

poverty. One reason the Nicaraguan contras have made so little progress is that the country's poor, the farmers and workers, are enthusiastic supporters of the Sandinista's reforms — nationalisation of important industries, distribution of land to the peasants, the mass literacy campaign, replacement of the old army and police, and introduction of a democratic system of government.

Any United States' invasion would fail, as it did in Vietnam, but it would inflict tremendous damage.

Australia should throw all its weight behind a peaceful political solution to the problems of Central America — a solution which allows the people of each country to decide their future, free from outside threats.

To date the Australian government has done the opposite. During his recent tour of Central America Foreign Minister Bill Hayden supported the murderous Duarte government of El Salvador. He repeated US lies that Nicaragua is destabilising El Salvador by supplying arms to the rebels — a claim that the US is advancing to prepare a pretext for invasion of Nicaragua.

Hayden accused the Nicaraguan government of attacking religious freedom, even though the government includes several Catholic priests.

Instead of supporting United States efforts to militarise the region, the Australian government should encourage a peaceful solution to the Central American crisis.

This means supporting the peoples' rights to choose effective solutions to poverty, hunger, illiteracy, and disease.

Australia should welcome and aid the efforts of the Nicaraguan and El Salvadoran peoples to improve their lives. Encouraging trade with Cuba and Nicaragua and establishing full-time diplomatic representation in both countries would be a first step in this direction.

Above all Australia should reverse its present support for US interference in the area. That only contributes further to the troubles of Central America's peoples.

Authorised by D. Turney, 23 Abercrombie St, Chippendale.

- I would like more information about the Socialist Workers Party.
- I would like to help in the 1984 SWP federal election campaign.
- I would like to donate \$ to the SWP federal election campaign.
- I would like to subscribe to the SWP's weekly newspaper *Direct Action* (\$5 for 12 issues introductory offer.)

NAME

ADDRESS

.....

PHONE POSTCODE

PO Box 515 Broadway, NSW, 2007

OR, contact the branch nearest you.

ADELAIDE:

Room 10, 1st floor, The Block, 2 Hindmarsh Sq.
Ph 223-4363.

BRISBANE:

Room 8, 1st floor, 66 Turbot St, City.
Ph 221-4854.

BURNIE:

PO Box 1047, Burnie, Tas 7320.
Ph (004) 31-4862.

CANBERRA:

27 Moore St, Turner (behind Havelock House).
Ph 49-1963.

HOBART:

198 Davey St. Ph 23-4382.

LA TROBE VALLEY:
PO Box 488 Morwell, Vic.

MELBOURNE:

1st floor, 14 Anthony St, City.
Ph 329-1277 or 329-1320.

NEWCASTLE

19 Scott St, Newcastle. Ph 26-2646

PERTH:

120B Barrack St, City. Ph 325-5885.

SYDNEY:

23 Abercrombie St, Chippendale.
Ph 690-1977.

WOLLONGONG:

Room 10, 157 Crown St, Wollongong.
Ph 28-4865.

vote Socialist Workers Party

Central America: The next Vietnam?



For a decade during the 1960s and '70s the United States, supported by Australia and some other powers, threw its military might into a bloody struggle against the people of Vietnam.

Poorly equipped guerrilla fighters confronted helicopter gunships, B-52 bombers, napalm, jumping mines, and many more of the US war machine's latest technological gifts to humanity.

The US put half a million troops into Vietnam, but the guerrilla fighters won because they had the overwhelming support of the people.

The Vietnam War was not just a localised conflict in a small country. The United States tried to get its military allies involved. Fortunately only a few were foolish enough to do so.

The war cost tens of thousands of lives, devastated a small country and was a constant threat to world peace. Powerful sections of the US military demanded the use of nuclear weapons.

Now a similar conflict is shaping up in Central America. The people of El Salvador are rising up because they have had enough of poverty, right-wing death squads, and military rule. The present system offers so little hope for the future that most of the people are prepared to fight, and die if necessary, for the right to build a new way of life.

Five years ago, in July 1979, the vast majority of Nicaraguans made the same choice. They overthrew the brutal dictator Anastasio Somoza, and set about building a new society on the ruins left by Somoza and his supporters.

Despite a non-stop secret war and destabilisation campaign by the United States, the vast majority of Nicaraguans continue to support the popular Sandinista government brought to power by the revolution.

The Nicaraguan mercenaries, a 15,000-strong mixture of former Somoza supporters and other riff-raff financed by the Central Intelligence Agency, concentrate on terrorising Nicaragua's working people. They target development programs, killing teachers, doctors and peasant leaders, destroying schools, hospitals and agricultural co-operatives.

They understand that trying to win popular support is a completely hopeless task. And it is clear that they are also losing the military

struggle.

The CIA funds them despite the fact that the US Congress has twice prohibited US funding. The September 1 death of two US citizens fighting with the contras indicates the extent of direct US involvement in this secret war.

The United States government has tried to discredit Nicaragua's presidential elections. It attempted to manufacture a scandal around Arturo Cruz, a Nicaraguan who has lived in the United States for 14 of the last 15 years. Cruz initially announced that he would stand for president. Then, realising that he would get very little support, he withdrew claiming that the elections would not be democratic.

In El Salvador massive US aid to the regime has not been sufficient to prevent the rebels steadily expanding their support.

One third of El Salvador is under rebel control, not because of the military strength of the rebels, but because of their popular support.

The government has helicopter gunships and the best equipment the United States can supply, yet its soldiers regularly desert to the rebels.

The government's failure to put down the rebellion has led the US to supply even more arms. The regime recently increased bombing raids on civilians living in liberated areas.

Despite an appeal by El Salvador's Catholic archbishop, the United States will shortly provide the bloodstained regime's armed forces with warplanes capable of firing 18,000 rounds a minute.

These armed forces have been responsible for 50,000 deaths in the past five years. Under the direction of US "advisers" they are using napalm and white phosphorus against civilians.

The twin failures of the Duarte regime in El Salvador and the contras in Nicaragua increase the danger that the United States will send in its own troops. Last year's invasion of Grenada made it clear that the United States government is prepared to use its troops to impose its will on other peoples.

Already the US has turned Honduras into a massive military base in preparation for large operations in the region.

President Ronald Reagan has indicated that he is contemplating military operations against Cuba. He recently challenged a 1962 agreement

not to invade Cuba if the Soviet Union withdrew its missiles from the island.

Cubans today enjoy a standard of living that is only a dream in the rest of Latin America. They are well educated, well fed, have a health service in many ways superior to that of the United States, and have a life expectancy 15 years higher than they did a quarter of a century ago.

This, in US eyes, is an extremely bad example for the impoverished peoples of Latin America. Cuba's achievements flow from a decision 25 years ago to build a new society and to nationalise US operations in Cuba "down to the nails in their boots" (as Fidel Castro put it).

The United States claims to be fighting Cuban and Soviet interference in Central America. But it is really fighting an example. Millions of people throughout Latin America have noted the Cuban example and decided that they also would prefer to live that way.

Who can blame people for wanting to build new societies when their present ones have proven incapable of providing even the necessities of life? If there is an alternative to mass poverty, starvation, disease and homelessness, people can hardly be expected not to choose it because US bankers and company directors disapprove!

The United States only has two choices. Either it can respect the will of Central America's poor, and stop funding vicious military dictators, or it can invade, as it did in Vietnam, to prop up these dictators.

The supreme US military commander in Central America, General Paul F. Gorman, claims that with enough weapons and more United States military advisers, the Salvadoran army could control from 80 to 90 per cent of the country in two years.

Very similar views led the United States into its Vietnam debacle. Military aid to El Salvador so far this year has been \$236 million, and economic aid has been over \$350 million. It is clear that, just as in Vietnam, the US military brass thinks it they can win a war against the vast majority of the population.

Mass slaughter is what they have in mind. But if the United States commits combat troops to Central America, it will discover once again that bullets are no answer to hunger and