



I.S.

REUNION DEL COMITE DE LA INTERNACIONAL SOCIALISTA PARA AMERICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE



VENEZUELA

CARACAS, DICIEMBRE 1987



SICLAC meets in Caracas

The SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (SICLAC) held its largest-ever meeting in Caracas on 8-9 December.

The meeting, hosted by the ruling Democratic Action Party (AD), was attended by delegates from thirty-three parties and organisations, including most of the SI member parties in the region and a number of representatives of SI member parties in Europe, as well as specially invited guests.

The meeting was opened by Reinaldo Leandro Mora, acting president of AD; José Francisco Peña Gómez, chair of the committee; and Carlos Andrés Pérez, an SI vice-president and AD's presidential candidate in the 1988 elections.

The SI delegates were also received by President Jaime Lusinchi, who underlined the significance of the SICLAC meeting, which would 'convey to the governments of the region an important message on present and fundamental problems of the region'.

Discussions

The main items on the agenda were the issues at the centre of political concern in the region, such as the peace process in Central America, the effects of the global financial and economic crisis, the political basis for development in the Caribbean, and strategies for democratisation.

On the peace process in **Central America**, the meeting heard reports on current developments from all SI member

parties in that region, as well as from other parties and organisations invited to Caracas.

Daniel Oduber, national director of the National Liberation Party (PLN) of Costa Rica and an SI vice-president, introduced the discussion, which dealt mainly with the progress of the Esquipulas agreements signed by the Central American presidents in August. It included contributions from Carlos Andrés Pérez; Guillermo Ungo, leader of National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) of El Salvador and an SI vice-president; Mario Solórzano Martínez, leader of the Democratic Socialist Party of Guatemala (PSD); and Bayardo Arce of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) of Nicaragua, who participated as a guest.

Concerning the Caribbean, the main topic dealt with by the meeting was the situation in **Haiti** following the cancellation of the elections scheduled to take place on 29 November (*see also page 33*). Of particular concern to the committee were the many innocent civilian victims who lost their lives at the hands of supporters of the former Duvalier regime while attempting to exercise their democratic rights, and also the responsibility of the present interim government in these events.

The discussion on the **economic situation** was introduced by Michael Manley, leader of the People's National Party (PNP) of Jamaica and an SI vice-president. His contribution and

the subsequent debate focused on the consequences of the present debt burden, which is threatening prospects for development and political stability for the democracies of the region, on the serious problems caused by the protectionist policies of the economies of the North, and on the potential effects of the developments on the world's stockmarkets in October.

The situations in Chile (*see also page 29*) and Paraguay received special attention in the analysis of **democratisation** in the continent.

Declaration

At the end of the two-day meeting in Caracas, SICLAC issued a statement reflecting the views of its members on the major points of the agenda. The first section of the Declaration of Caracas reads as follows: 'Latin America and the Caribbean find themselves at the most important crossroads of their history. The region faces the serious challenge of making democracy survive in the midst of a dramatic economic crisis. The deepening of this crisis has eliminated the possibilities of acting in a measured and gradual manner. All the countries of the region currently suffer varying levels of unemployment, hunger, disease and overburdened institutions.'

'The meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (SICLAC) in Caracas is held at a time when our people glimpse for the first time, some signs of hope.

'The Esquipulas II agreements to bring peace to Central America have demonstrated the wish and will of the countries of the region to reach stability and democracy.

'The summit meeting of the eight Latin American heads of state in Acapulco on 28-29 November has also opened the way to a regional joint effort to recover autonomy of decisions and to rescue prosperity and the right of development for our people.

'Nevertheless, the historic advances in this uninterrupted struggle for peace, freedom and democracy have not been understood and much less encouraged by the countries of the North, particularly those constituting the Group of Seven, thus giving force to the denunciation made by President Sanguinetti of Uruguay that "the countries that ask us to be democracies do not allow us to achieve democracy".'

'The political consensus that arose forty years ago in the United Nations on the need to achieve a welfare state, has been destroyed by the political leaderships of the countries of the North, who have refused to accept any proposal that would enhance the capacity of all peoples to share the benefits of an interdependent world.

'The attempts by the United States government to solve the Central American conflict by means of a military escalation in the region, the conditioning by the creditor countries of the payment of the external debt, and the aggressive and

asphyxiating protectionism on our economies have constituted the most representative responses of the countries of the North to the crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the exception of the European Community with regard to Central America.

'The recent fall of the stock market, the stagnation of global growth, and the countless young lives lost in the bloody wars scourging developing countries are conclusive demonstrations of the irrationality of such policies.

'The consequences of the lack of cooperation with the Third World to solve the current crisis are more than evident. Added to the results mentioned above, economic stagnation in our region has led to a reduction of imports, which greatly affects the industrialised economies and could unavoidably lead to a postponement of debt repayments and a declaration of a moratorium.

'The debt crisis is fundamentally a political problem and must be dealt with as such. The Socialist International has made repeated calls for a conference of creditor and debtor countries to deal with the severe debt crisis and has made proposals for its urgent restructuring, including an effective cut in interest rates, the extension of payment terms, the establishment of a percentage for debt servicing related to export revenues, and the cancellation of the debts of the poorest countries.

'It will be difficult for Latin America and the Caribbean to achieve stability and prosperity if others responsible in the international field do not make an effort to set aside selfish attitudes and face the fact that there is no possibility of solving the global crisis in isolation. The response to the October financial crisis, for instance, could give rise to greater economic hardships. The reduction of the US budget deficit could lead to a new great depression if urgent measures are not taken to restore aggregate world demand.

'Another important challenge for the Latin American people is the democratisation of all our

societies. This involves not only eradicating the opprobrious dictatorships of Chile and Paraguay, but also furthering and perfecting the existing systems of participation, so as to guarantee political pluralism and access to power through free elections effectively reflecting the sovereignty of the people.

'It is equally important to defend democratic systems in countries such as Peru, where terrorist forces continually violate human rights and the peaceful existence and freedom of its people.

'Democracy is the most dynamic system, the richest in diversity, and can be constantly improved. The structures of the democratic state must be adapted today to the new aspirations of the people. A continuous opening of channels for the participation of the different social sectors in Latin America and the Caribbean is an unwavering task for any democrat. Political democracy must be accompanied in our countries by social and economic democracy. The hour has come to bring an end to old patterns and to open the doors of our democratic societies to

Regional issues

In the remaining sections of the declaration, SICLAC specifically:

- stressed that dialogue is an essential condition for the fulfilment of the Esquipulas II agreement and hence for the Central American peace process, and that dialogue needs to be encouraged in accordance with the specific circumstances prevailing in each country of the region;
- considered it fundamental, since the peace process requires the fulfilment of a number of conditions for democratisation and peace, that the dynamics of negotiation and dialogue are maintained despite the difficulties and obstacles;
- welcomed, in view of the fact that dialogue must include all parties involved in the conflict, the decision by the Nicaraguan government to ask the archbishop of Managua to take charge of the dialogue with the irregular forces fighting against

the government, in order to achieve a ceasefire; considered it essential that, at the same time, the United States administration commits itself to ending the flow of economic and military aid to those forces;

- congratulated President Óscar Arias Sánchez of Costa Rica on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his efforts to secure a negotiated settlement to the conflicts in Central America;
- reaffirmed its support for the people of Chile and Paraguay in their efforts to reestablish democracy;

Haitians endeavouring to establish democracy in their country; held the interim government responsible for the fact that the perpetrators of violence could act with impunity; and demanded that the election process be resumed within the framework and the time limit laid down by the 1987 constitution;

- decided to appoint a special commission to follow developments in Haiti, with a view to increasing international awareness of the situation in that country and to providing support for the efforts of the



Host: Carlos Andrés Pérez

- welcomed the campaign for free elections in Chile and the degree of unity with which the opposition to the Pinochet regime is pursuing this campaign;
- denounced the intention of the Stroessner regime in Paraguay to once more present, through rigged elections, a facade of legitimacy to the oldest dictatorship in Latin America;
- appealed to the authorities in Guyana to heed the voice of the democratic opposition parties for democratic reforms of electoral laws and institutions;
- strongly condemned the acts of violence committed by supporters of the former Duvalier regime against innocent

Haitian people in favour of democracy; and

- accepted the considerations by the eight Latin American heads of state meeting in Acapulco on 28-29 November regarding reintegration of Cuba into the inter-American system.

Appeal

The committee addressed a special appeal to the superpowers, meeting in Washington at the time of the Caracas meeting, urging them to agree on further steps in nuclear and other disarmament and reiterating the SI's appeal to allocate the resources currently invested in armaments to global efforts for development.