

NICARAGUA

Slain editor may undo Somoza's rule

By Blase Bonpane

PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO, editor and owner of *La Prensa*, Nicaragua's only opposition newspaper, died Jan. 9 as a working reporter. In the pocket of his bullet-ridden jacket was an article he had written at home. It was just two months since he received the Maria Moors Cabot award from Columbia University for outstanding news coverage on Latin America and for "journalistic leadership of those forces opposed to tyranny in Nicaragua."

Proportionately speaking, the Nicaraguan people are more disturbed by the death of this courageous journalist than Americans were by the death of John F. Kennedy. For days the Nicaraguan capital of Managua has been paralyzed by a general strike supported by both business and labor.

Opposition leader.

It was not simply a newspaper that led to Chamorro's assassination. He was the head of Nicaragua's conservative party. As an astute politician he set about building a mass coalition in 1972. His unique structure, Union Democratica de Liberacion (UDEL) united most anti-Somoza forces in Nicaragua.

Through careful planning, Chamorro attracted dissidents from the Liberal party, Somoza's own political apparatus. The crafty editor had no trouble in drawing in the Independent Liberal party and the Social Christian party, founded in the '60s and made up of former members of the Conservative party and the Nicaraguan Socialist party.

UDEL generally represents middle and upper class democratic interests. It is not related to the Nicaraguan liberation militia known as the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion, FSLN. But members of Chamorro's coalition are quick to admit that they are relying on the military success



In Managua, Nicaragua, Jan. 12 protests swept the city in advance of the funeral of assassinated editor Pedro Joaquin Chamorro. In back of young men demonstrators is a burning customs house.

of the rebel FSLN as their only hope. Dictator Anastasio Somoza says, "I, like all Nicaraguans, feel great sorrow for the death of Chamorro."

For years the Somoza regime has taught and tolerated the torture and murder of dissidents. In 1977, the Catholic Bishops of Nicaragua accused Somoza's National Guard of "torture, rape and summary execution." Each murder and each use of torture do not require personal approval of the head of state. Some die while "trying to get away." Relatively unknown dissidents are in the most dangerous position.

Chamorro, on the other hand, was an

international figure. It is doubtful that his execution could take place without approval at the top unless the National Guard intended the action as an assertion of new autonomy. Such a case would indicate the advent of a military take-over.

Central American and Caribbean history give us many examples of such murders approved by dictatorial heads of state. In each case the dictators overplayed their power as they began to lose it. And Somoza is losing his power.

A few weeks ago he approved the destruction of a major Nicaraguan cultural center on the island of Solentiname in the Lake of Nicaragua. He could tolerate this

dynamic meeting place for social, political and spiritual change when he was strong. But he refused to bear Solentiname any longer as his regime proceeded in the death process.

The political disintegration of Nicaragua seems to explain the murder of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro. The Somoza dynasty began with treachery in the murder of Gen. Augusto Cesar Sandino in 1934, and now it may be ending in 1978 with the treacherous murder of Chamorro. ■

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TAIWAN

Student arrests only the beginning

By John Hanrahan

A NEW WAVE OF REPRESSION has hit Taiwan with a number of recent secret arrests and government warnings that writers who "try to spread class hatred" may also soon find themselves imprisoned.

In addition to the publicized arrests in early November of three persons alleged to be members of the underground People's Liberation Front, the regime also in recent weeks has secretly arrested as many as ten other persons.

These reports of additional secret arrests, based on letters sent clandestinely from Taiwan to Taiwanese human rights activists in the U.S., clash sharply with the picture that has recently been presented in major U.S. publications. The *New York Times*, for example, carried a Dec. 4 dispatch from Fox Butterfield in Taipei that stated, in part: "...there is recent evidence in Taiwan that President Carter's well-publicized pronouncements on human rights may have begun to take effect." Butterfield cited as evidence of "the improved atmosphere" on Taiwan some gains that independent candidates made against the ruling Kuomintang party (KMT) in local elections in November.

In the People's Liberation Front case, the government announced Nov. 5 that three persons had been arrested for engaging in communist underground activities and for sending threatening letters to foreign investors in Taiwan. The threaten-

With 8,000 political prisoners, Taiwan is no human rights model. It may get worse.

ing letters, purportedly sent last January to more than 70 U.S., German and Japanese investors, ordered "all foreign imperialists and capitalists" to leave Taiwan by the end of June or face "due punishment." However, June came and went without any incident.

No discussing "toothbrushism."

The government's version of the arrests conjured up visions of a dangerous terrorist organization, but information sent by anti-regime activists in Taiwan and received by their supporters in the U.S. indicates that the PLF threat exists largely in the government's mind.

According to letters received by the Chicago-based Committee to Stop Secret Execution of Political Prisoners in Taiwan, the arrests were designed to affect the local elections held in November as well as to warn students and writers who are following paths deemed dangerous by the government.

A recent letter received from Taiwan by the committee stated that at least five students or recent students, in addition to the three arrested in the PLF case, have been recently imprisoned. One of those

arrested was Tsai Yu-jung, a fourth-year student in the chemical engineering department at Tamchiang College.

Last spring as head of the Current Affairs Research Society at Tamchiang, Tsai had organized a seminar or series of lectures on the topic of Taiwan citizens acquiring property and residences overseas—a practice that has come to be known as "toothbrushism."

"Toothbrushism" refers to KMT officials and rich business people who are believed to have transferred most of their assets from Taiwan to other countries as a precaution against the anticipated day when the U.S. establishes diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China and severs its ties with Taiwan. With the rest of their wealth overseas and only their toothbrushes still with them on Taiwan, these people will be able to quickly flee the country.

Initially, the Tamchiang College administration agreed to allow a discussion of the issue but then changed its mind. Tsai Yu-jung reportedly helped initiate a petition drive to protest the decision and sent letters of protest to newspapers, government organizations and others. It was this that apparently brought him to the attention of the regime.

Tsai, as well as the earlier three persons arrested for allegedly being PLF members, was also involved in campaigning for Tsai Hung Ch'iao-wo, a non-aligned politician, in her election race for a provincial assembly seat from the Tai-

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Horton Hat

By David Moberg

MYLES HORTON, HUNDREDS of miles from his Tennessee highland home, was looking around for the room where he was supposed to speak. "I'll just follow the crowd," he explained with a touch of wry mountain humor, "then sneak up in front when they arrive. That's what leaders always do."

Horton, a lean and vibrant 72-year-old son of Appalachia, should know something about leaders. For the past 45 years he has been, despite all his modesty, a singularly influential leader on his own and an educator of possibly thousands of leaders at all levels of the civil rights, labor and other reform movements of the South. His Highlander Folk School, founded near Monteagle, Tenn., in 1932, has never had more than eight or ten staff but there is hardly a change that has rippled through the South over the past several decades that hasn't been started or bolstered by a Highlander pebble thrown in the pond.

Highlander's success stems partly from Horton's cantankerously democratic insistence that the common people—the textile workers, sharecroppers, miners, rural poor or disenfranchised blacks—are better leaders, organizers and even teachers of each other than any outside experts.

"The way I organize," he explains, "I have people organize themselves. I sit under the tree and read a book or go off and drink beer while they organize. I'm the laziest organizer in the world, but I can get unions where other people can't even get members signed up."

Horton's path to effective but lazy organizing started with a religious training and compassion that was soon directed toward political ends by his teacher, the

theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr. Horton studied sociology at the University of Chicago, but learned more from his extra-curricular reading of Dewey, Marx, Lenin, the utopian socialists and other radical thinkers. Through a minister he met at a church social, he learned of the Danish "folk schools," institutions set up in the late 19th century to preserve Danish culture and to defend small farmers and peasants.

These experiences guided Horton back to the mountains, to Grundy County, Tenn., then one of the 11 poorest counties in the country. He soon discovered that there were numerous strong native leaders who could lead strikes or organize protests.

Horton and his educator friends could provide some technical and legal advice, but mainly they offered a place to meet and a chance for people to share their experience and knowledge. That proved quite revolutionary.

The meetings were especially subversive of the old order of the South since they repeatedly violated Jim Crow laws prohibiting blacks and whites from gathering together. "We were too poor to segregate," he says with typical understatement. "We couldn't afford but one table and one toilet. There was only segregation by who was at the back of the line."

Necessity wrought other progressive steps in running a school, such as Highlander's practice of combining work and education. "A lot of things we did at Highlander was not because of high-minded theories but because of necessity," Horton says, "which is not a bad way to do things. When we started we had no money and had to support ourselves. So we had to work. We thought it was a good idea, but it was also necessity that combined theory and practice."

Highlander's joint meetings of blacks and whites brought down repeated legal attacks, sheriff's raids, Ku Klux Klan marches and cross-burnings, vigilante assaults, destruction of the school by arson and countless diatribes against the school as a haven of Communists.

Yet it brought other results too—the formation of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, the start of voter education projects, the first massive literacy campaign among poor blacks, conversion of "Kluxer" agitators into pro-integration union leaders and, not so indirectly, the symbolic event that triggered the civil rights movement: Three months after a session at Highlander, Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of the bus in Birmingham, Ala., sparking the boycott that launched Martin Luther King as the pre-eminent civil rights leader.

HORTON, INFECTIOUSLY JOVIAL and a crafty, genial storyteller, recently told a gathering of alternative school workers about one of the most remarkable experiments in alternative forms of education undertaken in this country.

Always devoted more to "social change in the country, not in the schools," Horton was introduced in 1954 to Esau Jenkins, a black man from the Georgia Sea Islands. While driving other blacks to their daytime jobs as domestics and janitors, Jenkins had tried to teach his bus-riders how to read and write so they could vote and influence local politics. Horton spent a year with Jenkins on John's Island, fishing, working on farms, playing with the kids and learning about the people.

Although there were state-supported literacy projects, Horton concluded that "their whole effort to educate people to read and write was a demeaning program carried on by dominating, opinionated kinds of people that made people feel inferior. So I tried to find the opposite—that would give them dignity, make them feel comfortable. Also, we didn't think it was a literacy program as such but teaching the people to read and write so they could be active citizens."

His first rule, developed during the period of "unlearning" his formal schooling, was that "the people you don't want to run the program are teachers." So they started their Sea Island's "citizenship school class" with 14 adults in the back room of a cooperative store, where they sat around a table rather than cramming themselves into undersized school desks. A black woman from the island was teacher and the first text was the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

"We were starting with the premise that these were adults and deserved the dignity of being challenged by something worthy of them," Horton says. The vast majority stuck with the class, learning in six weeks of meeting two nights a week how to write letters, order from the Sears catalog and pass the voting test.

"It was inspiring to visit," Horton says, "to go to one of those meetings and see these 60-year-old black people who were so used to holding a plow, a hoe or a fishing net that when they held a pencil, they would break it. I said not to worry, just hand them another. There are plenty more."

Within two years hundreds of schools popped up throughout the South. Often students who learned in one citizenship class "certified" themselves as teachers and started another class. The virtually self-perpetuating system was put under SCLC control in 1965.

Getting out of a successful project is typical Highlander behavior. Horton has a dread of becoming institutional. Wearing his t-shirt with the Chinese slogan, "Women hold up half the sky," Horton

and education writer John Holt, playing with his cello in a crowded hallway, were talking about the necessity of constant change. "I think every building and institution should be built so that it automatically self-destructs in 25 years," Horton said. Otherwise the institutional past rules the present.

Predictably Horton was impressed with some of the legacy of the cultural revolution in a recent visit to China. The practice of "implementing the mass line," having discussions of major policy at the commune, factory and neighborhood level, seemed to fit his ideas of adult education. Yet he also discovered that "up to ten years ago the schools in China were pretty bad. In some ways they're still pretty bad. While they talk a good line, they've still got teachers trained in the old way, and they stand up in front of class judgmentally and have students recite."

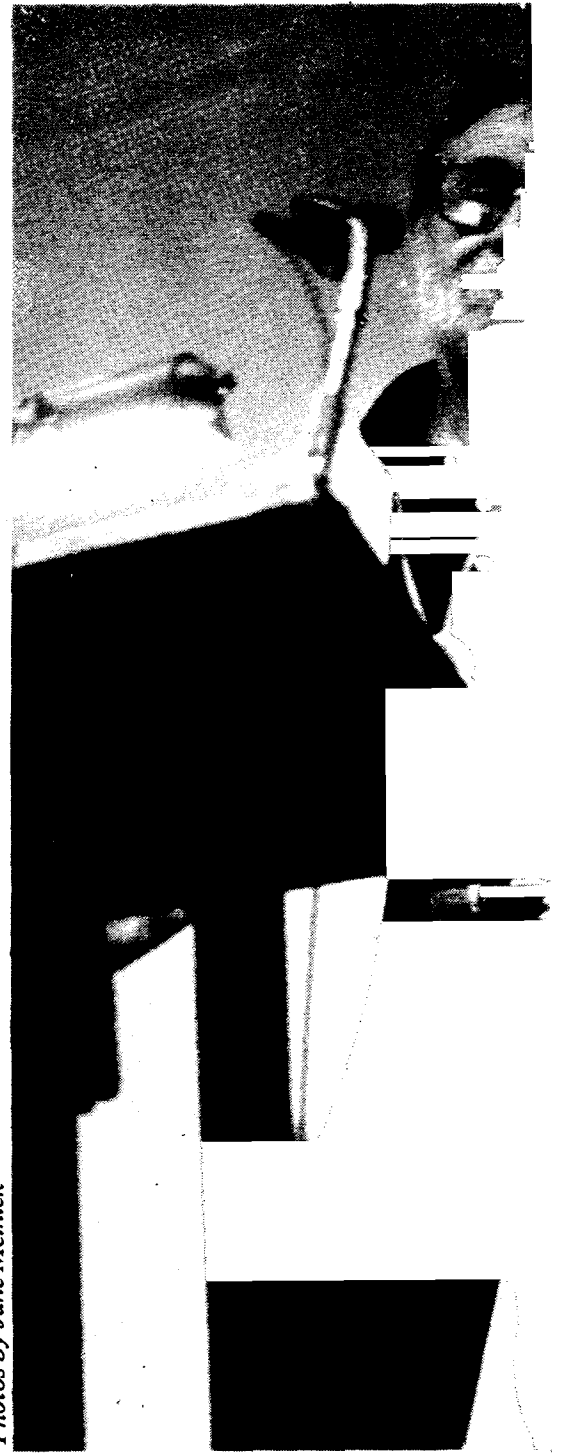
Throughout its many shifts of focus, the teaching style at Highlander, now located at New Market, Tenn., has remained informal, with students teaching students in a group setting. They try to work with a minimum of preconceived formulas about how to organize politically.

At first Highlander was preoccupied with building the CIO, but its emphasis on training leaders at the shop steward level and its openness to leftists during the McCarthy period threatened conservative officials who were consolidating their grasp over the union organization.

Later the civil rights movement was the center of Highlander work.

Now work with Appalachian poor—fighting stripmining, for example—and with activist unions in the South fills the Highlander agenda.

Myles Horton still teaches at Highlander, when he's not consulting with native Americans in the Canadian north or lead-



Photos by Jane Melnick