheric Affairs
Suite 201
1900 L Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Enclosure

cc: Rabbi Morton Rosenthal