

# FRONTLINE

On the Frontline  
In the Struggle Against  
War and Racism

Vol. 1 No. 17 Biweekly

A LINE OF MARCH PUBLICATION

March 5, 1984 • 75¢

## Elections set for November 4, 1984 Institutionalizing The Nicaraguan Revolution



Jubilant Sandinistas at a 1980 rally in Managua.

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By William I. Robinson, APLA

#### MANAGUA

The recent announcement that Nicaragua would hold its national elections this November 4 underscored the country's continuing moves to "institutionalize the revolution," and came as a surprise to opponents of the revolutionary government.

The February 21 announcement was made before an estimated 50,000 people in Managua's Revolution Square by the coordinator of the Government of National Reconstruction, Daniel Ortega Saavedra. Speaking before the tumultuous crowd on the 50th Anniversary of the

death of Augusto Cesar Sandino, Ortega addressed the elections as part of the country's revolutionary process:

"In this free land of Nicaragua, there are no roads that lead to the past," noted Ortega. "This revolution is being institutionalized as proof that it is already an irreversible process."

By advancing the date of the national elections—which had originally been planned for 1985—the Nicaraguan government was carefully out-manoeuvring its most belligerent antagonist, the U.S. government. Nicaragua's November 4 election will come two days before the U.S. presidential elections, a time when the U.S. ruling class will be constrained by the demands of its own political pro-

cess from strongly intervening against the Sandinista Revolution. Whoever is chosen U.S. President will thus face a Nicaraguan government confirmed by popular votes—and even the Sandinistas' most determined opponents concede that the revolutionaries are likely to win an overwhelming mandate.

International recognition of the Nicaraguan elections will further complicate plans for U.S. military intervention. Moreover, opponents of the Sandinistas within Nicaragua will not be able to use even a Reagan reelection to strengthen their electoral base—as they had planned when the elections were originally scheduled for 1985.

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## EDITORIAL

### The Challenge to the Left In the 1984 U.S. Election

One way or another, most of the left has already been drawn into the powerful magnetic field thrown up by the 1984 presidential election.

The pull of the election is inexorable, in part because, at the present level of the U.S. working class' political development, it is the main mechanism through which the broad masses interact with national politics. But this year there is another factor as well: the outpouring of progressive political energy in the electoral arena—especially from the Black community—that has been galvanized by the Jesse Jackson campaign. This effort, in both its immediate and long term pros-

pects, gives the 1984 election a significance going well beyond who wins on November 6.

Not that this outcome is unimportant. Ronald Reagan's reelection—for which prospects are, unfortunately, all too bright—would be seen by the administration and the ruling class more broadly as a popular mandate for pursuing even more vigorously the policies of war and racism which have characterized the President's first term in office. For this reason alone, the left, attempting to represent the interests of the working class both in the U.S. and internationally, cannot help but be concerned with doing whatever it can

to thwart Reagan's bid for a second term.

#### MORE THAN DUMPING REAGAN

Nevertheless, desirable though ousting Reagan from office would be, the task of the left in the 1984 election cannot be reduced simply to an all-out campaign to unseat the President. We need a broader perspective, one that views the election as one key vehicle for both the immediate and long term maturation of the working class and popular movements. In this sense, we believe that the left faces three challenges in the 1984 election:

One is to interact with what is essentially a plebiscite on the Reagan presidency in a way that calls into question and helps undermine U.S. imperialism's attempt to forge a popular consensus behind the policies of nuclear escalation, military intervention and a consciously racialized attack on the working class as a whole.

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## '84 Election...

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Second is to utilize the public debate engendered by the presidential election in order to pose before the masses the real political issues at stake and to help train the masses—the working class in particular—to both the uses and limitations of the electoral process.

And third is to identify and help develop all motion toward an independent working class politics presently straining to make itself felt in the electoral arena.

### JESSE JACKSON CANDIDACY

The unique character of the 1984 election is that a political force has emerged in it through which these objectives—as well as the immediate goal of defeating Reagan—can be singularly advanced. That political force is the candidacy of Jesse Jackson.

The significance of the Jackson candidacy does not rest in its prospects for capturing the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, let alone the presidency. Those prospects are nil. The principal immediate significance of the Jackson candidacy is that it represents a critique from the vantage point of the most oppressed sectors of U.S. society not only of the Reagan presidency but of the alternative to it offered by the mainstream of the Democratic Party (see "The Jackson Candidacy: A New Political Force in the Electoral Arena," pages 8-9).

### ESSENCE OF REAGANISM

The essence of Reaganism is the attempt by U.S. capital to deal with two intersecting crises: the worldwide crisis of imperialism resulting from the consolidation of socialism and the historic advances of national liberation movements; and the structural crisis of U.S. capitalism faced with falling profitability, more intense recessionary cycles, growing rivalry with other capitalist countries and the steady shrinking of areas in the world vulnerable to the penetration of capital.

The Reagan presidency set out to reverse both these historical trends. Its formula had two parts: an international counter-offensive against revolution and socialism, at the heart of which is the attempt by the U.S. to regain the nuclear edge over the Soviet Union; and a broad attack on the working class, to finance the war drive and to enhance the position of U.S. capital in general.

The Reagan strategy was to break the "Vietnam syndrome" and build a popular white, patriotic consensus for this program by a massive wave of anticommunism and national chauvinism and by racializing the attack on the working class so that the brunt of it would be felt by minorities.

That, in essence, is Reaganism and any attempt to stop Reaganism which is not based on challenging those policies is a sham.

### THE MONDALE ALTERNATIVE

Can the Democratic Party—itsself a political party rooted in the defense of the imperialist system—mount a meaningful challenge to Reaganism? This is not a speculative question. The answer has already been provided by the Democratic Party's most likely candidate for the presidency in the 1984 election, former vice president Walter F. Mondale.

Mondale has one basic criticism of the Reagan administration, a criticism which reflects the politics of the liberal bourgeoisie and the most privileged sectors of the U.S. working class which he represents. Mondale's criticism, in essence, is that the President is pushing his assault on the U.S. working class much further than is warranted and, in doing so, is running the risk of losing a popular consensus behind the war drive. The Democratic frontrunner put it this way:

"I believe in an America whose armed forces are strong enough to preserve the freedom of our friends and deter the aggression of our adversaries. We must have steady sustainable growth in the defense budget, backed by a solid consensus of the American people. I'm deeply worried that the Reagan defense budgets have failed to make tough choices and have undermined this consensus, which must be restored."

In effect, Mondale is saying, Reagan is irresponsibly undermining the longstanding alliance between the bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy which has been the key instrument for shaping a pro-imperialist ideological consensus in the U.S. working class.

Such views are why the top leadership of the AFL-CIO, in the first place the federation's head and leading war hawk Lane Kirkland, threw all of its political and financial muscle behind the Mondale candidacy from the outset of the campaign. And on the strength of that effort, the AFL-CIO expects to reclaim its "rightful place" as a major power broker in the internal politics of the Democratic Party.

### THE JACKSON DIFFERENCE

Thus, while Jesse Jackson has called for withdrawing all U.S. troops from Central America, ending aid to the fascist junta in El Salvador and support for the Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries, removing the cruise and Pershing II missiles from Europe, recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and a national homeland, and substantial cuts in the military budget, no such calls emanate from Mondale headquarters.

Even more pointedly, the Jackson candidacy represents a critique of the Democratic Party's complicity in the perpetuation of racism and its complacency in taking the political support of the Black community for granted.

Despite these facts, there are still many on the left who have been unable to recognize the profound political significance of the Jackson effort. Aside from a



The candidacy of Jesse Jackson is the catalyst for the outpouring of progressive political activity in this election year.

failure to grasp the clear-cut and immediate political differences between Jackson and the "mainstream" Democrats represented by Mondale, this view suffers from a racialized myopia which is blind to the historical roots and trajectory of the Jackson campaign. Jackson is a political figure produced and shaped by the dynamics of the Black liberation movement who, on the strength of a social base in the Black community, has charged into the electoral maelstrom of the Democratic Party in order to challenge its politics, its allegiances, and its function in U.S. political life.

Of course, it would not be difficult for anyone on the left determined to do a line-by-line analysis of Jackson's political positions to demonstrate innumerable flaws and shortcomings in them. It would likewise probably not be too difficult to construct a platform on which Jesse Jackson ought to run. But such exercises in futility miss the point: A real candidate, thrust forward by the political motion of the Black liberation movement, has moved into the center of the political

arena; and the basic thrust of his candidacy is a challenge to the twin pillars of imperialist rule—war and racism.

### WHY THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY?

Is this challenge indelibly compromised because it takes place on the terrain of the Democratic Party? Such a view, apparently held by some on the left, also misses the point. The Jesse Jackson candidacy represents an attempt by the Black masses to alter the oppressive conditions of their existence through the political mechanisms currently available to them. While the struggle against racism is central to that process, the logic of that motion pushes this effort to embrace all of the principal questions on the national political agenda—thus setting the basis for Jackson's "rainbow coalition of the rejected."

Of course, the "rainbow coalition" does not frame its politics in explicitly class terms. But it is framed by the class position of its main social base, in the first place the Black community. And this community is an overwhelmingly proletarianized sector of the U.S. population which, in class terms, is massively situated in the lower strata of the working class. This intersection of the principal class and racial contradictions of U.S. society has historically made the Black community the most reliable base for advanced politics in the U.S.—and the Jesse Jackson candidacy, representing that force, is a clear example.

Beyond the politics of the moment, however, is the fact that the Jackson candidacy—by thrusting itself on the Democratic Party—has set the condition for a challenge to the conspicuously white alliance of bourgeois liberals and the labor aristocracy which has traditionally dominated that institution. In essence that challenge arises out of the split which already characterizes the U.S. working class and is an attempt to provide the lower strata of the class, particularly its minority sections, with an independent political voice. The long range implication is clear, if not stated openly: if the Democratic Party does not give expression to that voice, another vehicle—independent of the Democrats—will, one way or another, be built.

Jesse Jackson, the individual, may not be able to pursue the logic of this process through to the end. But Jesse Jackson, the instrument of historical forces which exist independently of his consciousness of them, has opened the door to its subsequent development.

The challenge before the left, therefore, is to grasp—and act upon—the significance of this historical moment in which resistance to Reaganism and the potential for developing an independent political expression of the working class intersect in the Jackson candidacy. □

## letters...

We encourage our readers to submit letters to *Frontline*. Please keep them brief. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity, and will withhold names upon request.

### IMMIGRATION

Lately I've read three issues of *Frontline* and your bulletin on immigration. I like some of what you say. You seem to be more sworn to hard truths than are other groups on the left. You are not in the business of propagandizing hope, it seems. Hope is a nice thing, but it ain't always realistic.

I'm sending you a book I did about immigration. ("Without Documents," Condor Publishing Company, 1978.) It offers a history of several aspects of the question, a history that probably can't be found in one book elsewhere. I think you will find information in the book that you can use to argue your case against Simpson/Mazzoli.

However, I think your opposition is unnecessary. The bill is nothing more than a warmed-over version of earlier bills, all of which failed. The essential support for such bills comes from the AFL-CIO.

Opposition comes chiefly from business. The Farm Bureau and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business lobbies are satisfied with the status quo of immigration.

Nobody—not the American Civil Liberties Union nor the National Rifle Association—wants a national identity card.

Since the bill won't pass, why bother to oppose it? —Dick J. Reavis, Austin, Tex.

### BOURGEOIS CONSENSUS

While it may not conform with the layout for your *From the Horse's Mouth* column, here it is straight from the source: confirmation that the bourgeoisie has struck up a deal not to make Central America a political or policy question in 1984. On the official "Presidential Strategy Ballot" mailed to registered Democrats by the Democratic National

Committee, 13 items are listed as "critical national concerns"; respondents are asked to check off which ones the Democratic Party should "emphasize most prominently in the 1984 election campaign." But Central America is not included as one of the 13 concerns. —Abu Hashim el-Zarabi, Baltimore, Md.

### SOCIALIST INTERNATIONALISM

As someone who has been reading individual issues of *Frontline* for some time I'm convinced that you are publishing the finest left paper in the United States today. In my view this is directly related to your living sense of socialist internationalism, which also comes through in the lively way the paper is written. While I think the paper can certainly be improved, you are finally giving the left a paper which doesn't parrot the "cop left" view of real socialist nations while avoiding the depths of intellectual banality so many have come to associate with the words *Daily World*. —Kevin Coogon, Bronxville, N.Y.

### DIRECT ACTION

Thank you for the well-researched and well-written article on our effort to put nuclear war on trial in California in the December 26 issue of *Frontline*. I assume you are already receiving *Direct Action*, our

group's lengthy monthly publication covering direct actions around the world. If not, please write us and we will put you on our list. Thanks again for your timely coverage! —David Ross, Livermore Action Group, Berkeley, Cal.

## FRONTLINE

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*Frontline* is published in order to popularize a Marxist-Leninist perspective within U.S. political life. Its editorial policy is based on the assessment that the interests of the U.S. working class lie in peace, equality and socialism; further that the key to building a united working class movement that can achieve these goals is unbending opposition to war and racism. Building a United Front Against War and Racism, then, is central to *Frontline's* political perspective.

Overall political and organizational responsibility for *Frontline* rests with the Editorial Board of the Marxist-Leninist journal *Line of March*. The members of this board are Dale Borgeson, Linda Burnham, Max Elbaum, Bruce Occena, Melinda Paras, Irwin Silber and Bob Wing.

*Frontline* (ISSN 0738-4769) is published 23 times a year, biweekly except for the first week of January, the third week of June, and the first week of September, by Line of March Publications, a project of the Institute for Scientific Socialism. The Institute is a non-profit, educational foundation and contributions are tax-deductible. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Frontline*, P.O. Box 2729, Oakland, CA 94602. Subscriptions: \$15.00 a year; \$22.00 for institutions; \$20.00 outside the U.S. Special wrapped, first class rate \$20.00. Back issues \$1.00 per copy. Advertising rates sent on request.