

direction of democratic credentials. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that the lid will be kept on the situation with only the cosmetic changes enacted thus far.

The Catholic Church played a central role in encouraging the people to demand their basic democratic rights and will probably continue to do the same until measures are taken to improve the lot of the millions of impoverished Haitians. When Pope John Paul VI visited the island in 1983 he said "Things must change in this country." Hundreds of priests and nuns, and as of last year the hierarchy as well, took his words to heart. Catholic **Radio Soleil** was pivotal to the opposition, providing a means of mass communication which other media denied the movement.

The Church today is probably the most solid organization in Haiti. Bishop Francois Gayot is considered the political brain in the hierarchy. The Church, he says, "is free to criticize those who exploit the people and violate human rights." But he denies that the Church has any kind of political interests or aspirations.

As part of the legacy of 30 years of dictatorship opposition parties in Haiti are few, weak and disorganized, and for the most part tainted by their association with the Duvalier regime. Some demand immediate presidential elections, while others have called on the junta to form a provisional

government that includes opposition groups. Another position seeks to enact a peaceful, orderly transition toward political and economic modernization, but this is a tricky proposition in the present unstable situation. At any rate, everyone seems to be extremely conscious of what the U.S. will tolerate and what it will not, and this is part of Haitian political reality.

The liberal and progressive opposition is scattered in exile in Montreal, Miami, New York and Paris, and seems to have little chance of returning to the country unless more in-depth changes take place. Eugene Gregoire, self-announced presidential candidate for the Christian Democratic Party, says: "Most exiles who are members of opposition organizations disguised themselves as progressives but really supported violence. I don't think they should return until total political stability is achieved in Haiti." Meaning, probably not until the question of power and of the succession is resolved, and meaning that no left position can have a role in the process.

Whatever the final outcome, the words of Andre Peluquin, professor of economy and finance at Haiti's national university, still ring true months after Duvalier's fall: "If Dante had seen Haiti as it is today he wouldn't have had to go to hell to write the Divine Comedy." ★

Blanca González

by centuries of poverty and inflamed by the indifference of the wealthy nations toward a situation for which they are partly responsible, Palme's presence and policies signaled the rebirth of hope in the possibility of non-violent change. Olof Palme sought disarmament, he multiplied alliances, held out a helping hand and tried to quench the flames of discontent. These are all desirable policies in a continent under international pressures that are not of its own making. This is why in the early 70's Olof Palme began to take on the stature of a prophet in Latin America. His activity seemed an endless search for understanding, a negation of violence, a promotion of peace. He didn't condition his attitudes to the interests of his own country, but rather tried to really understand the poor countries' legitimate concerns. In this sense he was unique among the rulers of the developed nations. Many Latin American countries have had to nationalize important sectors of their trade and industry as a means of

defending national sovereignty and maintaining control over their economy when faced with voracious multinationals. Yet despite these groundings for their policy, international financial institutions have tried to force these nations to return government owned businesses to the private sector. These institutions ignore the fragility of Latin American democracies, and have resorted to all sorts of pressures in their unilateral concern for the economic interests of the developed countries.

Olof Palme came to the defense of Latin America in his last opening speech to the Swedish parliament. "The neo-liberal economic policy followed in Europe has not led to economic progress, but rather to increasing injustice and insecurity for most peoples, as well as to the squandering of their resources."

Palme's democratic stance vis a vis the most important international conflicts and issues of our times is another factor that made Latin Americans love and respect him.

## LATIN AMERICA MOURNS OLOF PALME

*Not since John F. Kennedy's assassination has the death of a northern hemisphere's head of state been as sad and meaningful for the Latin American people.*

Olof Palme loved peace, literature, poetry and modern art. He was both a qualified statesman and a simple man. He also cared deeply for the Third World in general, for Latin America in particular. This is why all of the Latin American

nations —with the sole exception of Chile, where Pinochet played down his death—reacted strongly to Palme's assassination. The reaction has been comparable only to the events that followed the death of President John F. Kennedy 23 years ago.

Latin America understood early on that Olof Palme was a peace-loving man. From every possible forum he called out for agreement and reconciliation. In our continent, violently torn



Olof Palme. A.P. Laserphoto.

A year before he became president of his party and Prime Minister of Sweden in 1968, Palme walked at the head of a march in Stockholm to protest the "dirty war" in Viet Nam. As Prime Minister he was one of the staunchest critics of apartheid, and Sweden's policy in the United Nations was belligerent in favor of measures that would isolate the Pretoria regime.

Palme was a severe critic of the military dictatorships that were prevalent in Latin America in the 70's: Lucas Garcia in Guatemala, Romero in El Salvador, Somoza in Nicaragua, Stroessner in Paraguay, Pinochet in Chile, Aparicio Mendez in Uruguay, Videla in Argentina, and so on. His country opened its doors to thousands of political refugees. In more recent years, Palme maintained his country's economic and political support for Nicaragua. More than any other world leader Palme supported the Nicaraguan elections and called them "absolutely honest". In fact, Swedish specialists served as advisors for the elections in which Daniel Ortega was elected president.

Just a year ago Palme spoke to Swedish youths and criticized the policy of support for Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries: "The Somocista guards and the mercenary soldiers are neither freedom fighters nor democrats. The so-called crusade against communism in Nicaragua is no more than the unleashing of outlaws who attack poor peasants and brutally rape women who are really only young girls." He was one of the first and firmest European allies of the Contadora Group.

Palme always knew he was speaking from that privileged part of humanity that lives in the industrialized northern hemisphere. He was sensitive and conscious of that privilege and always spoke out on behalf of dialog with the South, for a New International Economic Order and even in favor of cancelling the underdeveloped countries' foreign debt.

In October of 1985, Palme joined five important Third World leaders in addressing a joint message to Soviet Premier Mijail Gorbachov and to President Reagan. Together with Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid, Argentina's Raul Alfonsin, Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu and Rajiv Gandhi of India, Palme called on the leaders of "the superpowers to take

concrete steps" toward peace and disarmament and to agree on a one year moratorium on nuclear tests.

But perhaps the most important step in Palme's activity in international affairs was the creation of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security, which is named after him.

Just a few weeks before his death Palme delivered an important speech at Stockholm's Institute for Foreign Policy. He repeated some of the same ideas when he spoke at Indira Gandhi's tomb in New Delhi, during what was to be his last trip abroad. The emphasis he placed on the problem of the Third World's foreign debt still bears witness to his struggle for a different, better world. "The dialog between the developed and the underdeveloped countries during the 70's had as its central theme the New World Economic Order and long term evolution, in the broadest sense of the term. Today, for the most part, the central theme in that dialog is how to best collect the interest payments. The banks, the IMF and the governments of the developed countries are demanding harsh and rapid internal readjustments in debtor nations. This is meeting with increasing resistance on the part of the underdeveloped countries who regard this policy as further proof of the injustice of the international economic system."

Palme ended his speech with the following statement: "This (the foreign debt problem) may lead to direct confrontation between the industrialized and the developing countries. Such a contingency would serve nobody's economic interests. The political costs would be unpredictable. The threat to international stability and security would be even more direct."

In several of his last interviews Palme voiced his concern over the dangerous directions the world was moving in. "What most worries me is the development of violence and the influence of imported violence coming from the United States through television and movies."

In the eyes of Latin America Olof Palme stood for the best of the democratic West. Swedish democracy became a kind of ideal: public officials truly in the service of the people, and whose basis for prestige is intellectual honesty; officials who carry out a foreign policy devoid of boastful vanity, personality cults or cosmetic foolery. The seriousness of Palme's mes-

sage was the mature fruit of years of experience.

Olof Palme first visited Mexico as Prime Minister during the administration of President Luis Echeverria (1970-76). From then on our country sought dialog and exchange with European Social Democracy, and particularly with Palme and his party. Palme became a frequent guest of the Mexican government. But he had often visited Mexico since the 1940s; part of his family has lived in our country for over fifty years. A contemptible act of violence ended the life of a good man and a great statesman. It's possible that the killer was in some way conscious of the fact that he was eliminating the main model Latin America had of an

honest politician whose sense of purpose was to generously serve the people in the tasks they had entrusted to him.

The world has lost a citizen dedicated to the noble task of peace. Shortly after the shooting, rustic signs in Spanish began to appear in Stockholm, bearing witness to the gratitude of the thousands of Latin Americans who found refuge in Sweden thanks to Palme's policies. Olof Palme left a universal legacy to all people of good faith on how to stem the plans and instruments of barbarity.★

Compiled by **Arturo Arias** based on articles by Juan Jose Hinojosa, Miguel Bonasso, Tomas Gerardo Allaz and Anne Marie Mergier.

## NICARAGUA'S SEVEN YEARS OF REVOLUTION: WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING?

*Passions often prevent an objective view of Nicaragua. South of the Rio Grande, most analyses differ from traditionally-held views in the U.S.*

On July 19 the Sandinista Revolution will celebrate its seventh anniversary. Pressured on all sides, caught in a costly war with the contra, victimized by a severe economic crisis and opposed by the top hierarchy of the Catholic Church, the Sandinista leadership is getting ready to evaluate their government's achievements and failures. Their program of mixed economy, political pluralism and non-alignment has been put to severe tests. The eyes of the international community are fixed on the events that unfold in the country. Nicaragua, against its will, has been converted into one of the hottest spots on the globe.

The Reagan administration's disproportionate aggression against the Sandinista govern-

ment has been the most important external factor in determining the course of the revolution. Washington has used military pressure, an economic boycott and political confrontation against the Nicaraguan government. Until now, the Sandinistas have been able to resist the assault, but the social costs have been high.

By the beginning of 1986, the Sandinistas had been able to turn back the armed counter-revolutionary forces. According to Western press reports, the contras have now retreated to their Honduran base camps. U.S. military analysts and European diplomats assigned to Central America believe that the contras have already been defeated in strategic terms and that even with U.S. aid, they would need at least two years before they could represent a real threat to the Managua government.