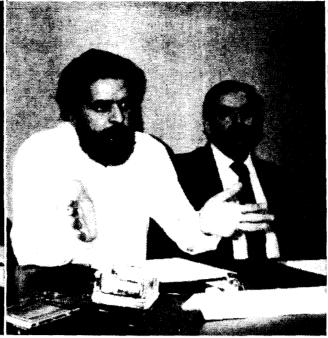
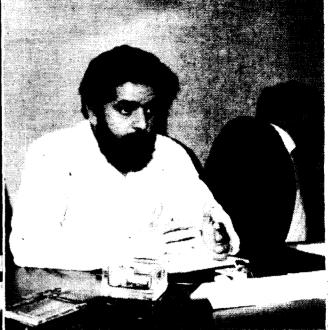
INTHE WORLD







Lula (left), seen here with French union official Jacques Chereque, now feels that international ties are crucial for the Brazilian unions.

LATIN AMERICA

Brazil cracks down on labor activism

By Diana Johnstone

21815 HEY CALL MIM "O LULA" AND in Brazil he is as popular as a soccer star. But when he is cheered in Vila Euclides stadium, army helicopters buzz menacingly overhead and machine guns scan the crowd. He is Luis Ignacio da Silva, at 35 the president of the Sao Bernardo metalworkers union and chairman of the fledgling Particio dos Trabalhadores (Workers Party, P.T.). To put an end to these activities Brazil's military regime is dropping its liberalizing pretenses long enough to haul Lula and a dozen of his colleagues before a military court next week.

They are accused of codaugering "national security." How? By inciting the metalworkers of the "ABC" (Santo Andre, Sao Bernardo and Sao Caetano) industrial triangle outside Sao Paulo to strike. Which they did, massively and peacefully, for 41 days last spring.

The strike called April 1, 1980, was so well prepared at meetings hypolying thousands of workers that "no pickets were necessary," explains Lula. "So there was no possibility of picketline violence. The government itself based the violence, to prevent free languages in between labor and management," Meavily armed troops occupied the ABC region. Labor leaders were plucked from their homes, from church—one was satisfied in the mayor's office—and Cuowa in jail. After a month, their howers got them out, but failed to get the case against them dropped or transferred to a sivilian court.

Thus on Feb. 23, the 13 mulon leaders come before a military iribunal on charges of "incitement to collective disobedience." If convicted, they could be sentenced to from two to 12 years in prison. But whatever the sentence, anyone convicted for "national security" offenses is barred from randing for any political or union office.

Inla and his 11 to detendants are not only union leaders but also belong to the leadership of the newly-formed Workers Party. The true thus shuts at both crippling the metalworkers and lopping off the leadership of a vehicle party that does not fit into the government's scheme of controlled plus alism.

The harassment did not stop there. Last July 21, during prasant struggles in the north Brazinan state of Acre, the president of the farm worker's union, Wilson Souza Pinheiro, who was also a local P.T. leader, was assassinated. Lula and P.T. secretary general Jaco Bittar, president of the Sao Paulo petroleum

workers, went to the protest meeting that followed. When a farm administrator was murdered, the government police called Lula and Bittar as witnesses and then charged them with the crime. This blatantly trumped-up charge also keeps them from their normal union and political work.

Aware that Lula and Bittar are not really dangerous criminals seeking to flee the country, Brazilian authorities finally granted them temporary passports in time to attend ceremonies marking the first anniversary of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. Then the two toured Europe to call attention to the Feb. 23 trial that Lula calls "the most important political event since the Brazilian military regime began its much-heralded 'opening' in 1978."

In Paris as guest of the French Democratic Labor Confederation (CFDT), Lula stressed that the "opening" does not involve the working class or the labor movement. The Brazilian regime, under General Joao Baptista Figueiredo. former head of military intelligence, has "opened up" political life for the upper classes with a 1979 law allowing new political parties to be legalized—but only if they can gather signatures of one-tenth of the current members of Congress or else prove they have local branches in one-fifth of the municipalities of nine states. This reform was designed to fragment the opposition, which had been forced to unite in the only legally allowed opposition party, the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB) after the MDB began to make life in Congress difficult for the government party, ARENA. The P.T. is not a breakoff from the MDB but a new creation of labor militants. It has grown fast but not yet met the standards for legalization.

Lula stresses that the "opening" is "very elitist, not intended for the whole of society." It may be a "liberalization" but it is definitely not a "democratization."

Talking strategy with Walesa.

Luis Ignacio da Silva was born in 1945 in the northeastern state of Pernambuco in a family of poor farm laborers who, like so many others from that depressed region, moved to the sprawling suburbs of Sao Paulo looking for work. The young da Silva worked a lathe in the Villares steel plant of Sao Bernardo. He was elected metalworkers secretary in 1973 and president two years later.

Disclosures in 1977 that the government had been falsifying the price index to hold down wages were followed by a series of major strikes for higher pay. The problems raised by these strikes convinced union leaders of the need for a workers party, which they founded last July with da Silva as chairman. By this time he had become O Lula, hero of the great ABC strikes of 1979 and 1980. Solid and placid-looking behind his fuzzy beard, he offered the huge crowds—up to 100,000—in Vila Euclides stadium the choice: "Die with our heads down, or die with our heads held high."

In Rome last month, Lula met Lech Walesa. The Brazilian had complained last August that in his country, fierce critics of the Sao Bernardo strike "can't find praise enough to lavish on the strikes in Poland." And yet, "the Poles are asking for the same things we are: freedom to organize their own union, the right to strike, the 40-hour work week."

At first, Lula differed with Walesa on one thing: political involvement. "Walesa thinks he should stay out of politics," Lula said in Paris. "We discussed that in Italy and concluded that even if he says he stays out of politics, in practice he has practically overthrown his government. The main thing is for workers' rights to be respected, whatever the system. Now, I think if Walesa were in Brazil, he'd do what we're doing, and if we were in Pol-

and, we'd do like him. At our meeting in Rome, we decided to keep in touch, because we realized that we Brazilians know little about Poland and vice versa."

Lula says he is a recent convert to the idea of international solidarity. "For a long time, I refused to travel to other countries, because I thought the special problems of Brazilian workers were a matter of national conditions. But now I have been realizing that the problems of Brazilian workers often originate in other countries, where multinationals have their headquarters."

Now he thinks two things are of fundamental importance: first, to find out about European unions—"and we discover that we are 100 years behind"—and second, to talk with European labor leaders about building real international solidarity.

The lessons of Europe.

The trip to Europe has shown him what freedom is. There is no comparison, he said, between the Brazilian political "opening" and that in Spain (though in Brazil the comparison is often made). "In Spain, when they started the open
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In These Times definitely fills a need, an important one, and does so successfully. I've found the foreign commentary and coverage particularly impressive and valuable.

Noam Chomsky

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ity." Nestle USA's president, David Guerrant, was apparently less than enthusiastic about all this, for Saunders further notes that "Mr. Guerrant is somewhat concerned that Nestle should not be seen to be the dominant subscriber to the Ethics and Public Policy Center." Help, however, was at hand in the form of Nestle's Washington counsel, Thomas Ward, of Ward, Lalos, Leeds, Keegan and Lett. "Mr. Ward," the memo continues, "informs us that there are ways in which this matter can be handled, and...I suggest that Mr. Ward remain closely involved in follow-up activity with the Center."

Even a mind untainted by memories of the colorful methods of laundering money revealed during the Watergate investigation would read this passage as a suggestion that Nestle's contributions to the center be hidden, but a Nestle rep claims that it was merely a suggestion that there was no problem because Nestle wasn't a dominant contributor.

Ward himself was unavailable for comment, and no one else in his firm was able to discuss the matter, but there was no question that Nestle-already planning to give the center an additional \$20,000—was about to become EPPC's dominant corporate contributor. Lefever claims that the center received donations from 26 corporations in 1980, but admits that \$25,000 was the largest contribution received from any single firm. More importantly, in May 1980, two months after Nestle's first gift, Lefever issued a report estimating EPPC's entire corporate budget for the year as slightly under \$100,000—making Nestle the source of one-fourth of the center's corporate donations and indicating that Guerrant's fears were well founded.

But they were overridden, for the Saunders memo continues: "We should review the optimum mailing list for the Fortune reprint and then decide how to finance the operation.'

In bad taste.

Shortly after these meetings, Lefever's center received another \$20,000 from Nestle. Lefever says that he had independently decided to reprint the Fortune article as an EPPC fund-raising device, but admits that "when Nestle saw Nickel's piece, they decided it would be good to use it." Shortly after receiving this second Nestle contribution, EPPC rented a mailing list of "community leaders" from a New York firm and sent out the largest promotional mailing in its history. Lefever says the mailing—including, of course, a reprint of Nickel's article (now retitled, without Fortune's ommunity leaders, adding that "normally, we send out a few hundred."

Fortune did its part in indirectly underwriting the distribution. When Lefever's center had reprinted an earlier piece of Nickel's on South Africa, it had been wouldn't be possible. So I went to Fortune—to the top of Fortune—and pleaded for a flat-rate sale. They agreed to let ment policy" abroad.) us print as many as we wanted for a single fee of \$150.'

that had no official connection with Nestle, reprints of an attack on the boycotters from a magazine with no acknowledged connection with the center.

supposedly studying it is surely in bad own forces."

taste, but if processed-food companies went to jail for bad taste, the prisons would be overflowing. Rather, the memo and the circumstances surrounding it give us a rare look at the operations of an informal Corporate Ministry of Disinformation-which we must fear is the force behind much of the "objective" information we read.

A case in point is a recent Wall Street Journal article entitled "Politics and Baby Formula in the Third World," by our old friend Ernest Lefever. Though the article was published 10 days after the Washington Post revealed his connections with Nestle. Lefever is identified only as "president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington and author of Amsterdam to Nairobi: The World Council of Churches and the Third World." Asked if he had told the Journal that Nestle was a major supporter of the center, Lefever replied, "Of course not."

Geoffrey Stokes is a staff writer for the Village Voice, in which a longer version of this article first appeared © 1981 News Group Publications, Inc.

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ing process, the first thing they talked about was union freedom and autonomy. But in Brazil, we still have the fascist labor law imposed by the first dictatorship in the 1930s.'

He is not using the word "fascist" loosely—the Brazilian corporatist labor law was copied from Mussolini's in Italy. Even during the "democratic period" between 1945 and the 1964 military coup, it was never repealed. The law allows government "intervention" in unions, meaning they can divest elected union leaders of their functions and impose their own officials. It also sets out narrow conditions for legal strikes, making it easy for the government to declare even a peaceful strike illegal, as it did last April.

Thus a priority for union organizers is to work for a change in Brazil's labor law, which implies political activity. Lula rejects criticism of the Workers Party for splitting the working class. "The unity of the working class doesn't mean everyone has to be in the same organization," he says. "During 10 years as a union leader, I wasn't able to make onetenth of the contacts I've made as party chairman. Creating a party doesn't create any divisions that weren't there already.'

Lula's search for solidarity in Europe has been highly successful. The big social democratic labor confederations in Sweden and West Germany, the L.O. and the DGB, as well as their metalworkers federations, the various socialist and communist labor confederations and metalworkers unions of Italy, France and permission, "Crusade Against the Cor- Spain all plan to send observer delegaporation: Churches and the Nestle Boy- tions to the Feb. 23 trial. Europe's socialcott")—went to "several thousands" of ist parties, some communist parties and even the Italian Christian Democrats are doing the same. (The last-minute postponement of the trial, originally set for Feb. 16, is seen as an attempt by the government to confound these plans.)

(When asked, a CFDT leader said the charged Fortune's standard rate of 10 U.S. machinists union and the UAW alcents per copy. "With all we wanted to so showed concern through the internareprint this time," says Lefever, "that tional secretariat of metalworkers, whereas Lane Kirkland and AFL-CIO leadership continue to "support U.S. govern-

What does Lula think of Reagan? "I'm very worried and I think many others are Editor Rukeyser denies that he was very worried, too. But I must stress this: "the top," but confirms that EPPC got Reagan has been elected president of the reprint rights for "a token fee." Thus United States, not president of the world. Fortune, which had had an article's re- He must respect the sovereignty of other search partially underwritten by EPPC, countries, just as he expects others to redonated the equivalent of several thou- spect the sovereignty of the U.S. This is sand dollars to Lefever's operation. And a crucial moment for all Europe to watch thus, of course, community leaders all out for a hardening of U.S. policy. With over the country received, from a center or without Reagan, we Brazilians will go on fighting for democratic freedom."

Finally, Lula quoted the comment of Brazilian bishop Don Helder Camara: "The difference between Carter and Rea-No crime seems to have been commit- gan is like the difference between Cocated; Nestle's giving five times what the Cola and Pepsi Cola. Both represent Amstudy cost to an organization that was erican capitalism. We must count on our

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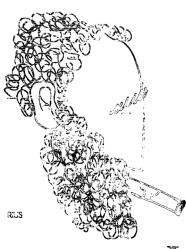
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