

SPAIN

Suarez threatened from all sides

Suarez has been begging Spain's Franco-appointed mayors to stay on, while he fends off opposition from left parties and unions.

By Barbara Mann Franck
Iberian News Service

GIRONA, SPAIN—Faced with runaway inflation, a crisis in the ranks of his center-right coalition, imminent municipal elections and the prospect of a winter of labor conflict, the government of Spanish Premier Adolfo Suarez is running scared. In this atmosphere of pending dissolution of the weakened executive government, the newly-elected Spanish *Cortes* (parliament) has begun meeting to undertake a major legislative overhaul of antiquated laws still in effect from the days of the Franco regime and to approve a constitution.

The official rate of inflation for the month of September was 3.2 percent, with a projected annual rate of over 35 percent for 1977. But a Barcelona daily, *Mundo Diario*, reported that its studies show the buying value of the peseta actually fell 50 percent in the first half of the year. Threatened Spanish capitalists have been clamoring for a program of emergency economic measures and have grown increasingly critical of the government's failure to react.

Suarez has been forced to divert the attention of his Cabinet and advisers away from the economic program, the outlines of which were finally announced in early October, to deal with discord among the centrist parties of his *Union del Centro Democratico* (UCD). The coalition, manufactured by Suarez at the last minute to carry his center-right forces through the June 15 parliamentary elections, is not holding up well under current political and economic pressures. Some key parties have criticized Suarez publicly.

Suarez needs unified backing to survive, and the coalition must be strengthened and expanded in order not to be wiped out in the upcoming municipal elections. These elections, promised for October, are being postponed to give Suarez time to extend his political base to confront the economic situation.

Mayors resigning.

The UCD holds an absolute majority in the *Cortes*, thanks as much to the 41 senators (a fifth of the upper house) appointed by King Juan Carlos I as to the seats it won in the election. With only a plurality in the lower house, the UCD faces strong opposition from socialist, communist and national groups who fared surprisingly well in the elections in spite of undemocratic electoral practices (See *ITT*, Sept. 14).

The opposition parties are already active at the municipal level, undertaking public campaigns to expose the corrupt practices of mayors and councils. Current town governments consist of Franco appointees. They are practically unable to function. Lacking a public mandate, backed only by the fragile central government and attacked from the left, they are beginning to resign in droves. Suarez called an emergency meeting in early October of 40 mayors of Madrid suburbs who had threatened to resign *en masse*. He begged them to stay on.

Unions attack pact.

To carry out economic measures the Suarez government must have the support of other major political factions. In an attempt to win such support, UCD presented an emergency package to all parties represented in the *Cortes* on Oct. 8 and 9. Under the agreement reached by the

government and the parties, salary increases will be held to 20 percent in 1978, and the government will attempt to hold the annual increase in the consumer Price Index to 22 percent. If a company should be forced by its workers to grant more than a 20 percent increase, it will be allowed to fire 5 percent of its employees!

The document released to the press outlining these economic accords was written jointly by representatives of the UCD, the *Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol* (PSOE, Felipe Gonzalez' Socialist Workers party), the *Partido Comunista Espanol* (Santiago Carillo's PCE), the far-rightist *Alianza Popular* and the small *Partido Socialista Popular* (headed by Tierno Galvan).

The recently legalized trade unions have attacked this "economic pact" because they were not included in the negotiations. Their exclusion was part of the government's strategy, and Suarez is now counting on the PCE and the PSOE to win union support for the austerity program.

A total of 221 collective contracts are to come up for renewal in January 1978. They will affect some of the most conflict-ridden industries, including metallurgy,

which has a long history of tough strikes. With pay increases to be held way below this year's rate of inflation, contract negotiations promise to be difficult. Spanish workers are in no condition or mood to settle for harsh measures now that the euphoria of their election victories in June has become frustration with the government's failure to enact meaningful reforms.

Socialists won't participate.

By far the largest of the now-legal unions is the *Comisiones Obreras* (the CC.OO., Workers Commissions). The CC.OO.'s strategy during the negotiations of collective contracts and related labor conflicts will be crucial. The CC.OO. is under the hegemony of the PCE. The PSOE controls the somewhat smaller *Union General de Trabajadores* (UGT, General Workers Union).

The CC.OO. has already announced basic support for the economic program, calling it "an important step to getting out of a situation that is worsening by the moment." The UGT, on the other hand, denounces the agreements "which attempt to make the solution of the economic crisis

fall once again on the backs of the workers."

Although the PSOE finished better than the PCE in the June 15 elections, the PCE's union strength gives the Communists added weight in negotiations with the government. Once the details of the economic pact have been settled and it has been presented to the *Cortes*, Suarez plans to seek a "political pact." The PCE is negotiating for the formation of a "government of national concentration" similar to the formula of the Italian Communists. Under the PCE proposal, representatives of all the major political forces that won seats in the elections would participate in the executive government. In the absence of such a government, the Communists warn Suarez, he will have no success in enforcing any economic measures.

The PSOE says it will not participate in such a coalition government. Instead, the Socialists are holding out for a chance to take power on their own, following the model of Portugal. However, because of the PSOE's historic role in the Republic and Civil War, it has been able to develop a good working class base and otherwise stands to the left of Portuguese socialists.



Schoolchildren flee an Oct. 18 guerrilla ambush of government troops near Mangua.

Wide World

CENTRAL AMERICA

'Somoza was shaken to the roots'

By Frank Maurovich

Two prominent Nicaraguans living in the U.S., both accused by President Anastasio Somoza of plotting to set up a Marxist government for the strife-ridden Central American country, say that the 41-year-old Somoza dynasty is toppling under "unprecedented public opposition."

Catholic priest Miguel d'Escoto of New York and architect Casimiro Sotelo of California said charges that they are planning any provisional government are "premature." They also denied that guerrilla fighters aim to impose a Marxist regime in Nicaragua, or that the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) has a Cuba connection. The FSLN renewed operations against government troops two weeks ago.

In separate interviews with Pacific News Service, Sotelo and d'Escoto said the guerrillas aim to establish democracy after toppling the "military dictatorship," as they called the Somoza regime. They said the present government has such broad-based opposition now that only U.S. military aid is keeping it in power. Both predicted an all-out civil war.

The two men described the FSLN—named after Gen. Augusto Cesar Sandino, who

fought against the 20-year presence of U.S. Marines in Nicaragua 50 years ago—as a tightly knit (about 1,000 members), well organized, well armed fighting force determined to wage "prolonged popular war."

Although refusing to divulge names, the two Nicaraguans acknowledged they had been in recent contact with FSLN leaders. "The FSLN has been active for 16 years," Sotelo said, "but what is unprecedented is the growing public opposition of church, labor and political groups."

Sotelo, son of a former congressman, and d'Escoto, son of a veteran diplomat, were accused along with ten other well-known Nicaraguans of being part of a Marxist plot to overthrow the government. The accusation was made after an appeal by the 12 was published in *La Prensa* calling on "all conscientious Nicaraguans" to unite in opposition to "the repressive forces of the dynastic government." The statement, which included the signatures of wealthy and conservative businessmen, educators and lawyers as well as of two clergymen, stated that "a solution that will guarantee a permanent and lasting peace cannot be achieved with-

out the participation of the FSLN."

According to d'Escoto, many prominent Nicaraguans, including a senator and four congressmen, endorsed the statement published three days after the FSLN launched attacks against National Guard troops near the Costa Rican border in the south, the Honduran border in the north and Managua, the capital.

"The reaction has shaken Somoza to the roots," the 44-year-old missionary claimed, "because there was no indication before of such broadly based support for the Sandinista movement."

Sotelo estimates that over 90 percent of the two million population in the country is opposed to the present government. He says that Somoza appears in public rarely, and then only speaks from behind a thick, bullet-proof window.

The mid-October FSLN offensive was apparently timed to take advantage of protests against U.S. military aid as well as reported internal struggle within the regime for a successor to the 51-year-old leader, who was hospitalized in July with a serious heart ailment.

Frank Maurovich is the former editor of the Lima, Peru-based *Latinamerica Press*.

Sandy Sizelove, a 36-year-old woman with a slight quaver of voice, stood up. "I've got a brother that's a scab," she said tersely. "Whatever happens to him or any other scab, they deserve it."

Why can't we holler? This is America!

By David Moberg

I. On strike in "Middle America"

"This is the first strike we've ever had," Georgia Ellis explained as we walked into the cavernous white hall of the Elwood, Ind., armory. "Before we've just accepted whatever they offered. But last winter, when it was so cold, people could either heat the house or buy groceries. They couldn't do both."

There were only a few men among the hundred grim-faced strikers sitting on folding chairs, waiting for the Sunday afternoon meeting to begin. Most of the women were at least middle-aged. Their hair, often greying or dyed closer to youthful hues, was usually in a tight permanent, although a few younger women favored shag cuts or the Dolly Parton style.

Although most of the scattered men present were in hunting and outdoors work clothes, the women were generally dressed with a careful, economical neatness. It was part of their effort at maintaining respectable appearances despite their meager pay of \$2.76 an hour for operating presses that stamp out small plastic parts for automobile electrical systems.

For the past seven months they have received even less. They have been on strike against the Essex Group, a branch of United Technologies. (The country's twelfth largest corporate employer and number 35 on the Fortune 500 list of industrial giants, United Technologies gave its president Harry J. Gray the top sum for any business executive last year, \$1,662,000.)

While on strike the 222 members of United Auto Workers local 1663 have confronted armed private security guards, sheriff's police and state police. They have battled strikebreakers with their bodies, fists, rocks, clubs and their full arsenal of abusive language, usually followed by the epithet "scab." They have been shot at, wounded, beaten, rammed by cars and trucks going through picket lines, assaulted in their homes, arrested and threatened with worse. At times they have retaliated with gunshots as well.

This is all taking place in what myth-makers call "middle America." Elwood is a virtually all-white town of 12,000 in the midst of cornfields, the birthplace of Wendell Wilkie, and only a few miles from Muncie, made famous as "Middletown" by the sociological studies of Robert and Helen Lynd in the '20s and '30s.

Yet, for all the anti-union sentiment and conservative local politics, it is a heavily unionized area. At one point it was nearly as important in the auto industry as Michigan. It is also an area that has seen harsh labor-management conflict, from a famous auto sit-down strike in Anderson in the '30s to a violent 53-week strike in 1970-71 to win a contract at the Ex-Cello plant in Elwood.

Women make up 85 percent of the Essex workforce. Most are raising families on their own, bolstering the incomes of a poorly paid husband or fending for themselves as widowed grandmothers.

The jobs at the green corrugated steel plant that Essex built just outside the city limits may not seem very desirable, considering the low pay, lack of a pension, limit-

ed insurance, absence of cost-of-living protection, heavy and noxious fumes and dust from the presses, and the intolerable heat—reaching 130 degrees at times and causing women regularly to collapse in the summer.

Yet jobs are hard to find in the area, which is dotted with small towns and cities dependent primarily on factory work. It is especially hard for women, worse if they're considered old.

Originally the strike was mainly over money and benefits. Essex workers wanted more than the 62 cents over three years that the company offered—a package that would put them only slightly ahead of the new minimum wage.

Now the focus of the strike has changed. Strikers are determined to force out all or most of the 60 or more strikebreakers and to regain jobs and seniority positions for everyone who wants to go back, including 11 people fired during the strike for "picketline misconduct." They also want to restore contractual protection that Essex took away.

Sting lessened by strikebreakers.

The sixth contract offer from the company, made the previous week in Detroit, was not even put up for a vote at the meeting, since it was identical in all but the tiniest details—changed to give the appearance of "good faith bargaining"—from the five contracts previously turned down by large margins. That rejection has come despite recommendations by regional UAW officials to accept the most recent proposals as bad but the best that can be won.

With the factory at least partly operating on non-union labor now, the strike has lost some of its sting to Essex. In any case, the company has its 26,000 employees scattered among 155 small plants, over half of them unorganized and the remainder represented by a half-dozen different unions. That lessens the power of workers in any one of the factories of the extremely profitable corporation, which earned a 21 percent return on investment in early 1976, the last figures available for Essex as a separate operation.

Infamous as a "union buster" and tough negotiator, Essex has not only relied on scabs to break strikes but has even shut down plants and moved them away during contract negotiations, as they did twice in Indiana in 1976.

Paul Couch, the 29-year-old, black-bearded union president, told the meeting that the local was looking for new weapons to use against Essex. They are appealing the rejection of their claim of unfair labor practices by the local office of the National Labor Relations Board in hopes of having the strike declared an "unfair labor practice strike" and forcing out the scabs. The local is also checking into possibilities of legal secondary boycotts and sympathy strikes or job actions.

With the help of the National Organization of Women, one of several feminist groups that have joined dozens of union locals in support of the Elwood strikers, they are considering a sex discrimination suit against Essex.

The union might also try to reopen the two injunctions that have limited the number and manner of their pickets on the

grounds that the company has brought armed strikebreakers across state lines.

"In England, they took the supervisor and plant manager hostage and locked them in," Couch said. "That's what we should have done." There was a loud burst of applause and laughter. Georgia Ellis whispered, "If they were with me for a week, they'd give up everything."

Split families.

In the middle of the disjointed flood of complaints and advice from the floor, Sandy Sizelove, a 36-year-old woman with a strained look on her face and a slight quaver of distress in her voice, stood up. "I've got a brother that's a scab," she said tersely. "Whatever happens to him or any other scab, they deserve it."

"That's her baby brother," Ellis commented. "That's hard for her to say." Such strained relationships are common in this strike: Ellis' son is a foreman working in the plant while his mother is the leading spokesperson for the strike.

Even more than food, money, food stamps and Thanksgiving turkeys, the main concern of every one was the scabs. "What are we going to do to get them out?" a woman in a checked coat pleaded. "We sit there at the gates like dumb butts. We aren't going to get anything till we get them out."

Others reported that unemployment offices in the area had been sending people to Essex, and one striker—just to check—was even told by her unemployment office to apply for a job at Essex.

Some people wanted to leaflet the scabs and talk to them, although they usually speed through the picket line. "This does not mean violence," Crouch warned. "It means saying, 'Scabs, one of these days you're going to be sorry.'"

"What do you mean? We can't holler?" a woman complained. "This is America."

Ellis, a 47-year-old grandmother of six and amateur poet, turned to me to explain the problems the local union had in getting information out through the Elwood newspaper, renamed by strikers the *Essex Call-Leader*. Her husband paid \$68 for an ad with her union message. "That's my Christmas present for this year," she said. "I'm going to hang it on my tree."

Despite the affirmations of solidarity, there was a war-weariness evident. "I'm getting to the point where something's got to give," one woman said later. "I'm not going to cross the picket line and I'm not going to be a scab. But something's got to give."

II. Scabs and violence.

Everybody knew that Essex was a tough customer when they decided to strike last spring, but they were amazed and personally transformed by the experience that followed.

Just before the strike date approached, the company built a chain link fence topped with barbed wire around the plant. Security guards were stationed at the gates to guarantee passage of trucks and supervisory personnel. Pickets tried to

stop some of the traffic and various scuffles occurred, some reportedly involving rock throwing or gunfire from each side.

By early June the company was actively advertising throughout the area for new employees. Strikers say the company probably expected that their resolve would collapse within a month or two. Women, especially older women, just didn't seem like formidable opposition, but they grew tough through the confrontation and now call themselves "Charlie's Angels" and "Fighting Grannies," the monicker on the back of some t-shirts.

Sheriff supports company.

Bringing in the strikebreakers triggered immense hostility at the people "stealing our jobs," but the Madison County sheriff had his men in place to keep the gates open. "They're the sons of bitches that caused us all the problems," UAW international representative James Johnson said. "The sheriff of that county put his deputies on permanent assignment to guard that plant and keep it open, even when he wasn't called."

At one point an Essex security guard was arrested—the sole arrest of a company agent compared with over 90 arrests of strikers—for making false reports of violence, an indication that the company wanted enough trouble going at all times to justify police guarantees of safe passage for strikebreakers.

Security guards reportedly pelted pickets with ball bearings shot with "wrist rockets" and fired over the heads of strikers from gun slits cut in the side of the building. For their part, Georgia Ellis said, "We tried to stop scab cars. We stood in front of them. We picketed. If we did anything, we were arrested. If we were hit, they'd say, 'See the prosecutor.'" Rocks, bottles and, by some accounts, gunfire also were returned toward the plant.

The arrival of strike breakers was provocative, but since some of the first non-union workers were blacks, the tension was even greater. Essex had hired almost no blacks during its 11 years in Elwood, a town known as a center of Ku Klux Klan activity in Indiana. The same tactic of social confrontation had been used by Essex in a violent 1964 strike in Hillsdale, Mich. Although soon most of the blacks quit and union officials contained racial hostilities, the Klan showed up uninvited to offer "moral support."

Why did the company hire strikebreakers? "It's simply a matter of good business," Essex spokesman Tom Castaldi said. "Our obligation is to serve our customers, which of course makes it possible to have a plant."

The new, non-union workforce now is much younger than before. There are also far fewer women. So far only three strikers have gone back to work, all of them men.

Confrontation and violence.

On July 6 the local union counted 88 strikebreakers going into the plant. They feared that the company might try to call a union decertification vote and were angry at the growing workforce displacing them. There was a tense confrontation at the plant gates that afternoon between a