

Fortune - the US magazine of an international mercenary network. Other Afghani contras have visited *Soldiers of Fortune*, such as Ratmatullah Safi, former colonel in the king's special forces when Afghanistan was a monarchy, now special forces training commander for Reagan's «freedom fighters».

None of these counterrevolutionary forces have been a military match for the revolutionary governments they aim to subvert. Instead they are reduced to terrorizing civilians and sabotaging economic and social institutions and infrastructure. This is the truly dirty aspect of US imperialism's war, and it is quite deliberate. The Reagan Administration knows that it would take much more massive aid, and ultimately the commitment of US or other imperialist troops, to actually challenge the Sandinistas', MPLA's or PDPA's hold on state power. The chosen alternative is sabotage, so that the revolutionary governments' development plans falter. This aims at eroding popular support to these governments, forcing them to negotiate power with the mercenaries, i.e., rolling back the revolution. Short of succeeding in this, the CIA's covert wars are used by the Reagan Administration to pressure the Soviet Union, Cuba and other progressive forces.

Proxy wars and direct US intervention

The reason for the viciousness of the Reagan Administration's attack on Nicaragua, is to be found in the field. The Sandinistas' evaluation of 1985 noted that «the counterrevolution entered into a process of strategic decline; the economy was sustained despite attempts to devastate it» (*Barricada Internacional*, January 16, 1986). Defense Minister Humberto Ortega, in an interview in the same newspaper, pointed out that the setbacks suffered by the contras drove them to remote areas or outside the country, rendering them incapable of launching significant actions: «The trend in 1986, therefore, will be toward the shifting of the war to the border zones, with the objective of generating tension with neighboring countries and increasing interventionist pressures. This is the option kept open by the United States should the counterrevolution fail. Toward this end, it has supplied tons and tons of munitions in recent months to the mercenaries based in Honduras and Costa Rica.»

US aid to counterrevolutionary

bands actually paves the way to broader intervention and all-out war. One angle of this is igniting local wars where military regimes, like Honduras and Pakistan, would serve as the US's proxies in attacking Nicaragua and Afghanistan respectively. This is having 'third world' peoples fight each other, the policy developed after the US defeat in Vietnam, to avoid war deployment of American soldiers. Today, with US imperialism's resurgent aggressiveness and drive for global military presence, such proxy wars don't necessarily replace direct US intervention. They can just as well be the prelude to sending the Marines.

To this end, US imperialism has turned Honduras into its own military base. Most recently, the US administration fabricated a story about a «large-scale Nicaraguan invasion» of Honduras to draw the latter into the battle, while securing passage of the contras aid bill in the US Senate. Another indication of this trend is the administration's announced intention to send dozens of Green Berets to train the contras, a job that has previously been done on the sly. Other signs of the US's bent towards war are its continued sabotage of the Conadadora group's peace proposals for Central America, and the designation of Philip Habib as a special envoy to the area. One has only to remember how his shuttle diplomacy served as a smoke screen during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The growing unwillingness of the Honduran military to be dragged into carrying out all the US plans, which are at the expense of Honduran interests and sovereignty, is another reason why the US may ultimately stage its own invasion of Central America.

Pakistan is assigned a similar role vis-a-vis Afghanistan, and the US has therefore made sure Zia ul Haq's military dictatorship does not enter negotiations with Kabul on a peaceful solution. Pakistan's military provides the infrastructure for the counterrevolutionaries' attacks on Afghanistan, and lately it has taken an even more open, aggressive role. Pashtun and Baluch tribes, sympathetic to revolutionary Afghanistan, have blocked the gangs from crossing the border in their territory. In response, the Pakistani army engaged in a genocidal operation against the tribal areas in the north: Artillery, tanks and planes were employed, and whole villages bulldozed to the ground, as reported by the Campaign for the Restoration of Human Rights in Pakistan (*New Worker*, Feb-

ruary 7 1986). The tribes responded with a general strike, and confronted the troops sent to quell this, signalling that the regime's support to counterrevolution may only increase its own internal problems.

Combatting US-sponsored terrorism

In the USA, there is a broad movement opposing intervention in Central America, and the antiapartheid movement has made opposition to funding UNITA a part of its agenda. Unfortunately, however, opposition to US interference in Afghanistan is much less widespread, although the issue is essentially the same. The reasons are varied, starting with Afghanistan's distance to distorted news coverage. British journalist Jonathan Steele, writing in *The Guardian* on March 10, 1986, relates how most western reporters take their information from the US and British embassies in Delhi and Islamabad. He cites several instances of how the information, especially at the US embassies, was in direct contradiction with the reality he himself had seen in the field. Most journalists, however, do little about this and simply repeat the fabricated stories, for «when no western forces are directly involved and the 'enemy' is the Soviet Union, distinctions between hard news, soft news and outright propaganda seem to lose all validity.»

The Reagan Administration is now busy reshuffling its definitions of dictatorship, freedom fighters and terrorists, in order to meet new contingencies, and justify support to mercenaries and attacks on Libya and other independent countries. As an example, Secretary of State Schultz correctly labeled the Pinochet regime in Chile as a dictatorship, but only in order to lump it together with Paraguay, Cuba and Nicaragua! Facing this psychological warfare, progressive forces must clearly define whom they support and why, in order to effectively oppose direct and indirect US intervention wherever it occurs. Reagan is raising the spectre of the Soviet Union taking over Central - and then South - America, to justify attacks on Nicaragua. Yet the US sent its troops south of its borders numerous times before the advent of the Soviet Union. Similarly, the US attack on Soviet presence in Afghanistan is only a 'cover for imperialism's drive to maintain strategic control, in order to continue exploiting the peoples and resources of the world. ●