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Nicaragua: On Confrontation Between Government & Striking Workers

by Deborah Tyroler

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April 29: On Friday morning, police arrived at the construction workers' union hall in Managua. Construction workers and auto mechanics walked off the job in February to protest a new wage scale. A hunger strike by 38 construction workers began on April 25. Claiming that the construction workers were blocking pedestrian traffic, the police arrested four of them. The hunger strike participants were barricaded inside the hall. President Daniel Ortega has charged that the strikers "have no class consciousness," and said they if they were patriotic, they would be protesting in front of the US Embassy, not against the government. The construction workers' union is affiliated with the Socialist Party. The union hall is decorated with portraits of Fidel Castro, Lenin and other revolutionary heroes. A large banner hanging on the front of the building proclaims, "We Prefer to Die of Hunger Fighting for Dignity Than to Die Working Like Slaves." A group of young persons from the Conservative Party went to the union hall late Friday, reportedly to show solidarity with the strikers. When they arrived, they were arrested by the police. At the headquarters of the Social Democratic Party, another group of would-be demonstrators was broken up before it could begin walking toward the union hall. Four were arrested. May 1: At a May Day celebration, President Ortega referred to the labor organizers as "pseudo-leaders who receive money from the CIA...They are playing a sad role as allies of imperialism. They are led by people who have a counterrevolutionary program." (Basic data from New York Times, 04/30/88, 05/01/88, 05/02/88)

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