

Report from the Revolutionary Communist Union (Dominican Republic)

By Wilberto Ventura*

Following are excerpts from a political report presented in the latter part of 1984 to an important meeting of the Revolutionary Communist Union of the Dominican Republic, a participating organisation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement.

The current situation in the Dominican Republic which forms the context of this report is one of repeated explosions of mass discontent. Last year, April 23 and 24, 1984, saw two days of major street fighting and clashes with the police and armed forces after the government announced a series of austerity measures imposed at the order of the U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund (for a first-hand account, see *AWTW* 85/1). Such outbreaks of what are becoming known as "IMF riots" are beginning to threaten the political stability of countries throughout Latin America and other regions dominated by the Western bloc imperialist powers. This includes the January 1985 outbreaks in Jamaica which were very much like those in the nearby Dominican Republic.

This past January Dominican President Jorge Blanco announced another round of price increases ordered by the IMF in return for emergency credits and a delay on interest payments due in 1985 on the Dominican government's \$2.6 billion debt. This meant an increase

of up to 70 % in the cost of gas and oil, coffee, eggs, medicine and rice—until recently the main staple of the Dominican people but now becoming a luxury for many. Living standards in the Dominican Republic, which have gone from bad to worse while foreign capital fattened on it, are plummeting.

Even before Blanco's January announcement, police and army patrols dominated the streets of the capital city of Santo Domingo and other cities, carrying out frequent arrests and house searches. In the earlier part of the month there were sporadic clashes in Santo Domingo, San Cristobal, San Francisco and Santiago. In the wake of Blanco's announcement, the armed patrols were stepped up. On the 11th of February came the long-expected social explosion, when once again thousands of Dominicans took to the streets to fight the forces of order. Four people were officially reported killed in Santo Domingo. On that day there was a general strike closing down all the factories and stores and emptying the streets of the usually ubiquitous street vendors. The following day, the 12th of February, Blanco announced a reduction of 20 % on many of the new prices he had just announced.

But economic and political conditions in the Dominican Republic and the imperialist system as a whole today rule out a return to stability; the living conditions of the masses of people and the political conditions for the ruling classes in this country can only worsen, and not necessarily in a straight line or at an even rate of fall. As the *Declaration*

of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement puts it, "Marxist-Leninists must seize hold of the revolutionary possibilities that are developing rapidly and lead the masses in stepping up the revolutionary struggle on all fronts—beginning revolutionary warfare where that is possible, stepping up preparations where the conditions for such revolutionary warfare are not yet ripe."

Not included in these excerpts is the opening section, on the international situation, which centres on the growing possibility of a Third World War and heightened opportunities for revolution in a whole number of countries, including imperialist countries. It also underlines the importance in this situation of the foundation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, and gives special attention to the role being played in today's world by the revolutionary war being waged under the leadership of the Communist Party of Peru. ed .

The Political, Economic and Social Situation in the Dominican Republic

We have to be very clear on what we're doing and what we have to do, and on the goals the Dominican revolutionary proletariat must achieve. Our organisation is four years old now and it has to be putting on a grown-up's long pants. It's not that in such and such short period of time we have to reach some abnormal level of understanding about everything. What we have to do is to be prepared to take up—and have the guts to take up—the difficult task of building the par-

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ty of the proletariat.

This is what's demanded of us, urgently but not hastily, by the political conjuncture the Dominican Republic is going through, when imperialist domination is becoming more cruel and sadistic, but also when the masses of people are constantly defying the power of the ruling class, in a spontaneous way, because they're sick and tired of being exploited and oppressed by foreign and Dominican bandits. Our role is not just to sit and watch the masses rise up spontaneously, leaving them to whatever happens, or in other words, whatever the imperialists do to them. Whenever the masses find themselves defenseless and without correct and revolutionary political leadership, the imperialists trick them and massacre them.

We have to build a powerful revolutionary movement capable of overthrowing the imperialist ruling class and carrying out the social transformations that our process requires and so advance along the road of world revolution. Imperialist domination has the Dominican Republic tangled up in a thousand threads. The multinationals here do whatever they want; they have their own government within the Dominican state, islands of power, where they don't even bother to hide the fact that they don't pay taxes and where they even have their own private police and send their stooges to kill revolutionaries who do political work among the workers in their enterprises....

But imperialist domination in the Dominican Republic also counts on the unwavering support of the government—of the governments that rotate in and out of office—and these governments use all the resources of the state, especially the armed forces and national police, to maintain imperialist domination, to maintain neocolonialism despite their claims of independence from Yankee imperialism. Obviously the CIA and the “military assistance group” that works out of the U.S. embassy are also mechanisms the U.S. uses to keep us in its yoke. There are plenty of CIA agents walking around Dominican streets in religious disguise preaching the

word of “God.” Oh yes, the word of “God” these gentlemen are preaching is meant to drag us down and tranquilise the masses, who are told that all the evils that have befallen us are the work of the times and destiny....

U.S. imperialism has us sunk up to the elbows, especially the Dominican youth, in all kinds of drugs, corrupting the morals of the overwhelming majority of youth who find themselves getting into delinquency to be able to buy drugs, drowning the fighting rebel spirit of part of our youth. It is undeniable that since the 1965 Yankee invasion imperialism has used drugs to pacify the masses, and this has led to the degeneration of thousands of youth who have been dragged down by drugs. This has held back the people's struggle and to some extent has neutralised the formation and consolidation of strong organisations in the slums.

Today the Dominican Republic is a bridge used by imperialism for its drug traffic. The authorities discover multimillion-dollar drug cargo coming from all over the world, bound for the U.S., and the government looks on with complicity or indifference. It never touches the drug traffic, because it's part of their business with their northern bosses, Yankee imperialism.

As far as the ruling class's culture is concerned, we're completely saturated with imperialist cultural penetration, with its nasty idols and reactionary values. Michael Jackson, John Travolta, Agent 007, Robert Wagner and all the rest of that U.S. artistic trash are sent to invade Dominican society, as they try to fill our heads with the feeling that our highest aspiration is to be the equal of an American, that Americans are superior to us, so we should get down on our knees before some raggedy American tourist....

Communist Leadership and the Proletariat

The Dominican working class has grown with the development of capitalist relations of production, and nobody can deny the revolutionary role of the proletariat—nobody, that is, except a despicable petit bourgeois vile traitor like these

“leftists” we've got around here who're more like priests than “leftists.” Society is more and more torn apart in a deadly class struggle, fundamentally between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, as well as between Yankee imperialism and all the oppressed, and this second contradiction is the one we have to resolve first to open the breach to a showdown between classes, where “whoever has the most spit can eat the most crackers,” as the old Dominican song says....

The working class may be a relatively young class in our social development, but its revolutionary role is indisputable. The centre of communist work must be in this class, the consistently revolutionary class in capitalist society when all is said and done, the class that has the principles of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought as the theoretical basis of its practical actions.

Without falling into workerism, the Revolutionary Communist Union should basically orient its work toward the working class, in political and organisational terms, fusing with the most advanced section to build the communist party, forming a revolutionary leadership around which the whole Dominican revolutionary movement can revolve. We have to break the separation between scientific socialism and the spontaneous workers movement. This separation has caused profound setbacks for the Dominican revolution, because there are daily outbreaks of protest, but without revolutionary political leadership they never go beyond the boundaries of spontaneity. Within them the opportunists and revisionists raise themselves up as the “bosses” of the movement, soaking the struggle of the Dominican working class in reformism....

This is the work we Dominican revolutionary communists must carry out because if we don't the Dominican working class will continue to be impotent against the ruling class. This work requires a great deal of patience because hastiness could lead us to defeat and to even greater setbacks for the revolution. Clearly the work of party-building is pressing and urgent because the

masses are being rapidly and irreversibly drawn into political life both by the deepening of the crisis of the capitalist system, which has the ruling class's political representatives trapped in its grip, and by the imperialist hunger, misery and repression which grow more widespread and deeper every day....

The Dominican revolution can't continue moving along the road of economism, reformism, anarcho-syndicalism and petit-bourgeois pettiness. We have to build a truly revolutionary movement guided by a communist party with unbreakable links to the working class to daringly lead it towards the conquest of political power, overthrowing the ruling class and establishing a New Democratic government which is the way to achieve socialism and establish the proletariat's revolutionary dictatorship.

A Few Words About the Peasantry

The Dominican countryside has undergone substantial changes. They demand definition urgently, in order to determine the role of the various social classes in the countryside and to understand how the class struggle in the countryside is unfolding. We can emphasise that U.S. imperialism has introduced capitalist production relations in the countryside without wiping out the semifeudal relations. In a way we can say that U.S. imperialism maintains hybrid relations of production in the countryside, although the tendency is toward the development of capitalist relations of production.

Since the launching of the so-called "Agrarian Code" and Balaguer's Agrarian Laws in 1972, the economic structure in the countryside has been modified bit by bit, although of course according to the necessities of imperialist expansion and plunder. But what forced U.S. imperialism to make certain modifications in the organisation of agriculture, in cahoots with the landlords, was the great upsurge of the masses of peasants, who seized the land, tearing down the landlords' barbed-wire fences. Everyone knows about the great peasant struggles where they seized lands with machetes in their hands, occupying hundreds of thousands of

hectares. Often this land had been left untilled or in the hands of some landlord who only seeded them for pasture for his cows.

The struggle to seize land in the countryside is far from over. More than 300,000 peasant families are demanding a piece of land to work, and the slogan "land to the tiller" continues to be correct. This slogan inspired a whole period of popular struggle in the countryside, forcing the imperialists to apply their infamous peasant counterinsurgency policies through Balaguer's "Agrarian Laws," which at the end of the day did not resolve the land problem in favour of the masses of peasants.

It's necessary to emphasise that the distribution of the land into the hands of the peasants or a struggle by thousands of peasant families for the right to own a little piece of land is not the centre of the peasant struggle, since the various successive governments and U.S. imperialism, through the Dominican Agrarian Institute, have succeeded in giving land to thousands of families in the so-called Collective Projects, diminishing the struggle of the broad masses of peasants who believed that this would resolve their tremendous problems....

These Collective Agrarian Projects turn the peasants into landowners, but they face serious problems, with no technical assistance and often not even the seeds to sow the land. Many times the peasants are forced to sell their parcel of land to some landlord because they aren't in any position to make it produce.

In the Dominican countryside there are a lot of ways of squeezing money out of the peasants. The government doesn't give the peasants the help they need, while it allows unscrupulous intermediaries to control the marketing of their products, and sometimes, though it might seem ironic, it turns out that the "peasants" given the title to state lands are really well-known landlords. What good is it to the peasant to have the title to some property when he can't even seed his "own" land? Isn't the peasant at the mercy of the voracious intermediaries protected by the government?...

Along with all this there are the problems of health and of illiteracy in the countryside. Hundreds of peasants hurt in some way while working in the fields die trying to make it to a city because there are no hospitals in the countryside. For schools, it's the same thing: a Dominican peasant who wants to become literate has to move to a city somehow, because the lack of schools in the countryside is an evil that the Dominican ruling class does not want to see resolved—it doesn't want the peasant to learn how to read and write. The imperialists and the government find it more convenient to keep the peasants backward and ignorant. One result of this is that the bourgeoisie's politicians are always trying to take advantage of the peasants in their various electoral contests, fooling them with empty promises, and treating them as a class that's easily deceived because of its lack of revolutionary political consciousness.

So the picture of the classes in the Dominican countryside can be summarised like this: thousands and thousands of landless families (poor peasants); the landlords (who monopolise millions of hectares of land); small landowners who received their land from the government in the so-called Collective Projects, but often without technical assistance or seeds to sow; and thousands and thousands of agricultural workers who cut rice or sugarcane, work in the dairy industry, etc. In the Dominican countryside there is a combination of the struggle for land by the landless peasants and the struggle of the small propertyholders for better technical assistance and aid from the government so that they can work their land, as well as the struggle of the agricultural workers against the exploitation of the capitalist barons.

It has to be emphasised that a great many peasants have two different roles in the countryside: during the sugarcane harvest they are workers in the cane plantations and the sugar mills, while the other six months of the year they work on a landlord's estate or on their own small parcel. This creates an interesting situation in which the same masses of peasants carry out dif-

ferent productive functions. This is very important because to some extent it creates better conditions for our work as revolutionary communists to build the worker-peasant unity or alliance necessary to defeat imperialism and the whole ruling class, an alliance which requires drawing the great majority of the masses of peasants into the revolutionary struggle against the exploiters and oppressors. Besides the fact that the peasants are the revolutionary proletariat's reliable and necessary allies, we are sure that the Dominican countryside will be ablaze with anti-imperialist struggle as the base area for the resistance against the Yankee troops who will invade if we overthrow their current government. This takes us to the question of the revolutionary strategy for confronting the imperialists in our society, which deserves to be treated in its own right.

What must be emphasised here is the necessity of working among the masses of peasants in order to unite them with the revolutionary proletariat in the struggle against the all-around exploiters of the Dominican people. I'm completely confident that we have the basis for this work and that it can be relatively easy for us, for the simple reason that organising and leading the agricultural workers guarantees the alliance with the poor peasants, since many ties unite these two. Without neglecting the work in the factories to win over the best elements among the proletariat, we have to work in the countryside, because it is the countryside that constitutes the base area for the Dominican revolution's resistance.

Work Among the Students

Nobody doubts that the students, who are part of the revolutionary petit bourgeoisie, have played a great role in the Dominican revolutionary struggle, awakening the working class itself to political life. But with the passage of time and the growth of capitalist relations of production creating a proletariat in our society, the students have become a secondary force in the Dominican class struggle. Today we could even say that because the students are

under the leadership of the opportunists and revisionists they really don't inspire any part of the oppressed to rebel. The student scene has been plagued with conservatism and concerned only with academic problems, often showing indifference to the demands and the struggles of the working class and the peasants.

We have to shake up the student scene so that it can fight with all the fearlessness which has characterised it, while keeping in mind that they are not the vanguard of the revolution nor are the students the ones called to lead the working class and the rest of the oppressed—this place of honour must be taken by the working class. But it will be impossible for the students to launch a truly rebellious protest against the capitalist system without a political vanguard which leads all the oppressed on this same road and coordinates the whole struggle of the exploited towards the overthrow of this rotten system—in other words, without the existence of a revolutionary communist party....

Revolutionary Crisis and the Role of the Revolutionary Communists

After the April 1984 events shook the whole society, all the political analysts of the "left" as well as the right have noted a profound change in the Dominican political situation. Basically, within the FID [Front of the Dominican Left, a revisionist and social democratic agglomeration—*AWTW*], the idea that we are on the threshold of revolution has become widespread. The theory of "imminent revolution" has arisen, the theory that we are in a pre-revolutionary situation. We also hold that this is a pre-revolutionary situation, but our analysis is very different from the FID's on this matter.

The FID wants to paint itself as the people's vanguard, and in the face of the imminent protests arising from the measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund on this country, enforced by the PRD [ruling Dominican Revolutionary Party—*AWTW*] through bloodshed and gunfire, these gentlemen want to become the negotiators for whatever popular struggle arises.

This was what happened in the April events, although they were not the leaders of the spontaneous movement which arose and took on an insurrectional colouring. In the midst of that tremendous social tumult, they called for a "general strike" so that the government would appoint them as the leaders of the movement and thus be able to suffocate the waves of mass upsurge whose fury was knocking down everything in its path and sowing panic throughout the ruling class.

But it is true that we are in a pre-revolutionary situation, principally because of the multiplication of hunger and deprivation among the people and the rapid deterioration of their living conditions—the masses are no longer in a mood to put up with this living death.... Although hunger and deprivation are deepening and famine is appearing on the Dominican social horizon, the subjective conditions... do not exist, and this is a problem for us, since we have to give the coming struggle clear guidance so that the people do not become cannonfodder, pitilessly and defenselessly massacred, as happened during the past April events.

Besides, the FID's talk about the "imminent revolution" is just a lot of empty threats meant to confuse the masses. We know very well that these gentlemen of the FID just drool a lot of nonsense; they talk about "revolution" but they don't do anything to prepare for it nor do they take the message of revolution to the masses....

This has to be seen as a period of political, organisational and military preparation of the masses in terms of the road we have to start out on during this critical period for the ruling class when hunger, deprivation and repression against the people are spreading rapidly....

If a revolutionary situation is approaching, if the ruling class, that is, those on top, can't go on ruling the people according to their whims any longer and those on the bottom will no longer tolerate living under this capitalist yoke, then we must prepare the masses for the coming battles, battles in which it is possible that the revolution may triumph.