

Information, Education, Discussion Bulletin

In Defense of Marxism

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Special Double Issue—No. 100



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Anwar Shaikh
Claire Cohen
George Breitman

Alan Wald
James P. Cannon
Frank Lovell

And More...

Who We Are

The *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* is published by an independent collective of U.S. socialists who are in fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International, a worldwide organization of revolutionary socialists.

Supporters of this magazine may be involved in different socialist groups and/or in a broad range of working class struggles and protest movements in the U.S. These include unions and other labor organizations, women's rights groups, antiracist organizations, coalitions opposed to U.S. military intervention, gay and lesbian rights campaigns, civil liberties and human rights efforts. We support similar activities in all countries and participate in the global struggle of working people and their allies. Many of our activities are advanced through collaboration with other supporters of the Fourth International in countries around the world.

What we have in common is our commitment to the Fourth International's critical-minded and revolutionary Marxism, which in the twentieth century is represented by such figures as V.I. Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and Leon Trotsky. We also identify with the tradition of American Trotskyism represented by James P. Cannon and others. We favor the creation of a revolutionary working class party, which can only emerge through the conscious efforts of many who are involved in the struggles of working people and the oppressed and who are dedicated to revolutionary socialist perspectives.

Through this magazine we seek to clarify the history, theory, and program of the Fourth International and the American Trotskyist tradition, discussing their application to the class struggle internationally and here in the United States. This vital task must be undertaken if we want to forge a political party in this country capable of bringing an end to the domination of the U.S. imperialist ruling class, establishing a working people's democracy and socialist society based on human need instead of private greed, in which the free development of each person becomes possible.

The *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* is independent of any political organization. Not all U.S. revolutionaries who identify with the Fourth International are in a common organization. Not all of them participate in the publication of this journal. Supporters of this magazine are committed to comradely discussion and debate as well as practical political cooperation which can facilitate eventual organizational unity of all Fourth Internationalists in the United States. At the same time, we want to help promote a broad recomposition of a class-conscious working class movement and, within this, a revolutionary socialist regroupment, in which perspectives of revolutionary Marxism, the Fourth International, and American Trotskyism will play a vital role.

The *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* will publish materials generally consistent with these perspectives, although it will seek to offer discussion articles providing different points of view within the revolutionary socialist spectrum. Signed articles do not necessarily express the views of anyone other than the author.

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Indexed in the Alternative Press Index

CONTENTS

Revolutionary Socialists Unify Fourth Internationalist Tendency Votes to Join Solidarity	3
by Paul Le Blanc and Steve Bloom	
Resolution: For Unity of Fourth Internationalists in the United States	6
Rediscovering America: A View From Below	8
by Rafael Pereira	
People's Progressive Convention Held in Michigan	12
by Tom Barrett and Claire Cohen	
Labor's Deepening Crisis Underscores the Need for a Labor Party Now!	14
by Jerry Gordon	
21st Century Party Founded at D.C. Convention	17
by Carol McAllister	
International Capitalism in Crisis—What Next?	23
by Anwar Shaikh and Ernest Mandel	
Leninism as a Revolutionary Orientation Today	30
by Paul Le Blanc	
The Genesis of the Theory of Permanent Revolution	33
by Michael Löwy	
Political Declaration: Statement of the Russian Group, 'Revolutionary Socialism'	39
On Opposition and the Need for It	41
by M. Baitalsky	
Along the Road to the First Hundred	47
by Frank Lovell	
George Novack, 1905-1992—Meaning a Life	52
by Alan Wald	
Glen Munroe, 1957-1992	57
by Frank Lovell	
Intellectuals and Revolution	59
by James P. Cannon	
Revolutionaries and the Fight for Reforms	62
by George Breitman	

Front Cover:

This illustration is a portion of a 1933 mural by Diego Rivera. The figures in the back row (left to right) are Marx, Lenin, Engels, and Trotsky. The women flanking Lenin are Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin. In the foreground are early leaders of American communism, including James P. Cannon (second from left).

Back Cover:

The photograph of Leon Trotsky was taken in Mexico in the late 1930s by Alexander H. Buchman and is reproduced here with his kind permission. (A. H. Buchman, copyright 1939, 1964, 1990. All rights reserved.)

Editors' Note

This special double issue of *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* is designed to celebrate the 100th issue of the magazine. It is also the final issue of the magazine to be planned by members of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

As explained in the article by Steve Bloom and Paul Le Blanc, "Revolutionary Socialists Unify," the majority of FIT members have decided to join the organization Solidarity. The retrospective piece by Frank Lovell describes how the magazine came into existence and what it has been up to now. *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* will now be published as an independent magazine—supported and produced by former FIT members and others—based on a new editorial statement of principles that can be found on the inside front cover of this issue. A new and greatly expanded editorial board is in formation and will be listed in issue No. 101.

This anniversary issue of the magazine gives special stress to major articles that reflect some of the perspectives important in the orientation of the FIT and this magazine.

The articles by Paul Le Blanc and Michael Löwy focus on the distinctive political contributions, respectively, of Lenin and Trotsky. An excerpt from Mikhail Baitalsky's introduction to his *Notebooks for the Grandchildren*, which was translated by Marilyn Vogt-Downey and serialized in our magazine, throws new light on the struggles of the Trotskyist Left Opposition against the bureaucratic tyranny of Stalinism in the USSR. The translation by George Saunders of a manifesto by contemporary Russian revolutionary socialists indicates a living continuity with Leninist-Trotskyist tradition.

The letter by the pioneer American Trotskyist James P. Cannon to the noted socialist intellectual George Novack reflects some of the most impressive qualities in our political heritage. Pieces on Novack by Alan Wald and Dorothy Breitman also add to our understanding of this tradition. The tribute to Glen Munroe is also a tribute to the FIT's persistence in the political education of former YSA and SWP members. We believe *BIDOM* will continue to attract and bring back to the Trotskyist movement thoughtful and serious revolutionaries like Glen. Other dimensions of American Trotskyism are suggested in the discussion by the late George Breitman of the relationship between struggles for improvements under capitalism and the revolutionary socialist goal of overthrowing capitalism.

Approaching problems and struggles of the present from a standpoint grounded in a critical-minded and open Marxist tradition finds reflection in the three articles dealing with independent political action: Jerry Gordon's discussion of today's working class struggles and Labor Party Advocates; the People's Progressive Convention and the Ron Daniels campaign, based in left-wing currents in the Black liberation movement, as described by Tom Barrett and Claire Cohen; and the interplay of gender, race, and class arising in the feminist-initiated 21st Century Party described by Carol McAllister. Similarly, the magazine has approached historical questions from the standpoint of struggles in the present and goals of the future—which is the case, for example, with Rafael Pereira's probing Marxist analysis of the meaning of the 500th anniversary of Columbus's "discovery" of America, providing an understanding which is internationalist and anti-imperialist. The analyses by Anwar Shaikh and Ernest Mandel of the international crisis of capitalism indicate the economic framework within which the working class and all of the oppressed will struggle for a better future.

The *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* will continue to provide such perspectives in the future, even as we strive to make the magazine an even more effective publication in promoting revolutionary socialist education and action.

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Fourth Internationalist Tendency Votes to Join Solidarity

by Paul Le Blanc and Steve Bloom

Delegates to the eighth national conference of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT), meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on September 19, voted to approve the following motions: (1) "This conference approves the unity of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Solidarity," and (2) "At the conclusion of its agenda, this conference formally terminates the independent organizational existence of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency as it is presently constituted." A number of other motions, implementing this basic decision, were also adopted. Various counter-motions were put on the floor by those who either opposed unification outright or who favored unification on the basis of certain conditions, but all of these motions and amendments were rejected.

This decision to join Solidarity, supported by a substantial majority of FIT members, came after a long period of consideration and discussion. Two years earlier, in September 1990, the sixth FIT national conference had issued a call for the reconstitution of a united sympathizing section in the United States of the Fourth International. The Fourth International is a world revolutionary socialist organization founded in 1938 by Leon Trotsky and others, with affiliates and sympathizing sections in many countries. The FIT goal was to bring together the fragments of Fourth International supporters organized in the FIT, Socialist Action, and Solidarity's Fourth International Caucus. This organizational division in the ranks of U.S. Fourth Internationalists was a direct result of a series of undemocratic expulsions from the Socialist Workers Party in the early 1980s.

Subsequent discussions with Socialist Action and Solidarity made it clear that neither group was interested in pursuing the kind of process envisioned by the FIT, and the leadership of the FIT then explored whether it might still be possible to unify with either group as a partial step toward the broader goals adopted by the conference. The most serious initial discussions took place with Socialist Action, but they broke down in the late summer of 1991.

Our exchanges with Solidarity led to a different result, however. And at the FIT's seventh national conference in February 1992, a spokesperson for Solidarity's leadership presented a proposal suggesting that the present FIT membership could join Solidarity and—as a demonstration of good faith that there was no intention of asking us to give up our different political identity as supporters both of the Fourth International and of a particular revolutionary tradition in this country—agreed that the FIT's magazine, the *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, could continue to be published by those inside of Solidarity who wanted to do so.

After a series of further discussions between the leaderships of the two groups, a meeting of the FIT's National Organizing

Committee (NOC) last May adopted several resolutions and motions outlining the kinds of perspectives present FIT members would want to pursue if they did, in fact, join Solidarity. The NOC asked Solidarity whether such an approach seemed a reasonable basis for unification. In August, Solidarity's national convention replied with an overwhelming vote (more than 90 percent) to affirm its leadership's invitation to the FIT, also affirming that this was consistent with the NOC decisions. The final FIT conference has now responded favorably in its turn.

Political Perspectives

Most FITers who voted for the decision to join Solidarity had not changed their minds about any of the basic ideas that have, for the past eight years, defined our organization: the importance for U.S. revolutionaries to engage in active participation in the Fourth International, of reunifying the organizationally divided U.S. component of the Fourth International, of the necessity for programmatic clarity and honest debate among revolutionary Marxists, and of constructing a revolutionary vanguard party to lead a successful socialist revolution in the United States. But we see nothing in these ideas which is incompatible with membership in a broader revolutionary socialist organization which does not share all of them—like Solidarity—provided only that Solidarity members are open to a real exchange of views about what we think. The process of discussion between the FIT's February and September national conferences convinced a majority of FIT members that such political discussion will be possible within Solidarity.

In addition, a majority of FIT members became convinced that there was substantial political agreement with Solidarity on certain issues—particularly in the positive response of both groups to efforts underway in the U.S. to promote pro-working class, antiracist, and feminist electoral efforts that are independent of all capitalist parties, such as the Democrats and the Republicans. This was highlighted by a public forum on "Independent Political Action" held during the conference. The forum featured: Dennis Serrette, a national leader of the Ron Daniels presidential effort and Campaign for a New Tomorrow; Kate Curry, president of the Cincinnati chapter of National Organization for Women and a founding member of the 21st Century Party; and Jerry Gordon, a veteran union organizer and a leader of the Cleveland chapter of Labor Party Advocates. Members of both the FIT and Solidarity have been active in all of these efforts.

The Future of the Magazine

Also important in the decision of FIT conference delegates is the fact that the *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* will continue to be a public voice for the kinds of perspectives the FIT has represented up to now. The main change is that it will no longer

be published under the auspices of an organization, but as an independent journal. A meeting for supporters of the new magazine was held on Sunday, September 20, following the adjournment of the FIT conference. The supporters elected an editorial board of 31 members, including some FITers who voted against unity with Solidarity plus a number of individuals who had not been members of the FIT. The supporters also approved the resolution on the character of the magazine proposed by the FIT conference.

One specific question discussed at that meeting was whether to change the name of the magazine to mark its altered status. By a vote of 18 for, 13 opposed, and 6 abstentions, the magazine's supporters present in Pittsburgh voted to keep the present.

Individual revolutionary Marxists, both former members of the FIT and others, may now become formal supporters of the *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, a status which enables them to be part of making decisions about the policies and contents of the magazine, and to assist with the magazine's circulation. These organized supporters will have a vote on major questions—including future elections to the editorial board. Supporters of the magazine must be in agreement with the newly adopted editorial statement of principles (see inside front cover), be prepared to help with production and circulation of the magazine, and contribute \$20 per year over and above the regular yearly subscription rate.

Why the FIT Was Formed Eight Years Ago

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency came into being following waves of expulsions from the Socialist Workers Party in 1981–84. These expulsions resulted from a break, engineered by the new leadership under party national secretary Jack Barnes, with the party's traditional Leninist and Trotskyist organizational norms and programmatic perspectives.

A January 17, 1984, appeal was issued by Naomi Allen, George Breitman, and George Saunders (first published in *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* No. 3, February 1984), who called together “expelled SWP members who seek to influence and participate collectively in the pre-world congress discussion” of the Fourth International, and also to discuss the major political and theoretical questions facing the fragmented SWP. They urged the reunification of all its members through the overturn of the expulsions. They noted that “the SWP represents an unbroken heritage of more than five decades of revolutionary Marxism in this country,” and therefore they asserted: “We remain, as we always have been, loyal to the SWP. We will continue to try to build the party, and convince the party membership of the need to return to the historical program of revolutionary Marxism, which is being abandoned by the leadership.”

The Struggle for Revolutionary Program and Unity

This dual goal—fighting for 1) the program of revolutionary Marxism and the American Trotskyist heritage and 2) U.S. Fourth Internationalist unity—was clearly reaffirmed at a national meeting held in Minneapolis, February 3–5, 1984, which founded the FIT. This comes through clearly in the report published in *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* No. 4, March 1984:

The members of the F.I.T. all agree that its political priority is to participate in the absolutely essential process of theoretical and programmatic discussion which has been placed on the agenda by the Barnes leadership's attack on Trotskyism. Always in the past, when revolutionary Marxists have been faced with a fundamental programmatic challenge of this kind, the response has been to subordinate everything else to a defense of our theory. . . .

The F.I.T. campaigns for readmission into the party of our tendency members and of all others unjustly expelled. . . . The creation of the F.I.T. means that there are now four organized currents that have developed within the SWP during the last three years, since the 1981 national convention of the party. [At that time, the other three were the SWP majority following the Barnes leadership, a current following Peter Camejo in abandoning the organized Trotskyist movement, and Socialist Action, “which acts like a rival party and seeks to replace the SWP.”] . . .

The fact that these four currents now exist in separate organizations is solely the responsibility of the Barnes faction. There is in fact insufficient political basis for this split that has been imposed on the revolutionary party by that leadership. Only a thorough discussion and decision by the party membership can resolve the differences. And only if we find that the disagreements are irreconcilable and of a principled nature *after* such a thorough discussion would a split be justified. We believe that the F.I.T. is the only one of the four currents that operates in accord with this concept of revolutionary unity.

The Necessity of Further Developing Revolutionary Theory

In a major article on “Why We Are Building the Fourth Internationalist Tendency” published in the same issue of *BIDOM*, Adam Shils insightfully explained the larger international and historical realities which had created a crisis of perspectives within the SWP. His elaboration of the problem underscored an essential aspect of the nature of the FIT.:

The first point to understand is that the questions that the SWP majority raises are not inconsequential or irrelevant. How should the Fourth International relate to revolutionaries from different traditions? Why has the colonial revolution been at the center of world revolution? Has the theory of permanent revolution been refuted by the post-World War II social overturns? What is our attitude toward the deformed and degenerated workers' states? Is Trotskyism outmoded, a dogma from the past?

These questions arise from big events in world politics. In fact, probably the majority of revolutionaries in the world would give broadly similar answers to those given by the Barnes leadership to many of these questions. Even if the SWP leadership was not raising these problems, the Fourth International would still have to respond to them. The challenge Barnes poses to Trotskyism is a reflection inside the Fourth International of the uneven development of the world revolution. Trotskyism certainly has the potential to explain these new phenomena.

Answering this challenge is an essential precondition for saving the SWP and preparing the future growth of the Fourth International. We cannot just assert the correctness of our ideas, or repeat the lessons of the past from memory. We need to show how our orientation simultaneously explains and is enriched by new developments in the class struggle. This requires a painstaking and careful process of education, discussion, and elaboration. This is the central task and

activity of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency today, one which we believe should be vigorously undertaken by all Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. and throughout the world.

This certainly did not mean attempting to “reinvent the wheel,” but rather to refine, contribute to, and—in the face of new and evolving realities—creatively develop the revolutionary Marxism to which the FIT’s members were committed. The “Platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency” (first published in *BIDOM* No. 5, April 1984) specified the programmatic basis of the FIT: “Historically we base ourselves on the programmatic record of our party and our International. Major documents of that record include the theses and resolutions of the first four congresses of the Communist International, 1919–1922 [the early heroic era under Lenin and Trotsky]; the ‘Transitional Program,’ 1938 [the founding document of the Fourth International, written by Trotsky]; the ‘American Theses,’ 1946 [a fundamental statement of American Trotskyism written by James P. Cannon]; and the ‘Dynamics of World Revolution Today,’ 1963 [the work of Joseph Hansen, Ernest Mandel, and others, representing the reunification of the Fourth International within a common programmatic framework].”

Activism and Organization Building

The FIT platform explained: “When we tried to defend this program in the SWP we were expelled. We are now compelled to organize as a separate current in order to present our views to the party ranks, and to pursue political activity in our unions, movement groups, and solidarity campaigns.” This last modest sentence touched on what would become an increasingly important aspect of the FIT’s existence—involvement in the larger political, economic, and social struggles of our time. Although the FIT always emphasized the immense importance of discussion and education, its members were clear on the fact that revolutionary theory and program must especially be utilized, defended, tested, and further developed *in practice*. The importance of this was emphasized in a resolution “Our Present Organizational Tasks,” adopted on October 7, 1984, at the FIT’s second national conference (first published in *BIDOM* No. 13, November 1984): “While asserting the primacy of a sound theory and program as indispensable to effective action, revolutionary Marxists deny any sharp dichotomy between ‘theory’ and ‘action.’ Our theory and program must be constantly tested, enriched, and corrected on the basis of application in living struggles. If we allowed our separation from the SWP to isolate us from these struggles we would ossify.”

The resolution on organizational tasks insisted that such activism, and also recruitment efforts, must take place within a modest framework, that the FIT must *not* see itself as “the revolutionary party” or as “the nucleus of the revolutionary party,” but rather as only one of the fragments of such a party. Nonetheless, activism and recruitment became an important concern of the new organization: “While recognizing that we are not a party, do not aspire to be a party, and therefore cannot accept all of the tasks of a party, we nevertheless must organize ourselves to intervene in the class struggle movements to build these movements, carry out basic socialist propaganda, and recruit workers and activists to a revolutionary socialist perspective.”

Accomplishments

In its eight years of existence, the FIT has accomplished a great deal. Numbering only about forty members at its inception, the organization was able to record a membership of seventy in its final year, as well as a much wider periphery of friends and supporters. This has been the case despite the loss of valued comrades—some through death, a few due to personal circumstances, others because of political divergences. Each has contributed something distinctive, some more than they are aware of. The organization has proved capable of attracting serious political activists of different generations, including seasoned militants who were founding members of the SWP and younger people newly drawn to the socialist movement in the 1980s and ’90s.

We have enjoyed a rich democratic internal life in which there have often been frankly stated disagreements, sometimes quite sharp, but in which polemical heat has never obliterated serious discussion. No one has ever been expelled or driven out of the organization because of political differences. At least to some extent being small had this advantage: it was a hard practical lesson in the foolishness of pursuing ideological uniformity. The FIT had to use all of the talents of every single one of its members—no matter what political differences might exist—even to begin carrying out the many tasks which our organization confronted.

In the manner of Lenin and Trotsky, we have sought to ensure that the expression of differences results in mutual influence, not mutual ostracism. In the manner of Cannon and the pioneer American Trotskyists, we have placed a premium on achieving clarity through honest political discussion—placing this above narrow factional or organizational considerations, or alleged infractions of “discipline.”

One of the most outstanding accomplishments of the FIT has been the publication of one hundred issues of the *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, a substantial revolutionary magazine, dealing with a variety of historical, theoretical, and current political questions, with an extensive and loyal international readership.

Utilizing and Developing Theory and Program

The revolutionary Marxist program has been the bedrock of FIT activity. By “program” we mean: a body of analyses of the political, social, and economic realities we face; a particular understanding of the changes that are needed in these realities; and an approach for bringing about those changes. This program is a guide to action, not a set of holy dogmas. The accumulation of lessons learned by the labor, socialist, communist, and revolutionary movements for more than two centuries is one vital source for this program. This has been intimately connected with the studies and analyses, and the theoretical method, of such revolutionary socialists as Marx and Engels, Luxemburg, Lenin, and Trotsky. Historically, American Trotskyism has involved a blending of rich labor radical traditions in the United States with the theoretical heritage of revolutionary Marxism represented in the work and ideas of Trotsky.

By its very nature, the revolutionary program must be incomplete because of the need to continually develop, refine, and add to it in the face of ever-changing realities—and particularly through intimate involvement in the ongoing practical strug-

For Unity of Fourth Internationalists in the United States

In 1990 our organization appealed for the unity of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, Socialist Action, and the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity in order to rebuild a unified sympathizing section of our world movement, the Fourth International, in the United States. Since that time, we have been working seriously to bring this about. Our efforts have met with partial success. We believe that the unity of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency with the FI Caucus of Solidarity is an important step forward toward the reunification of FI forces in the United States. This will leave two recognized groups sympathetic to the Fourth International instead of three. It will also provide an opportunity for the comrades of the FIT and the FI Caucus to demonstrate that it is possible to overcome organizational divisions without compromising revolutionary principles, and that building a broader revolutionary socialist organization can be done in a manner that is consistent with

maintaining a vibrant, self-confident component of our world movement, playing an active role in strengthening the Fourth International.

Without pretending that there are no complications or difficulties, we affirm: our goal remains the eventual coming-together of comrades in the FI Caucus of Solidarity and the comrades in Socialist Action, to create a single, unified sympathizing section of the Fourth International.

In addition, there are comrades who have left Socialist Action and other comrades who are not joining in the present partial reunification taking place at this conference. Still others—members of the Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group, the Trotskyist League, and some individuals—have also made clear their desire to help build our world movement yet are not part of any group having sympathizing status within it. We favor all efforts designed to facilitate common political work and comradely political discussion among

such forces. We urge these comrades to become a loyal component of one or the other of the two recognized FI groups in the United States, if that is possible.

While recognizing that "immediate fusion" proposals—ignoring profound political differences among these forces—would in no way be serious, we do favor more modest efforts at collaboration that could create the basis for the eventual unity of all Fourth Internationalists in the United States. This could include participation in such efforts as the independent successor to what has been the FIT's *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, as well as some collaboration on the local level—and perhaps nationally—in educational and practical political activities. We pledge ourselves to work for the realization of such efforts, and to continue the struggle to bring about the unification of all supporters of the Fourth International in the United States. □

gles of the working class and the oppressed. The high quality of the FIT's involvement in such struggles stands as another of its genuine accomplishments. A number of FIT members have been active, often playing prominent roles, in the efforts of a number of trade unions—including major organizing campaigns, strikes, labor solidarity (inside the U.S. and internationally), labor education. We have been involved as rail and transit workers, electrical workers, teachers, packinghouse workers, steelworkers, airline workers, and others. We have thrown ourselves into helping with the Hormel strike of the packinghouse workers in Austin, Minnesota; teachers' strikes in Philadelphia and Los Angeles; the Pittston strike led by the United Mine Workers in Virginia; the Black Workers for Justice campaigns in North Carolina; the Giant Eagle supermarket strike, and the current newspaper strike in Pittsburgh; and more.

The struggle of the working class extends beyond the organized labor movement and embraces a broad range of social issues. Cutbacks in social services and education, particularly the massive struggles of students at the City University of New York, has been another focal point of activity for FIT members. Protests against racist attacks in Howard Beach and Bensonhurst, and the massive protests against the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles, have also engaged the attention and energies of FITers, who have also been drawn to Malcolm X commemorations stressing the continued relevance of Black

nationalist ideas and the right of self-determination for the Black community. The feminist movement has been central to the FIT's political efforts, with a number of members playing a prominent role in local chapters of the National Organization for Women, clinic defense and abortion rights coalitions, women's studies programs, and more.

Political action of the workers and the oppressed, independent of the capitalists who seek to control them, takes place in the streets but also in the electoral arena. The two capitalist parties, Democrats as well as Republicans, have discredited themselves in the eyes of many, giving rise to such new party activities as Labor Party Advocates, the Campaign for a New Tomorrow linked with the Ron Daniels presidential effort, and the 21st Century Party initiated by some members of the National Organization for Women. FIT members have played significant roles in each of these formations, seeking to form links between them with the perspective of creating a new party based on a program that is unambiguously in the interests of the great majority of people in the United States rather than the capitalist class.

At the same time, the FIT has consistently been a revolutionary internationalist organization, as evidenced by its regular and substantial participation in the activities of the world Trotskyist movement as a sympathizing group of the

Fourth International. As befits those embracing the heritage of Lenin and Trotsky, FIT members have been involved in such groups as the Moscow Trials Campaign Committee and the U.S.-Soviet Workers Information Committee (defending the heritage of the Bolshevik revolution from the vicious corruption of Stalinism and the lethal dead end of capitalist restoration). No less important has been their involvement in organizations, coalitions, protests, and meetings having to do with the liberation struggles of the peoples of Central America, opposition to imperialist threats against the Cuban revolution, and solidarity with the students and workers victimized in the heroic Tiananmen Square protests in China. They have been active in opposition to South African apartheid, repression in the Philippines, the destruction of democracy in Haiti, and Zionist aggression in the Middle East. There has also been an active collaboration with sisters and brothers in Canada and Mexico opposing the pro-capitalist, anti-working class North American Free Trade Agreement.

Education and also analytical and theoretical contributions have been inseparable from such engagement in practical political work. It has been carried out through numerous FIT classes and forums in various cities, two very successful national educational conferences—one in the Minneapolis area in 1987 and an even more ambitious and substantial 1991 gathering in Pittsburgh—and an extensive book and pamphlet publishing effort in addition to the monthly magazine of the FIT.

Books published by the FIT include the three-volume series “In Defense of American Trotskyism,” documenting and explaining the struggle waged for revolutionary Marxist perspectives against the Barnes leadership of the SWP. These three volumes are: Sarah Lovell, ed., *The Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party 1979–1983* (1992); Paul Le Blanc, ed., *Revolutionary Principles and Working-Class Democracy* (1992); and Paul Le Blanc, ed., *Rebuilding the Revolutionary Party* (1990). More than simply providing the record and a historical materialist analysis of the disaster that devastated the American Trotskyist movement, and of the struggle against that disaster, these volumes stand as valuable source books for revolutionaries who want to learn from the past in order to build more effectively for the future.

Revolutionary Unity

The dual goal of the FIT—defending Trotskyist perspectives and fighting for Fourth Internationalist unity in the U.S.—remained constant. But with the defection of the SWP from the Fourth Internationalist movement, the orientation for achieving this shifted. The September 1990 national conference of the FIT noted that “reunification of FI forces can now take place only outside of the SWP,” adding:

The FIT therefore unconditionally favors a process which can lead to unity among comrades currently in our own organization, in Socialist Action, and in Solidarity, resulting in the reconstitution of a sympathizing section of our world movement in the U.S. The process we envision involves all three components of our movement in this country which are recognized in a fraternal way by the Fourth International. In this spirit we advocate and will work to bring about discussion and cooperative activities between the three existing groups.

There were serious complications with this perspective. One was that only the FI Caucus of Solidarity, not Solidarity as a whole, has sympathizing ties with the Fourth International. Another difficulty was that, although Socialist Action and Solidarity were prepared to maintain positive relations with the FIT, neither was inclined to relate to the other in a way that indicated any serious prospect for unification. But we did not see these problems as insurmountable. Since Solidarity as a whole is a revolutionary socialist group (whatever inconsistencies or imperfections it might be perceived to have), there was no principled reason why other comrades of the Fourth International—from the FIT, and from Socialist Action for that matter—could not join it. The FIT said that it would be prepared to unify with either Socialist Action or Solidarity initially, and from that vantage-point work for full unity of FI forces in the United States. At the same time, frequent efforts were made by the FIT to cooperate with both groups on practical projects and, when possible, to initiate activities—such as tours of international speakers, as well as the 1991 educational conference—that could include members of all three organizations.

There were a number of independent activists, especially former members of the Socialist Workers Party, who made known their support for the FIT’s approach, but support also came from some organizations. One was a new group of about a dozen activists, also made up largely of former SWP members, called the Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group. Another was the Trotskyist League, which has international co-thinkers in Italian, Danish, and British sections of the Fourth International. There were also forces inside Socialist Action and Solidarity who clearly favored a positive response to this unity initiative.

While the FIT’s decision to join Solidarity does not achieve its original perspective of reunifying *all* FI forces, a majority of FIT members have concluded that they can best continue to advance this goal though loyally building Solidarity as a broad regroupment organization of revolutionary socialists, while at the same time supporting the continued publication of *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* as a Fourth Internationalist magazine in which *all* currents among U.S. Fourth Internationalists are invited to participate.

As a result, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency has decided to come to an end as a distinct organization. It never conceived of itself as anything other than a transitional formation, a tendency, one current of thought within the broader revolutionary Marxist movement in the United States. From the beginning, it set the specific goal for itself of dissolving as an independent organization at the earliest possible moment in order to take on a more normal status for such a group as part of a larger and more diverse revolutionary organization. This has now been accomplished. But the fundamental commitments, the goals, the perspectives that animated the FIT have not disappeared. They will continue to be expressed and advanced in the pages of this magazine, by activists in working class struggles and various mass movement groups, and by an ideological current of thought that now exists inside of Solidarity. □

September 29, 1992

One year from today, on October 12, 1992, there will be celebrations all over the world to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the so-called discovery of America. At that time nice words are going to descend upon us, nice words about liberty, about freedom, and about the greatness of our civilization. There will be official ceremonies, parades, festivals, and even beauty contests. The atmosphere will combine solemn acts of self-congratulation with burlesque and carnival-like scenarios that will put the wilder surrealistic scenarios to shame. Meanwhile the Native Americans will be silently biting their tongues, containing their anger, as this celebration actually means the negation of their humanity.

achieve could now be accomplished in one, and later in decades. The renaissance in the arts and in philosophy that this process brought was immense and thereby the universe, the cosmos, and the imagination were incredibly opened.

I believe that in this sense the great Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier was right when he said that 1492 marked the most important turning point in history, the over-coming of the last frontier on our globe. The landing on the moon, amazing feat as it was from a scientific standpoint, does not compare. For one thing, we have not found life there yet and all indications point to the fact that we are not going to find any. And whether we admit it or not we tend to be anthropocentric; our fascination is not real-

The Columbus of the Right Wing

Let me give you an example that epitomizes the position of those who are cheering for the celebration, an essay written by neoconservative Charles Krauthammer entitled "Hail Columbus, Dead White Male" which appeared in *Time* magazine (May 27, 1991). Krauthammer started by setting up a straw man: "The 500th anniversary of 1492," he said, "is approaching. Remember 1492? 'In fourteen hundred ninety-two/ Columbus sailed the ocean blue.' Discovery and exploration. Bolivar (sic) and Jefferson. Liberty and democracy. The last best hope of man. The left is not amused." After setting this caricature of the left argument, Krauthammer proceeded

Rediscovering America: A View From Below

by Rafael Pereira

This is the revised text of a forum sponsored by Red Book in the Boston area, given October 12, 1991. The author, a sociologist and journalist, has been active in radical movements in Puerto Rico and the United States for many years.

There is no doubt that from the time Columbus and his crew set foot in the Bahamas that early morning of October 12, 1492, the whole course of history changed. To give an example: for the first time in history there was truly a world system. Before that time, for instance, the Chinese thought that they and the domains under their control were the "world." The same view was held previously by the Greeks and the Romans in Europe and by the Egyptians in Africa. The peoples of Asia, Africa, and Europe either looked inwards and considered each specific culture as the "world" or exchanged goods and ideas between themselves (or invaded) and thereby expanded their horizons. But there was a key part missing in the Old World puzzle—and that was America. After 1492 the world really became a totality for its inhabitants. The world system was thereby formed and the result was an unprecedented transfer of peoples, uprooting them from the most restricted locales and parochial settings. After 1492 the rhythm of life became faster and the pace and character of work changed dramatically. The progress and advances that came about in the sciences were astonishing: what had taken 15 centuries to

ly with the flying saucers but with those we assume to be behind the wheel, to whom we attribute human features and characteristics. We humanize them and thus we are at the same time fascinated by them and fear them; and we have lived for so long with hierarchy and domination that we assume that "they" must come "to take over," i.e., to colonize us. And here we come back to 1492.

The feats mentioned before that came about after Columbus are undeniable. To ignore them, to simply negate them in *toto* will represent a totally backward move. But the point is that there are more angles to the story. As the television show used to say, "there are many stories in the naked city." And more: when we look at the past we connect with the present and project to the future. Through the questions we pose, and through the material we include or leave out we explicitly or implicitly show our worldview. And the fact is that the people who are sponsoring the celebration of the "discovery," the ones who are going wholeheartedly for the hoopla, represent vested interests, the interest of a tiny group. And their view of history is, to say the least, screwed up.

like a B-52; he took snipes in rapid and erratic succession at the Association of Indian Cultures of Madrid for planning "acts of sabotage" against the celebration, at the National Council of Churches for its condemnation of the event, at Kirkpatrick Sale's book *The Conquest of Paradise*. Krauthammer even covered himself with the mantle of PanAmericanism; first by including Bolivar in his cynical characterization (he talks in the plural, the Americas, when in fact he means the United States), and second by quoting a "Hispanic leader" on the declarations of the National Council of Churches as "a racist depreciation of the heritages of most of today's American peoples, especially Hispanics." Krauthammer then goes to the core of his argument: "Balzac once suggested that all great fortunes are founded on a crime. So too all great civilizations. The European conquest of the Americas . . . was indeed accompanied by great cruelty." But, remarked Krauthammer:

The real question is: What eventually grew on this bloodied soil? The answer is: The great modern civilization of the Americas—a new world of individual

rights, an ever-expanding circle of liberty and twice in this century, a saviour of the world from totalitarian barbarism.

And to say this is the whole point of "Hail Columbus, Dead White Male." After stating it Krauthammer returns again to the leftist straw man he had previously built. He jokes about movies like *Dances with Wolves*, which have seen the Indian past as a Garden of Eden characterized by peace and ecological harmony. The Hopis, he sarcastically notes, were "tree-hugging" pacifists, but most Indians were like the Incas, and he quotes the description by born-again conservative Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa that the Incan civilization was like a "beehive." Then we have a dramatic finale: "Is our civilization better than the Incan beehive?" asks Krauthammer. Yes, he answers, it turned out "infinitely better." And "mankind (sic) is the better for it. . . Reason enough to honor Columbus and bless 1492."

The great writer Dante said in *The Divine Comedy* that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Krauthammer's position seems to be the opposite: that the road to glory, civilization, and wonders is filled with hell. He presents an argument: an ever-ascending progress which leads to salvation. But salvation for whom? What eventually grew on this bloodied soil, he answers us, are the things important to *him*; "individual rights" and so on. This faulty methodology was aptly criticized by Howard Zinn during his examination of Samuel Elliot Morrison, the Harvard historian who won a Pulitzer prize for a book on Columbus:

One can lie outright about the past. Or one can omit facts which might lead to unacceptable conclusions. Morrison does neither. He refuses to lie about Columbus. He does not omit the story of mass murder; indeed he describes it with the harshest word one can use: genocide. But he does something else—he mentions the truth quickly and goes on to other things more important to him. Outright lying or quiet omission takes the risk of discovery which, when made, might arouse the reader to rebel against the writer. To state the facts, however, and then to bury them in a mass of other information is to say to the reader with certain infectious calm: yes, mass murder took place, but it's not that important—it should weigh very little in our final judgements; it should affect very little what we do in the world. (*A People's History of the United States*, p. 9.)

And that we cannot accept. Genocide is serious business, and it should not be a minor issue but the center of any judgment

we pass on this period. The "500th Anniversary" should first and foremost bring to surface the "Indian Question." We must take a moral, ethical, and surely a political stand on this issue. And, of course, this stand cannot be that of Krauthammer and his ilk. What "eventually grew on this bloodied soil"? he asked, and then just went on (business as usual). But let us stop here: Who is going to decide? Who is going to convince me that the road to salvation lies ahead when the soil is going to be fertilized with my blood? And how many atrocities can we mention that have been committed—and rationalized—in the name of salvation, of freedom, of individual rights? What is implicit in Krauthammer's rhetoric is a view that says: the end justifies the means, a view that came to life during the early capitalist era and which consolidated with the generalization of commodity production and exchange. From this perspective, people are not seen as subjects, but as *objects* to be used (or eliminated if standing in the way of "progress"). This is the quintessential utilitarian perspective.

Discovery, Western Expansion, and Eurocentrism

Now, let me contrast the discourse of an apologist-ignoramus such as Krauthammer with a real giant of that Western civilization that he, like the others waging the battle against "political correctness," so strongly claims to defend. This is what Karl Marx had to say in the first volume of *Capital* about the issue that concerns us today:

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things which characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation. Hard on their heels follows the commercial war of the European nations, which has the globe as its battlefield. It begins with the revolt of the Netherlands from Spain, assumes gigantic dimensions in England's Anti-Jacobin War, and is still going in the shape of the Opium Wars against China, etc. (*Capital*, Fowkes translation, p. 915.)

Here we have the problem set in different terms. Instead of a counterposition between Western and non-Western civilizations, we are talking of the beginnings of the capitalist era. That era initiated a brutal

process that bound together the oppression of the peoples of Europe and the extirpation and enslavement of the original peoples of the Americas, the slave trade of the Africans, and an overall process of colonization. That is what happened in 1492; not a "discovery" or *encounter*—the neutral term now in vogue—but an *invasion*. Some people were thereby colonized for the benefit not of "Europe," but principally for the benefit of the early bourgeois class, namely the merchant class (and the absolutist-monarchist state as well). Capitalism converted the whole globe into a battlefield for its operation since its inception.

Let me briefly examine in this context the word *discovery* to illustrate what we said earlier about how the perspective we choose says a lot about our ideology. *Discovery* means to uncover the existence of something that no other human being is specifically or demonstrably aware of. And in the case of America that was obviously not the case, as there were millions of people living here in 1492, from Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic, who were very much aware of their surroundings. To pose the issue in terms of discovery, as it is commonly done, could only be sustained from a *Eurocentric* standpoint. This standpoint presupposes a conception of America in 1492 as an *empty space*—just lying there to be taken and then put to productive usage for "civilization." This conception—incredibly—has been literally defended as late as 1987 by three "reputed" historians, Richard N. Current, T. Harry Williams, and Alan Brinkley in *American History: A Survey*: "For centuries—centuries in which human races were evolving, forming communities, and building the beginnings of national civilizations in Africa, Asia, and Europe—the continent we know as the Americas stood empty of mankind and its works. . . The story of this new world . . . is a story of the creation of a civilization where none existed." By way of this ideological reconstruction the "discovery" is then converted into a *necessary* development. This is the *sine qua non* of colonialist ideology. As Frantz Fanon noted a quarter century ago:

The colonialist . . . reaches the point of no longer being able to imagine a time occurring without him. His irruption into the history of the colonized people is deified, transformed into absolute necessity.

Myths of origin have historically enabled peoples and societies to locate themselves in time as well as space (as with the Christian's "original sin"). From the Eurocentric angle, "real" history started in 1492, or even more clearly in 1620; i.e., when the whites (Columbus or the

Pilgrims) landed on the scene. The previous 35,000 years or so of recorded human presence and activities, it seems, were just a preliminary side dish to the more nourishing heroism of the transplanted Europeans, who effected the transformation of the "wild" environment into civility. This kind of colonialist hogwash is asserted continually in our educational ivory towers, where a "scholar" in a three-piece suit and smoking a pipe will present this rehashed nonsense as "fact," as an example of knowledge achieved through the disinterested pursuit of truth—and in the process the "scholar" will provide you with a straight face as well.

In any case, this view of empty spaces lies at the heart of colonialist ideology. This view informed Columbus. This view informed those who landed in the Mayflower. This view informed the Dutch who went to South Africa. It infused the French who thought they had "discovered" the true Cambodia when they stumbled on the Angkor ruins in the nineteenth century. It infused the early Zionists. This view of empty spaces is also embedded in the representations of George Lucas's *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. And in the Americas today the last frontier to be "discovered" for "civilization" is the Amazon region, which is definitely inhabited but still considered empty by the latter-day colonialists—the capitalists from Brazil and the transnational corporations are salivating over the prospects. This exemplifies the *utilitarian* perspective that I talked about earlier.

Horrible Harm on Native America

The indigenous peoples of the Americas have paid dearly for the incursions of capitalism and colonialism into their terrain, what Krauthammer and his ilk call euphemistically civilization: slavery, coerced labor, disease contagion, naked repression, innumerable violations of human rights, and even annihilation—you name the human tragedy and it has been experienced by the Native Americans. From the 16th century onwards the indigenous peoples have carried the stigma of the colonized, of the defeated, and their descendants were gradually converted into the "other" in the land which once belonged to their ancestors. Indeed, the ascription "Indian" itself was originally imposed from outside, as Columbus and the other conquerors thought they had landed in the "Indies." Much rain has dropped from the sky since the 16th century and profound transformations have taken place in the Americas. The native peoples, however, have not recovered from the historical onslaught visited upon them

by the process of European outward expansion. The violations continue unabated.

Up to now, however, our analysis has been too abstract. We must challenge the sterilized versions of the process of conquest and colonization of America that are generally provided, like the one presented in the PBS series "Columbus and the Age of Discovery." This series, which has been portrayed as "the best screen treatment ever" of Columbus because of its "evenhandedness," does not even start to give a sense of the horror visited upon Native Americans by the glorious "discovery." Let me, then, in order to illustrate, provide two stories. The first is derived from Hans Koning's book *Columbus: His Enterprise (Exploding the Myth)*. Columbus was first and foremost interested in gold and there was very little of it in the Caribbean. He was on his second voyage and wanted to bring something back to Spain so the king and the queen would continue to support his ventures. And Koning relates:

We are now in February 1495. Time was short for sending back a good "dividend" on the supply ships getting ready for the return to Spain. Columbus therefore turned to a massive slave raid as a means for filling up these ships. The brothers rounded up fifteen hundred Arawaks—men, women, and children—and imprisoned them in pens in Isabela, guarded by men and dogs. The ships had room for no more than five hundred and thus only the best specimens were loaded aboard. The Admiral then told the Spaniards they could help themselves from the remainder to as many slaves as they wanted. Those whom no one chose were simply kicked out of their pens. Such had been the terror of these prisoners that (in the description by Michele de Cuneo, one of the colonists) "they rushed in all directions like lunatics, women dropping and abandoning infants in the rush, running for miles without stopping, fleeing across mountains and rivers."

Let me tell you another story that for me exemplifies the atrocities committed against the Indians. Frederick Engels wrote a book, entitled *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, based on the findings of Lewis Morgan who in turn based his ideas on the study of the Iroquois Indian federation. Engels posed a correlation between three things: the origin of class society, the origin of the state as a coercive power standing above society, and the oppression of women. This idea seems to be corroborated by the societies to be found in the Americas before the Columbian epoch: i.e., the more class-based or the more state-based a society was, the more clearly we encounter a sub-

ordinated status of women. Thus, the Seneca Indians of New York, the Montagnais-Naskapi of Canada, and the Bari of Colombia were sexually egalitarian societies whereas the Incas, the Mayas, and the Aztecs were not. And here comes the account as related by friar Diego de Landa in his *Story of the Things of Yucatan*. The captain Alonso Lopez de Avila captured a young Indian woman in the War of Bacalar in the province of Yucatan in Mexico. The Mayan woman had promised her husband before his capture that she was never going to be with another man. The captain Lopez de Avila was amused by the fact that the woman repeatedly said she will do anything but give herself to him. He used all his "charm" and his persuasion but could not convince her to "voluntarily" change her mind. Lopez de Avila, infuriated, decided to go the dramatic way—he decided to throw her to the dogs. One can imagine the brutality of this environment as the Spaniards just sat down and watched the dogs tear apart the woman, piece by piece, bite after bite. . . . Here is where we can see the real human dimension of this tragedy; a poor Mayan woman treated like an animal by the colonizers; a Mayan woman standing between the desires of two men (and thus with no free will), one who wanted to possess her and then throw her away like garbage, and the other who loved her, but still wanted to possess her—even after death. This tragic story of the dilemmas imposed on this Mayan woman, told by Tzvetan Todorov in his *The Conquest of America*, questions the whole rap of Krauthammer of the "nice liberties that came about." The road to the kingdom of civilization, as is known, is a rocky one; the soil of America was not only fertilized by blood but by rape. History has traditionally been written by the victors and these definitely had (and have) a patriarchal perspective. The full dimension of the sexual violence that followed the colonization of America still needs to be told. There is information enough, however, to establish its habitual practice but we would not notice it from the sanitized version *a la PBS* which just mentioned this in passing!

The Colonization of the Soul

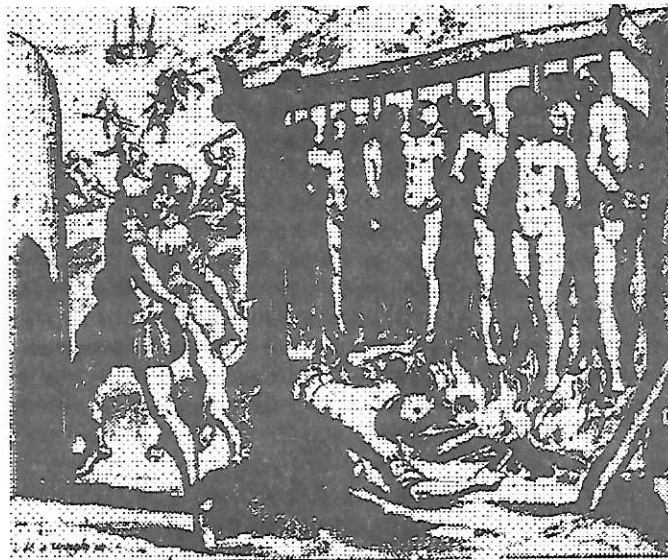
Now we have talked about the naked violence of the conquerors, about the "usages of the sword"; but the other side of the coin was the cross. If one sees a program like the one in the PBS series about Columbus one will think that the Native Americans converted to Christianity almost exclusively because of the debilitating effects that the diseases brought over by the Europeans had on their psyche. And indeed the diseases accelerated an overall cosmological break-

down of the peoples, who in turn "accepted" Christianity. But the unfolding of Christianity resulted as well from a conscious development: the introduction, by the missionaries and the church that was built on their footsteps, of a systematic program of ideological indoctrination. Within the colonial division of labor the conquistadores carried out the *material conquest* and the missionaries the *spiritual conquest*. Although carried out by distinct agents, which at some moments were in tension with each other, the material and spiritual dimensions of the conquest formed part of a single unified process: as the former became more entrenched so spread the latter.

As background to the events in America, the Christians and their institutions had the fanaticism and evangelical zeal characteristic of late 15th century Spain, notably the labors of the recharged (1483) Inquisition, the "holy war" against the Moorish "satans" called the *Reconquista*, and the expulsion of the Jews. The intolerant and oppressive practices that were routine in the mainland were then extended to the "New World." Hence, the representatives of Christianity in America, although supposedly guided by dictates of a higher order, directly participated and/or benefited from the most cruel and mundane practices that became commonplace in the colonies. They established reservations that opened frontiers for the conquistadores, benefited from or directly participated in slavery, benefited from the *encomienda* system that provided them with coerced Indian labor, and last but not least the church itself was a main beneficiary from the expropriation of land from the Native Americans. A TV program like the aforementioned PBS series on Columbus, which when dealing with the Christian dimension of the conquest of America highlights the labors of humanist missionaries like friar Anton de Montesinos or Bartolome de las Casas, commits a most serious blunder. It accentuates the exception at the expense of the norm.

But let us quarrel even with las Casas. Undoubtedly las Casas defended the Indians against the abuses and exploitation of the Spaniards. He also left an important written *oeuvre* without which few of us would have really known the extent of what happened to the indigenous peoples. Yet las Casas's positions were derived from an ideology which could only run counter to the interests of the Native Americans. Las Casas affirmed that the Indians were

human beings, and this surely was a step forward at a time when many Spaniards considered them to be animals. But there was also a step backwards. Las Casas loved the Indians because he was a Christian and



given that they were human they could be *converted to Christianity*. The activities of this most famous missionary, as noted by Todorov, could only be understood within this ideological framework. And this presupposed a *position of superiority*, as he wanted them, ultimately, to abandon their identity, their specificity, and to become just like himself! This obviously entailed the negation of their cosmology as well as the transformation of their whole way of life. Las Casas was not for genocide or for the slavery of the Indians but his paternalistic project of Christianization represented de facto *ethnocide*, the degradation or disappearance of the indigenous culture.

It is thus not true what the Spanish priest interviewed in the PBS series said, that if las Casas's mode of intervention in America had predominated the situation would have been absolutely different. Las Casas represented another version of colonialism, more subtle, more humane, but colonialism nevertheless. He was a forerunner of the ideological tradition of the "white man's burden," the tradition of seeing the inhabitants of third world countries as "noble savages" to be educated in the path of salvation so they could become "civilized." This tradition continues in different forms still today. The most well-known secular variety in the U.S. today is the Peace Corps.

Retrospectively, when drawing a comprehensive balance sheet on a historical figure of the magnitude of las Casas, one could not help but feel a certain admiration for a man who against all odds mounted an ardent, albeit contradictory, defense of Indian human rights. Las Casas, moreover,

had a lifelong commitment to his cause, whereas now the "white man's burden" is many times sold as sporadic "adventure." But one must also take a critical stance towards his *politics* as they objectively represented a straitjacket over the Indians, regardless of his noble intentions. This twofold assessment is definitely lacking from the typical media coverage of this issue, as exemplified in the PBS series on Columbus.

IndoAmerica Is Here to Stay

The net result of the debacle visited upon the Indians by capitalism and colonialism are quite noticeable. In the northern part of the Americas the aboriginal peoples were virtually exterminated. Their survivors are truly marginalized at present with minimal, if any, influence on the

dynamics of national life. Likewise is the situation in the southern cone of the hemisphere, particularly in Argentina and Uruguay. In both these regions, conversely to the depopulation of the original inhabitants, there took place *white settler colonization and migration*. The culture and societies that developed in these regions came to be distinctively *Euro-American*. In the Caribbean region, in contrast, there developed cultures and societies with distinct *AfroAmerican* tonality, for there the Indian holocaust, which materialized in some instances as early as the 1550s, propelled the colonizers to massively introduce slaves from Africa. The Afro-American and Euro-American traits of large segments of the Americas are today unmistakable. The Indian element, though, still imprints the character of significant zones.

Where the early European colonizers encountered dense populations and highly civilized cultures (namely in Central America and the Andean region), the indigenous people, in spite of the onslaught, survived and profoundly marked the new economic, socio-political, and cultural life established. One has but to glance at countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, and Guatemala to confirm this. This is our *IndoAmerica*. It is from these countries, particularly from Guatemala with its violently suppressed but militant "oppressed national majority," that the Indian question will again come back, like a ray suddenly breaking through the clouds, to haunt the consciousness of America—and indeed that of the world at large. The

(Continued on page 16)

People's Progressive Convention Held in Michigan

by Tom Barrett and Claire Cohen

Three hundred and eighteen activists from all over the United States gathered at the Ypsilanti campus of Eastern Michigan University August 21–23. The National People's Progressive Convention was initiated by the Campaign for a New Tomorrow (which is running Ron Daniels for president of the United States) and organized out of the offices of the National African-American Network in Washington, D.C. The convention succeeded in launching a National People's Progressive Network (NPPN), whose purposes are to exchange information among militants of color, trade unionists, feminists, gay and lesbian activists, antiwar organizers, and radical environmentalists; to initiate emergency responses to provocations by the ruling class; and to promote dialogue and united action among the disparate elements of the fragmented movements for social change. Conference participants met in constituency caucuses, regional caucuses, and working groups, as well as in plenary session. Discussion centered around the Principles of Unity which defined adherence to the NPPN and on the leadership structure for the continuing organization. In addition, people shared reports on activity in their local areas and discussed combating racism and sexism in communities, workplaces, and within the radical movement itself.

The People's Progressive Convention did not set grandiose goals for itself, nor did it achieve grandiose things. However, activists in groups and struggles who do not normally communicate with each other *did* communicate with each other during the weekend. Nearly all who came were interested in seriously listening and talking to others and in the conference's success. A few groups came with agendas of their own, but this was not the kind of gathering which lent itself to "intervention." The important discussions of strategy and tactics did not and could not take place within the limited time available. However, an ongoing network has been set up through which that kind of dialogue can occur.

The catalyst for bringing participants in the different struggles together was, without question, Ron Daniels's campaign for U.S. president. Even though the conference was not projected as a Daniels campaign convention—and Daniels himself requested that the conference *not* endorse his presidential campaign—nearly all who attended were Daniels supporters. Daniels makes no secret of his concern about the lack of collaboration among different independent political action initiatives and among different oppressed constituencies. The People's Progressive Convention succeeded in *beginning* the process of breaking down the barriers between different struggles, but much remains to be done.

Who Attended—and Who Didn't

Ron Daniels had expressed the hope that the conference would be 50 percent people of color. That goal was not achieved; however, approximately one-third of the participants were people of color, a much higher proportion than at most left-wing gatherings. Nearly all, however, were African Americans; only a few Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans attended.

Probably a majority of those who came were male, but not an overwhelming majority. The conference organizers made a special attempt to reach out to women, and their efforts were successful. However, most of the women who attended did not represent

explicitly feminist organizations. Even so, feminist concerns were expressed and acted on by the conference.

A few lesbians and gay men attended and played an active role in the People's Progressive Convention, but not nearly as many as should have been there. Nearly everyone attending recognized that more needs to be done to reach out to militant homosexuals and their organizations.

Roughly 10 percent of conference participants (by our count) were under the age of 25. This is not what one would hope for, but it is an improvement over most other meetings of this type.

A large minority of those attending were members of trade unions. Trade union *participation*, however, was disappointing. Only one international union—the United Electrical Workers (UE)—endorsed the conference and made an effort to send representatives to it. Members of other unions, including United Auto Workers, Communications Workers of America, Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers, Transit Workers Union, and others, attended on their own initiative. Tony Mazzocchi made a conscious decision *not* to attend, and while many Labor Party Advocates members were present, LPA sent no official delegation.

Most participants came from organizations which are supporting Ron Daniels's presidential bid. A substantial number came from the various state Green parties and other state-level independent political action initiatives, including the California Peace and Freedom Party, the Wisconsin Labor-Farm Party, and the Consumers' Party (based primarily in the Philadelphia area).

The largest number, however, were clearly people who—like Ron Daniels—had worked in Jesse Jackson's previous presidential campaigns and had belonged to the Rainbow Coalition, which has for all intents and purposes ceased to exist. During 1984 and especially during 1988, the Rainbow Coalition was an uneasy alliance of progressive activists with Democratic Party machine politicians who happened to be African American. With Jackson's support, the politicians took over undisputed leadership and imposed their agenda—getting themselves elected to public office—on the Rainbow Coalition. Those who maintained a commitment to social change found that the Rainbow Coalition no longer shared that commitment, and a great many launched other vehicles through which to carry out their activity. Project New Tomorrow, the National African American Network, the Greens, and other such groups are the result.

The People of Color Caucus

During the conference some of the most important discussion took place during meetings of constituency caucuses, the largest of which were the Women's Caucus and the People of Color Caucus. Also meeting were caucuses of trade unionists, gays and lesbians, and youth.

The People of Color Caucus met four times, bringing about 100 people together. Participants frankly discussed the political challenges to the communities of color—African Americans, African Caribbeans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and others of non-European ethnicity. People began coming to grips with the unfortunate antagonisms which have arisen between different communities of color; for example, between African Americans and Latinos and between African Americans and Asian Americans. As previously mentioned, concern was expressed that the caucus was composed overwhelmingly of African Americans and that greater efforts were needed to reach out to Latinos, Native

Americans, and Asian Americans. The caucus also confronted the issue of immigrant rights, recognizing that "people of color" also includes thousands who are not citizens or even legal residents of the United States. Though it was understood that each community has its own issues and concerns which should not and cannot be subsumed into the general category of "people of color," there remains a need for greater collaboration and solidarity.

The People of Color Caucus focused much of its attention on the need to involve people from their communities in independent political action—in the Daniels campaign and other initiatives as well. The caucus set up a structure of its own so that it could begin actually working as a group to build support for political alternatives within the oppressed communities. The caucus plans to have ongoing activity of its own and to meet again as a group within six months, and it elected a leadership to make sure that will happen.

The Women's Caucus

The discussion which took place in the Women's Caucus, which was no less rich and important than the discussion in the People of Color Caucus, was nevertheless quite different in its focus and emphasis. The Women's Caucus turned its attention to revising the Principles of Unity drafted for the proposed National People's Progressive Network to make it more attentive to women's needs and concerns. It is too often overlooked that the hardest-hit victims of the current economic crisis are women and, tragically, children. In spite of the sexist slander that feminists are "selfish," the safety and well-being of children are among the highest priority items on the feminist agenda. In contrast to the empty rhetoric from reactionaries about "family values," the Women's Caucus suggested amendments to the Principles of Unity which raised demands for the protection of women and children from domestic violence, for the right to housing, health care, and education which respects *all* cultural backgrounds, and for economic security as a right for all children, regardless of who their caregivers are or whether they live in single-caregiver situations. The caucus addressed the issue of violent crime and the failure of the capitalist criminal sanctions system to insure working people's—especially women's and children's—safety, while at the same time incarcerating millions, a majority of whom are people of color.

The caucus also addressed some of the effects of sexism, one of the most insidious being many women's lack of confidence in themselves and their ability to express their ideas and to lead people in struggle. An educational workshop for males also confronted this problem, which has plagued the labor and progressive movements for decades: that women have been entrusted with the hard and sometimes tedious organizational tasks but not with the complicated political thinking-out and decision-making. Women's lack of confidence has been a factor in continuing the problem. As a symbol of women's support for each other, when the caucus's amendments were presented the entire group came forward and stood on the platform, and the reading of the amendments was shared among several participants.

Other Constituency Caucuses

The Labor, Youth, and Gay and Lesbian Caucuses' discussion centered primarily around reaching out to their constituencies for increased involvement in independent political action and better awareness of the issues on the part of activists. The Labor Caucus drew about 45 people from a number of different unions, though, as mentioned earlier, only the United Electrical Workers officially

endorsed the People's Progressive Convention. In addition to the conference's shortcomings in its attention to trade unionists, the caucus had a lively debate on the issue of a labor party. Nearly all participants favored building a labor party, and a great many identified themselves as members of Labor Party Advocates; however, some, mostly members of the Labor Party Organizing Network (not to be confused with Labor Party Advocates), proposed that the People's Progressive Convention should itself call for the formation of a labor party and reject any support for candidates running as Democrats or Republicans. Those who disagreed with them argued that a number of people who had come to the conference and helped to build the conference had not yet come to the conclusion that a complete break with Democratic and Republican candidates was necessary, and that the information-exchanging network which was being proposed should be as inclusive as possible. For example, a member of SANE/Freeze had spoken at the Friday night session explaining why he and his organization were supporting Bill Clinton for president; Ron Daniels, in his charge to the convention on Saturday, had said that while he disagreed with the brother from SANE/Freeze he respected his opinion and valued his participation in the People's Progressive Convention and in the activity projected out of the convention. In addition, the Labor Caucus facilitator, a UE official from Chicago, was actively campaigning for Carol Mosely Braun, an African American woman running for U.S. Senate as the Democratic candidate.

Plenary Discussion

The discussion in the plenary session centered around the structure of the proposed National People's Progressive Network. Its stated purpose would be, as outlined in the draft proposal, to provide a communications structure which facilitates grassroots leaders, activists, organizations, campaigns, and parties to:

- maintain regular contact
- transmit emergency alerts
- carry out an on-going national dialogue which would lead to coordinated national actions/programs which are designed to broaden democratic participation and support independent candidacies or other electoral reforms
- facilitate state and regional conventions by 1994
- plan for a national convention in 1995.

Though considerable time was spent discussing the network's leadership structure, the convention did arrive at a consensus. Representatives were elected from constituency caucuses, from regional caucuses, and from organizations adhering to the National People's Progressive Network. The convention mandated that half of the elected leadership be female and that half be made up of people of color.

The People's Progressive Convention successfully brought together activists from different constituencies on the basis that even though their struggles are not identical they are linked, and that while differences in gender and nationality must be respected they need not be obstacles to political collaboration. In the months ahead the National People's Progressive Network can become a valuable resource to promote better understanding and better coordinated activity among fighters for social change. □

September 23, 1992

Labor's Deepening Crisis Underscores the Need for a Labor Party Now!

by Jerry Gordon

The following is a talk given at a forum on independent political action in Pittsburgh on September 19, 1992. Jerry Gordon is an international representative of the United Food and Commercial Workers (for identification purposes only) and member of Labor Party Advocates, Cleveland Chapter.

I want to speak mainly about the conference that is coming up in Detroit on December 5th and 6th, and tell you why I think it is a specially significant event which we should build to the extent possible. Before getting to the details about the conference it might be worthwhile to spend a few minutes assessing the period in which the conference is being built.

I think if we had to put our finger on the one key factor for us in the labor movement today it would be the ferment taking place. We have a changing labor movement. We have more and more workers doing serious thinking about the crisis the movement is in and about its accumulating problems. These include especially deep-rooted and pervasive job insecurity, and the decline in real purchasing power.

There have been some positive gains in the last year, particularly what happened at the *Pittsburgh Press*. Masses of workers stopped scabs and prevented the paper from getting out. It is inspiring; a real example for what the labor movement should be doing around the country. The steel workers also won a significant victory at Ravenswood after a 15-month struggle. There is a lot of organizing going on around the country. People don't realize it, but it's really taking place. From the mainly Hispanic janitors in Los Angeles, to the organizing of packing plants, to organizing in the South, there are a number of victories being recorded. In Philadelphia municipal workers are waging a militant fight against city-demanded takeaways and threatened privatization. The Teamsters, under their new leadership, are organizing. They recently successfully negotiated a contract for 16,000 car haulers which got rid of double breasting (union employers setting up non-union dummy firms and transferring work to them). Everywhere you look there is a fightback taking place. Even though the strike statistics don't show it,

the workers are full of fight. Once there is any kind of winning strategy in place and any kind of opening for mounting a real struggle, workers will resist. Even under today's adverse conditions, they repeatedly show they're ready to hit the bricks.

Having said that, I have to say that this is not the dominant trend in the labor movement today. The dominant trend is decline and retreat, and even defeat. We saw this especially at Caterpillar, which was a severe loss for the UAW, this once proud and powerful union. We saw it with the back-to-work legislation passed by Congress which broke the second railway strike in the last couple of years. Strike provoking and union busting are taking place around the country. Again, it doesn't make headlines but it's happening. Unions are being wiped out in many companies, particularly the small-to-medium size ones. A measure of the problems that the labor movement finds itself confronted with is the fact that only 12 percent of workers in the private sector are organized. If present trends continue, by the end of the century, this will be down to 5 percent. The employers are feeling their oats. There are at least 18 million people in this country unemployed or underemployed according to the government's own statistics. The bosses have the upper hand and they're using it to gut wages and to gut benefits. In fact, the average worker today is making \$100 a week less in real wages than two decades ago.

One of the most pernicious and dangerous developments is what is taking place around the Teamsters. The government is tightening and expanding its control over this union. Under the RICO settlement—in the anti-racketeering suit a settlement was arrived at—the Teamsters agreed to have their affairs monitored by an "Independent Review Board." This was supposedly temporary until they had the elections and then the government would get out of the picture. This Independent Review Board is made up of three people: one appointed by the government who turns out to be a corporation lawyer, one by the Teamsters, and the two of them are supposed to select a third person. What has happened is that instead of allowing the process to work and for this third person to be selected, the judge that's overseeing the process has named the third person, and the one that he named is William Webster, former head of the FBI and the CIA! But that's not all about Webster. In addition to being a former corporation lawyer himself, he also sits on the board of Anheuser Busch, which is one of the biggest employers that the Teamsters bargain with, and on the board of that notorious strikebreaking agency, the Pinkertons. This is the guy that's making decisions

affecting the welfare and the affairs of the Teamsters union. No door is closed to any of these three guys.

Some people here tonight may recall a difference of opinion expressed here in Pittsburgh at an educational conference about a year ago on the question of the intervention of the government in the life and affairs of the Teamsters. Some of us thought it was a dangerous move; that it was something wrong to call for. Once it happens, you make use of the openings, but it was important to warn the workers from day one that the government is an agency that represents the employers and that we should resist its intervention and involvement. Others thought it was a good thing from a pragmatic point of view because it made possible the victory of Ron Carey. The Teamsters have to clean up their own affairs themselves, and the demand ought to be "Government get the hell out!" In order to resolve something like this workers need to take a hard class line. Government represents big business, and we don't want the government involved in the affairs of the unions.

These are some of the things that are going on. These are tough times for working people. Everybody's insecure about their job. Workers are taking a beating economically and the unions are taking a beating. In greater and greater numbers workers are looking for a way out.

Well, the labor leadership has found the way out. It's real simple. They've been talking about it for years and now it is at hand. The way out is to put a Democrat in the White House which means electing Clinton in November. Once that happens our problems are going to be solved. Of course in the early months of the campaign when most of the unions preferred another candidate labor leaders muddled Clinton up a bit, and if they're going to sell Clinton now they've got to clean him up. And the way they are trying to clean him up—I'm referring here to the labor journals and the labor newspapers—is to suppress all the negatives about him and make him appear as a virtual messiah, a virtual savior of the working class.

They are not telling workers that in 1976 as attorney general, Clinton supported Arkansas' Right to Work law, and that in the 1980s as governor he bragged about the Right to Work law and about Arkansas' low wages in state-sponsored ads in the business press. They aren't telling the workers that as governor Clinton relied on regressive sales taxes to finance much of his legislative program. They're concealing the fact that as governor he helped break a UAW strike against Morrilon Plastics by personally approving a state guaranteed loan of \$300,000 for a company that was on strike by the UAW. The

president of the Arkansas AFL-CIO said that this tipped the scale against the union.

The labor leadership is not telling the workers that Clinton had fought the teachers union over the so-called competency testing. When GM whipsawed workers in the Arlington Texas plant against the workers in Willow Run and the workers in Arlington gave sweeping concessions so that the Arlington plant stayed open and the Willow Run plant closed, costing thousands and thousands of jobs, Clinton visited Arlington and praised the workers there for having given the concessions. Clinton's plans for a national economic policy are predicated on making U.S. industry more competitive in the international markets which will entail workers' acceptance of lower wages and more oppressive conditions. What happened in Arlington was right up his alley.

Of course, Clinton supports the North American Free Trade Agreement, although he's begun to waffle a bit on that. And finally, he wants 100,000 more cops on the street: more strikebreakers at hand.

On foreign policy, Clinton attacks Bush from the right. Clinton endorsed the Torricelli bill before Bush did. That is the bill to tighten the boycott against Cuba and starve the people there into submission by cutting U.S. trade with any country that trades with Cuba. Clinton said: "The Bush administration missed a big opportunity to

put the hammer down on Fidel Castro." Clinton has called for bombing Yugoslavia even before Bush has gotten around to doing it. Clinton has not only endorsed the latest U.S. military moves against Iraq, but he accuses Bush of coddling Iraq. No wonder that on August 17th a group of 33 ultraright-wing political and military leaders had a big ad in the *Washington Post* endorsing Clinton.

But it is not just military and political leaders, as *Business Week* noted, that support Clinton's campaign. His campaign has "raked in hundreds of thousands of dollars from Wall Streeters." In my union, UFCW, public enemy number one is Wal-Mart, and public enemy number two is Tyson's. These are real vicious anti-union companies. Hillary Clinton sits on the board of directors of Wal-Mart, and Wal-Mart is one of Clinton's big supporters. Tyson's is another big Clinton supporter. Yet the UFCW has endorsed him, putting the union in the same camp as Wal-Mart and Tyson's.

The labor leadership is going all out for Clinton. Me, I hope he wins. I'm not voting for him, but I know that the so-called friends of labor expose themselves much more quickly when they're in office rather than when they're on the outside and spouting all their demagoguery about how bad the Republicans are. I've been hearing this for 12 years. We get in a big struggle, try and

mobilize the workers, and we're told we can't win. The labor leadership says that we've got to change who's in the White House. Well, if there's a change in the White House maybe it will be a little more difficult to repeat that old refrain.

What we really need to do is to get around to mobilizing workers and building solidarity, both nationally and internationally; turning the unions over to rank-and-file control; and finding ways to inspire workers with a fighting, winning strategy. We're not doing that now.

The election will be over in November, and this conference on independent labor political action will convene a month later. It's going to offer an alternative kind of politics: independent labor politics . . . labor party politics. A particular focus of this conference is going to be the 1993 elections. Significant independent labor political action may well be taking place in New Jersey next year. Norm Levins, former president and current organizer for CWA Local 1040 has issued an invitation to some 300 New Jersey trade union leaders to attend a meeting September 30 to discuss running independent labor candidates for office in the state.

That's an important development and we want to make it part of the conference. It's interesting to note that Tony Mazzocchi, who has a very strong policy as far as Labor Party Advocates not running candidates,

Plans for Detroit Conference

"After the Elections: Where Does Labor Turn Now? A Discussion of Labor's Political Strategy in 1993 and Beyond" is the theme of an educational conference to be held in Detroit Saturday and Sunday, December 5 and 6. The Cleveland and Detroit organizing committees of Labor Party Advocates are the sponsors.

The conference will feature three panels: "Labor and the Democratic Party," "Prospects for Independent Labor Political Action in 1993 and Beyond," and "Experience with Labor Parties in the United States and Elsewhere."

Speakers at the Saturday panels include Nancy Riche, president of the New Democratic Party and executive vice president of the Canadian Labour Congress; Jan Pierce, vice president, Communications Workers of America District 1; Frank Valenta, president of the Cleveland AFL-CIO and director, United Steelworkers District 28; James Gibbs, president, United Mine Workers Local 2490 (Gibbs, an African American, works at the Pittston Company, was active in the mine occupation during the strike there, and was involved in the successful campaign to elect UMW leader Jackie Stump to the Virginia State Legislature as an independent).

Also, Russ Leone, financial secretary, United Auto Workers Local 600 and chair, Detroit LPA; Harold Mitchell, president, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Local 100 and chair, Cleveland LPA; Baldemar Velasquez, president, Farm Labor Organizing Committee; Millie Phillips, chair and shop steward, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1225, and president, San Francisco Coalition of Labor Union Women; Lynn Henderson, editor of *Straight Track* (which has a circulation of 25,000 among rail workers); and Ellen David Friedman, organizer, Vermont National Education Association and co-chair of Vermont Organizing Committee (Vermont's independent party).

The Sunday speakers are Elaine Bernard, former president of the British Columbia New Democratic Party and current executive director, Harvard University Trade Union Program; Dave Riehle, local chair, United Transportation Union Local 650 and labor historian; and Mike Merrill, associate professor, Labor Studies, Rutgers University.

The December conference is intended to bring together labor activists from the Midwest and other parts of the country to share experiences, exchange views, and discuss strategies to advance the cause of labor political action by such measures as unions running their own candidates independent of the Democratic and Republican parties.

Moreover, the conference could be an important vehicle for organizing the growing labor party sentiment in union ranks by stimulating education and discussion within labor bodies, unemployed groups, retirees, and other labor allies. At the same time, it will help build Labor Party Advocates. Tony Mazzocchi, of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, founder of Labor Party Advocates, will lead a workshop on LPA.

While LPA does not endorse or run candidates at this point, it helps local groups form "recruiting committees" to build a strong membership base for a labor party.

Holding the conference in December makes it possible to draw some lessons from labor's experience with the Democrats in the 1992 elections and to consider what an alternative electoral strategy might be. Experience shows that capitalist politicians who purport to be labor's friends are more quickly exposed when they are elected and actually hold the reins of government in their hands. This is certain to be the case with Clinton if he wins in November, especially since he has no solution to the deepening economic crisis which is devastating workers' living standards.

For those disenchanted with the Democrats to move in the direction of independent labor politics and a labor party, it is essential that there be visible and viable organizations in place which can provide the alternative they seek. LPA today offers the best medium for developing such an alternative.

As Mazzocchi repeatedly says, there will be a third party. The question is whether it will be a party of labor or a party of the right. The December conference will open a broad discussion of what kind of party labor needs and how we can build it.

The conference will be held at the Royce Hotel in Detroit. Registration is \$15.00 or \$2.00 for unemployed.

For more information and to get copies of the brochure on the conference, write or phone Russ Leone, UAW Local 600, 10550 Dix, Dearborn, MI 48120 (313/842-5701) or Harold Mitchell, AFSCME Local 100, 1603 East 27th St., Cleveland, OH 44114 (216) 781-0408.

—J.G.

was immediately agreeable to including in this conference a panel discussion about independent labor prospects for 1993 and beyond. LPA is often criticized for not running candidates, but there is an opening there, a way to publicize and educate with regard to independent candidates around the country and to help spur that on.

I've mentioned the importance of this conference in terms of education and raising consciousness. It can also be a springboard and a spur for launching independent candidates in 1993 and beyond. There is a third key purpose. That is to organize and build LPA. There are different concepts of LPA and what its potential is. Mazzocchi has projected that it become a mass organization of 100,000 or more and to then become *the* labor party of this country. Others have a more restricted projection. Many of us see LPA as being invaluable in providing education and raising consciousness. The more likely course for actually launching a labor party is that the big international unions will be won to this perspective and will agree to meet together in a convention. But regardless, building LPA now is of prime importance and we want to do everything we can to increase the membership.

Note the evolution of LPA. At the early stage it was hard for groups around the country to establish LPA committees. We

had one in the Twin Cities, one in Detroit, and one in Cleveland. That was about it. Anybody now can form a LPA recruiting committee, and they're encouraged to do so. One was recently initiated in Pittsburgh. We want to see these grow in numbers and in size.

How is the Detroit conference going to be built? LPA nationally is going to help build it. LPA has several thousand members and we're working closely with Mazzocchi. *Labor Notes* is playing a very key role. People from Solidarity are working very hard on this conference. We hope to reach rank-and-file currents in the labor movement such as New Directions and Teamsters for a Democratic Union. We need to approach anybody and everybody that is in motion. Not necessarily people that are already committed to the course of independent labor politics, but militants, dissidents, class conscious workers, thinking workers, workers who are looking for a way out. We think in modest terms. If we can bring a few hundred people together in Detroit it will be a significant step forward in expanding this process of independent labor activity.

This conference should be seen as part of the fightback movement of U.S. workers with political action as a central focus. When we say political action, we are talking about more than electoral action. We're

talking about building a movement that is going to be out in the streets. We know that every four years workers in this country are confronted with a choice between two candidates put up by big business. We've had this routine time in and time out. It's high time, to say the least, to break this pattern.

The choice this year being particularly noxious, more and more workers are seeing that there has to be an alternative. This is demonstrated by poll after poll that LPA has conducted showing that 50-60 percent of workers favor a new party, a labor party. The sentiment is there and it is going to deepen in the days and months ahead. If Clinton is elected, workers will soon see that he has no answers to the economic problems or the social problems in this country. Masses of people will be going through an experience that will raise their consciousness and convince them of the need for a labor party. In order for all this to happen it is going to take the work of class conscious workers, socialist workers with a program of independent class politics and with the boldness and audacity to get that program carried out. Even small numbers of people, when the times are right, can make a big difference. The times are right, right now. The opening is there for us. Let's seize it. □

Discovery of America (Continued from page 11)

recent, and sudden, acknowledgement of the Miskitu (in the context of the United States-Nicaraguan confrontation), the widespread reaction of amazement and solidarity as the Mohawks confronted the overwhelming forces of the Canadian State, even the multiple debates spearheaded by the movie *Dances with Wolves* are but a prelude, announcing more crucial events to come.

IndoAmerica seeks its rightful place in the American ethno-regional and political constellation. The particular political form that their challenge will adopt, peaceful or confrontational, is uncertain. One thing is clear: contrary to the wishful thinking of the racists the Indian people are here to stay. And the "superior civilization" of the white man (i.e., capitalism) looks quite grim today when the example chosen to show its greatness was the carpet-bombing

of Iraq. Perhaps, after all is told, the Native Americans, epitomizing the semi-communal past as well as the most modern democratic aspirations, will clear the road for new popular struggles that, just like the civil rights and black power movements, will electrify the imagination of the whole human species.

Conclusion

The Indians were the first victims of expanding capitalism in the Americas. And in my opinion in order for them (as well as us) to be free one must struggle to end this horrendous system. We must struggle to build a socialist federation of exploited and oppressed peoples of the Americas, from Buenos Aires to the Andes, to Mexico City, to San Juan, to San Francisco, to Boston—all the way to the nearest reservation. If we

are successful we will look back and see people such as Krauthammer and Bush as they really are, as dinosaurs. This will mark the end of the prehistory of humanity and then freedom, creativity, and peoplehood will truly flower.

And in order to do this we need not follow some of today's popular but insidious trends of self-ascribed "friends" of the Indians. We do not have to follow the New Agers who become "spiritual" by negating political intervention and doing fancy meditation in the saunas of their petty-bourgeois environment. We do not have to accept the cosmology of *Black Elk Speaks*. We surely do not have to Dance with the Wolves. But we *do* have to fight the piranhas that 500 years later are still singing the same procapitalist and procolonialist song. □

21st Century Party Founded at D.C. Convention

by Carol McAllister

Our world is in turmoil. Political demagogues are leading a new rise in bigotry, with "ethnic cleansing" being practiced abroad, and a "cultural war" being waged in the United States. Meanwhile, the economy declines, with a wholesale redistribution of resources from the many to the few, and the planet itself is in jeopardy. We must counter this rise with a new political force—a force composed of all those locked out of power, disgusted with the backlash to women's progress, determined to end discrimination and bigotry, and fed up with unfair taxes, scandals in high places, and the rip off of billions of taxpayers' dollars for illicit spending. This political force will ignite the drive to translate the voters' anger and hopelessness into action for the common good.

We, the members of the 21st Century Party, do hereby dedicate ourselves to creating that force.

Thus begins the preamble to the platform of the newly formed 21st Century Party—the Nation's Equality Party. These words also convey the spirit of determination, as well as general political orientation, of the majority of those present at the party's founding convention held in Washington, D.C., on August 29–30, 1992.

Though a more modest affair than the original projection of a bi-coastal convention with telecommunications hook-ups throughout the nation, this weekend event brought together 200 people, more than 130 of whom were dues-paying members and thus eligible to vote on the party's platform and constitution. Founding members and supporters as represented at the convention were overwhelmingly white—a serious weakness in the creation of the new political force called for in the platform's preamble. They were, however, diverse in other respects, including gender, sexual orientation, and regional representation. There was a relative absence of youth but a fair distribution of ages from people in their twenties to senior citizens. Most of the convention participants appeared to be long-time activists in a number of social movements. There was particularly strong participation from the feminist movement, as represented by the National Organization for Women, but participants also included members of other feminist groups as well as those involved in

antiracist, lesbian and gay rights, labor, disability, and environmental struggles. Most of the members and supporters are working people though many may not clearly define themselves as working class.

Development of NOW's Independent Political Initiative

A number of those present at the 21st Century Party's founding convention had been involved in the development of this independent political initiative from its beginning; others had only become convinced of the need for this course more recently. Arising out of a workshop at the 1989 NOW National Conference, the call for a new party took shape in the context of testimony by scores of NOW members about their years of loyalty to and continual betrayal by the Democratic as well as Republican Party. Many of these former Democratic Party supporters, campaigners and even candidates, including some of NOW's top leadership, form a key component of the membership of the 21st Century Party. They are joined by activists who are newer both to movement and party politics, as well as by those, primarily socialists, whose basic political perspective involves the building of a party representing the interests of the working class majority and the oppressed. Through a series of hearings held by the Commission for Responsive Democracy established by NOW after its 1989 National Conference, as well as continuing discussions at NOW meetings and conferences, the need for a party independent of the Democrats and Republicans became clearer. Such a conclusion was reinforced by the massive outpouring of women's anger through street demonstrations such as those held on April 5, 1992, and after the *Casey vs. Planned Parenthood* Supreme Court decision in late June. Through this whole process, the basic political orientation of such a new party also became more sharply defined. (See *BIDOM* Issue Nos. 68, 77, 81, 88, and 95 for more information on these developments.)

Central to the political definition of the 21st Century Party is what both NOW members and other party supporters refer to as an Expanded Bill of Rights for the 21st Century. This Expanded Bill of Rights includes:

- the right to freedom from discrimination based on sex, race, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability;

- the right of all women to freedom from government interference in abortion, birth control and reproduction, and the right to publicly funded and available birth control, abortion and pregnancy care;
- the right to a decent standard of living, including adequate food, housing, health care, education, and jobs;
- the right to a clean and protected environment;
- the right to freedom from all violence, including the threat of war and the threat of violence at home;
- the right of working people to join together in unions, bargain collectively, and use economic sanctions, such as strikes and boycotts;
- and the right of all to participate in and have representation in our government.

In terms of its own organizational principles, the 21st Century Party has a stated commitment to both gender and racial/ethnic balance in all party bodies, a goal of internal party democracy which will be reinforced by the funding structure of the party (no corporate memberships, and monthly pledges equal to 1/2 of 1 percent of the income of individual members), and a principle of candidate adherence to the party's platform. It was on this basis of these political and organizational principles that the 1992 NOW National Conference voted overwhelmingly to endorse and support the formation of the 21st Century Party, providing the final impetus going into the party's founding convention.

Party Platform and Constitution

The two-day founding meeting was devoted largely to the development, elaboration, and refinement of this basic orientation. Participants thus spent most of their time working on and amending drafts of two documents, the "Founding Platform of the 21st Century Party" and the "Constitution and Bylaws of the 21st Century Party."

The "Founding Platform" is the more complex and also more interesting of the two documents. After a substantial preamble that develops in greater detail the "Expanded Bill of Rights for the 21st Century" and the basics of party organization noted above, the draft platform took up seven principles: (1) Women Taking Power, (2) Strength and Prosperity

Through Diversity, (3) No Lesser People, (4) Rising Above Violence, (5) Restoring a Sustainable Environment, (6) Respecting the World, and (7) Expanding Democracy. Under each of these principles there was a general analysis of the issues involved and then the enumeration of specific platform positions. Convention participants divided themselves into different workshops, each one concentrating on discussing and revising one of these seven sections. Proposals for changes and amendments were then considered by the body as a whole and voted on by the membership in a plenary session on the second day of the convention.

The platform, both in original draft form and as amended and adopted by party members, has several strengths. It is very wide-ranging and inclusive, taking up a number of issues and topics, including those of women's rights, the rights of people of color and other oppressed groups, the economy, the environment, and foreign policy. There is at the same time an attempt to bring a feminist analysis and perspective to each of the platform's principles. All sections of the platform had been developed in considerable detail and certain positions were clearly and explicitly formulated, including statements on reproductive rights and on national health care. The general analysis was strongest in terms of women's experiences and demands.

There were, however, also some serious weaknesses in the draft document. These included a kind of fuzziness or hedging on various issues, a fact reflected even in the title of some of the principles. For example, "No Lesser People" is really about the economy and the rights of working people, something not clear from that principle's designation. There was also considerable unevenness in the political analysis developed and the positions put forward in some of the sections. Again, the principle "No Lesser People" provides a good illustration. This section includes, among other provisions, the following platform positions:

- Establishment of a full-employment economy with a guaranteed annual income provision.
- The right to organize collectively without interference is a constitutional right of all workers. We affirm the right of workers to strike without being replaced and to boycott without restrictions.
- Establishment of a pay equity system for all employees.

However, the subsection on "employment" in which these positions occur is preceded by another subsection on "commerce" that appears to affirm the rights of

large corporations, as well as small businesses, to continue to operate within the current competitive market framework, though under "fairer rules." This impression is reinforced by other scattered references throughout the document to women "breaking through the glass ceiling" (i.e., getting into top corporate management positions), and the inclusion of women and racial minorities in "corporate decision-making."

What is at least as significant as the strengths and weaknesses of the draft platform as brought into the convention is what happened in the workshops and the plenary sessions where each section of the platform was discussed and amended. The workshops not only provided a structure for revising the specific wording of the draft document but also offered opportunities for active political discussions and the development of proposals for more fundamental changes in the Party's platform and thus political program. The quite democratic functioning of the workshops, along with the experience of many workshop participants in actual struggles around the issues being examined, furthered this process of political discussion and clarification. There was often sharp debate and disagreement in both workshops and plenary sessions, and some ambiguities about interpretation still remain, but this collective work substantially improved the "Founding Platform."

For example, a consensus emerged in several workshops to develop two new principles, one on health care and one on education; the initial work done on these new sections helped to considerably sharpen and strengthen the platform. In addition, some important and substantive changes were proposed and eventually adopted in the original sections of the draft platform. Thus under the principle, "No Lesser People," the following statement is now included: "We seek the creation of democratic controls over major industries and resources on which society depends to help us rebuild the economy on the basis of cooperation and equality."

The section on "Strength and Prosperity Through Diversity" also underwent some important transformations. Initially framed simply in terms of "building on our diversity," with no references at all to racism, sexism, or homophobia—and the unequal power relations that underlie these forms of institutionalized discrimination—the section was eventually revised to include the following wording: "The problems we must overcome are the centuries of institutionalized racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of exclusion and discrimination that have scarred our nation and its people and that continue to prevent the full and free development of large num-

bers of individuals and indeed of whole communities. . . . Preparing for the 21st Century requires that we reject this legacy of discrimination and exclusion and that we join in and support the struggles of women, people of color, lesbians and gay men, seniors and youth, the disabled, and poor and working people." Even more important than the change in written text was the lengthy and serious discussion that ensued around these issues in the workshop on this principle and then again the sharp debate on the floor of the plenary session considering the proposed amendments. Because of active engagement in such discussion and debate, the majority vote for the change in wording on this principle seems clearly linked to a change in political consciousness and understanding as well.

The most disappointing discussion on the platform occurred around the section entitled "Respecting the World." This was perhaps the weakest section in the draft document, including, for example, no references to actually occurring instances of U.S. military intervention nor to the vital struggles of people elsewhere in the world. Instead there were references to the U.S. as "a world leader," the need for the U.S. to "set an example," the appropriateness of the U.S. "competing" in the world economy. Combined with a lack of recognition of the imperialist role of the U.S. was a call for reliance on existing international bodies, including the UN, to settle conflicts among nations. While considerably improved by the amendments proposed by workshop participants who grappled with this section of the draft platform, several people in the plenary session expressed their feelings that even the initial version was too radical and far-reaching. The whole section, in the end, was thus referred to the newly appointed Interim Representative Council, a much smaller and more exclusive group than the convention itself. In fact, during the floor discussion, one of the amendments coming out of the workshop—that calling for a national referendum before the United States government would be permitted to engage in military action and war—was ruled out of order and non-debatable because it "violates the current U.S. Constitution."

The discussion and debate on the party's Constitution and Bylaws was less intense. However, several important principles were reaffirmed and in some cases strengthened. Of most significance was the attention in both text and discussion to the equitable inclusion of women and people of color in all party bodies and leadership positions as well as the general principle of democratic functioning. The principle of candidate adherence to the party's platform and the stipulation that the party will only endorse and support candidates who

embrace that platform was considerably clarified by the following amendment: "The 21st Century Party will support only those candidates who adhere to and advocate the above principles [essentially the Expanded Bill of Rights for the 21st Century]. Candidates will be held accountable to support and work to implement the platform of the 21st Century Party. Such candidates must demonstrate their commitment to these principles by publicly endorsing the 21st Century Party platform prior to and as a condition of receiving the party's formal support." While this in no way definitively settles the question of the relationship of the 21st Century Party to candidates in the Democratic (or even Republican) Party, it should put certain constraints on free-wheeling endorsements of so-called "progressive" Democrats.

Regional Caucuses

The other major activity at the founding convention involved the meeting of members in regional caucuses to begin to strategize ways to build the 21st Century Party and to do some initial networking with others in their area of the country. In the caucus I attended, participants suggested developing a popular piece of outreach literature, proposed setting specific goals for membership to be achieved by recruitment drives, and discussed the need to be conscious of where meetings are held so that people of color feel included not excluded.

Another suggestion was to create local political clubs that would provide a diversity of services and opportunities for political discussion as well as run candidates. This then developed into a debate around the relative emphasis that should be placed on building a base versus supporting candidates for office and on local versus national campaigns. Though not a major focus, there was some discussion of relating to other initiatives for independent political action, including the Ron Daniels for President/Campaign for a New Tomorrow, Labor Party Advocates, and the Greens. A suggestion was made that the 21st Century Party should join the People's Progressive Convention Network established at the Ypsilanti Conference the previous weekend.

While this aspect of party building is obviously as important as adopting a good political platform and set of bylaws—in fact the two go hand-in-hand—there was not sufficient time for even setting the basis for this work at the founding convention. Thus the ideas raised in this session remain largely undiscussed and uninitiated suggestions and the process of getting to know each other and working together will need to be done later, primarily at a local level.

A Transitional View of the 21st Century Party

Where then does this leave the 21st Century Party and our assessment of its present state and future prospects? In terms of composition, political perspectives, organizational functioning, and practical party-building tasks, the above discussion highlights both strengths and weaknesses. More important, however, than just drawing up a balance sheet of pluses and minuses is the necessity of seeing this initiative as a development in motion, and thus to apply our understanding of transitional processes and of the transitional program to its current character and possible future directions.

The 21st Century Party can be viewed as marked by transitional dynamics in at least three senses. First, there is the transitional process that has brought and is still bringing the party itself into being. The 21st Century Party is in no way a finished product. For example, work on the party's platform and thus on its essential political perspectives will continue through the structure of the Interim Representative Council. At the end of the convention there was a call for the active involvement in this work of all those who want to help formulate specific analyses or positions to be included in the platform. The membership and thus composition of the party is even less set or determined at this point, and the work of building local and regional party structures has barely begun. There are currently plans for another convention in 1993, to both gather together a larger group of party supporters as well as to review the platform and elect a Representative Council composed of between 100 to 550 members.

The 21st Century Party must also be viewed as transitional in another sense as well. This is the sense in which it may serve as a bridge or transition to future independent political formations that are broader and more consciously rooted in the working class. An important contribution of the 21st Century Party to this endeavor is its strong feminist orientation. This does not mean that the immediate future of the 21st Century Party lies in its dissolution for the founding of "something better." But it does mean interaction with other initiatives for independent political action that are emerging from different sectors of our society, especially the Black community and the labor movement. Through such a process, the potential may be created for an eventual coming together of the 21st Century Party with other current efforts toward independent politics in a way that combines the important strengths of each.

Finally, it was clear at the founding convention that there is some transitional process occurring within the political con-

sciousness of the 21st Century Party's members and supporters themselves. This is partly a result of their own unfolding experiences and partly a result of the discussions among activists with different analyses brought together by the formation of the party. On specifically gender questions, the party's perspective tends to be fairly radical and far reaching. On questions such as the economy, racism, and war as described above, the positions presently adopted by the 21st Century Party are not on the whole revolutionary positions. But neither are they merely reforms that can be accommodated within the current economic and political framework of U.S. society. The positions put forward by the party's platform represent demands that the majority of members feel are necessary and just at this historical moment. But these same positions at least raise questions about the future of the capitalist system and the goal of achieving equality within it. In this sense, they promote a transitional dynamic in terms of both social change and change in the consciousness of individual supporters of this initiative for independent political action.

While clearly facing and analyzing the party's problems, we can still recognize the significance and potential of this political development. And rather than taking a "hands-off" position—either because we see the party as hopelessly flawed or because we accept the limitations of its current framework—we should roll up our sleeves and help shape the party's future development in positive directions. For the remainder of this article, I would like to discuss what I see as four weaknesses in the 21st Century Party and make some initial suggestions about how to approach overcoming them.

The Problem of Race

One of the most serious weaknesses of the 21st Century Party is its predominantly white composition combined with its failure to clearly and decisively address the issue of racism. While limiting the political consciousness of the party at the present time, this problem could develop into a situation which threatens to perpetuate a dangerous racial divide in American political life, even among progressive forces. In addition, the prospect of a party composed predominantly of white activists challenging the political hegemony of the Democrats and Republicans is doomed to failure. Without the substantial involvement and leadership of people of color in efforts for independent political action, the scope and potential of the ensuing political struggle will be seriously undermined if not misdirected.

While there is a commitment in the 21st Century Party to try to recruit to its ranks

more people of color and to achieve racial/ethnic balance on all party bodies, this by itself is insufficient to overcome the existing problem. Modest efforts to address this shortcoming include greater attention to the problem of racism in the revised version of the party's platform as well as suggestions about making party activities and meetings welcoming for people of color. There also needs to be a consistent effort to include the concerns of people of color in any general issue being addressed. For example, in demands around reproductive rights, it is essential to raise questions of funding and accessibility for both abortion and pregnancy care as well as to voice opposition to involuntary sterilization and coercive use of contraceptives such as Norplant. The resolution passed at the recent NOW National Conference that mandates the enactment of affirmative action plans within all NOW bodies—including the organization of educational and consciousness-raising programs around the issue of racism—is also an important step in the right direction. Since NOW is a major political force in the 21st Century Party, such a development is likely to affect the composition and perspective of the party as well (see *BIDOM* No. 99 for a discussion of this and other decisions at the 1992 NOW National Conference).

At least as critical, however, as the recruitment of people of color to the 21st Century Party is the need for the 21st Century Party and its current members to relate to the already existing struggles of people of color. Some of these struggles are longstanding while others are newly emerging. They occur on both a national level and in various local communities. In the white community in general there tends to be a serious lack of awareness of developments within and struggles around issues in the Black, Hispanic, Native American, or Asian American communities. There was talk during regional caucuses of getting to know one's own community—what people are thinking, what they are concerned about in one's particular city, town, or rural area; for white activists this should include a special effort to become familiar with issues and struggles in the racially oppressed communities in the urban or rural areas in which they live. Such support for the struggles of people of color must of course be genuine, not self-interested, and must take direction from those involved in these struggles, always being conscious of the absolute right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities.

A special aspect of this need for growing awareness of and solidarity with the struggles of people of color is the call for the 21st Century Party to actively support and collaborate with the major initiative for independent politics emerging out of the

African American community today—i.e., the Ron Daniels Campaign for President/Campaign for a New Tomorrow. It was quite unfortunate that no major leaders of the 21st Century Party effort were present at the People's Progressive Convention that was held in Ypsilanti, Michigan, the weekend of August 21–23 and that central activists in the Daniels campaign were not present at the Founding Convention of the 21st Century Party. Continuing to promote collaboration between these two initiatives should remain one of the primary efforts of our work within the 21st Century Party over the coming months. One positive step could be involvement in the People's Progressive Network. A particularly persuasive argument for this, and one that speaks to a major concern of 21st Party supporters about the role of women and feminist perspectives in other independent political initiatives, can be found in the central role the women's caucus played in the Ypsilanti Convention that established that Network and its principles of unity (see article in this issue by Tom Barrett and Claire Cohen on the People's Progressive Convention).

The Problem of Class Consciousness

A second weakness of the 21st Century Party as it is now constituted is its lack of a clear class consciousness. An overwhelming majority of the members and supporters of this party are part of the working class in the sense that they sell their labor power for a wage. Some are fairly high-paid professionals. I would estimate that the bulk are white-collar and pink-collar workers performing traditional women's work at typical women's wages—i.e., proportionately below that of working class men in similar or comparable positions. While a few members of the party may be non-salaried professionals or independent entrepreneurs, there is no evidence any of them are members of the capitalist class, controlling the major enterprises and financial institutions of our society. The party is thus not dominated by capitalists of either the liberal or conservative variety. At the same time, there is little consciousness of the need for working class independence.

This contradiction characterizes the political perspectives of the party as well. The Expanded Bill of Rights for the 21st Century on which the party is based has a clear working class orientation. The same is true for most of the specific positions developed in the party's platform—i.e., they are in the interests of the working, not the capitalist, class. The problem is not that the 21st Century Party is on the wrong side of the class line but that there is insufficient awareness of the existence of a class line.

There is in the party's perspectives an acknowledgment of the difference between rich and poor and an awareness of the power and control of the rich. At times, though, there seems to be an overstated distinction between the poor and "the rest of us," and a lack of awareness of the divide separating the working class, whether employed or unemployed, and the capitalist class which not only holds personal wealth but has a fundamentally different relationship to the means of production.

Using the transitional method to promote a clearer class consciousness, as well as a clearer perspective on the capitalist system as a whole, will involve not simply inserting the phrase "working class" in the party's documents or calling for the replacement of the 21st Century Party by a "labor party." This, in fact, is a particularly ineffective approach given the historical insensitivity of the leadership of the organized labor movement to feminist issues and the general propensity, even among radical circles, to conceive of the working class as composed primarily of male industrial workers. Instead we need to begin with people's immediate experiences as workers, family members, and community participants while offering a revolutionary framework to help them make sense of their individual experiences and broaden their consciousness. It is particularly important to talk with women supporters of the 21st Century Party about their lives both in the paid labor force and as unpaid workers at home, validating their own feelings and perceptions in the current economic crisis. The growing attacks on working class women—both those who have jobs of some sort and those who are forced to depend on the income of others or on the increasingly inadequate and demeaning welfare system—are providing some unfortunate but important contemporary lessons about the class nature of our society.

Another approach to the development of class consciousness is to share with our fellow party members more class-based analyses of issues that are prominent in the social struggles in which they are already involved. This is particularly obvious in the feminist movement. For example, the recent undermining of abortion rights as a result of the *Casey vs. Planned Parenthood* Supreme Court decision can be discussed in terms of the differential impact of this decision on working class women. An area in which it is particularly important to develop a clearer class analysis is that of foreign policy. In fact the weakness of this section of the 21st Century's platform flows from both an inadequate understanding of class dynamics and an insensitivity to the racism of current U.S. foreign

policy. Unlike other parts of the party's platform, this section seems to be guided by an unstated assumption that there is a shared national interest that encompasses all U.S. citizens. The unbridled pursuit of this national interest, it is recognized, impinges on the rights of people of other countries and is thus unjust and unwise. However, there is little discussion of the effect of events such as the gulf war or policies such as the superexploitation of "third world" peoples on the working class, particularly women and people of color, here at home.

As with the problem of racism, this lack of class consciousness in the 21st Century Party might also be partially overcome through encouragement of the party's interaction with other efforts toward independent political action. In addition to the Ron Daniels Campaign for a New Tomorrow, which has a much clearer class analysis, there is also the development of Labor Party Advocates which is centered in the organized labor movement. Here an interesting exchange can be envisioned between the experience of Labor Party Advocate members as more conscious workers and the experience of many 21st Century Party members as more conscious feminists.

Relationship with the Democratic Party

Perhaps the most immediate question facing the 21st Century Party is its relationship to the Democratic Party. While projected as an alternative to both the Democrats and Republicans, neither the party nor its central leadership has yet made a definitive break with the twin parties of capitalism. This question is particularly crucial because without such political independence, the development of a better understanding of class oppression and of racism as discussed above will be very difficult to achieve. The clear feminist positions that now characterize the 21st Century Party's program will also be inevitably undermined.

The founding convention did not directly discuss this issue, and indirect indications of the current thinking of party leaders and members are unclear and somewhat contradictory. For example, while there was general support for the bylaw amendment that requires candidates to publicly endorse the party's platform before they receive the party's formal support, there was also loud objection to a resolution introduced from the floor of the convention to ask NOW to remove a pro-Clinton T-shirt from prominent display in its store window a few blocks away.

The same kinds of contradictions have characterized the developments that led up to the founding convention of the 21st Cen-

tury Party. In the first months after the 1989 NOW National Conference, when the idea of forming a new party was first seriously considered, there was much talk of using such an initiative to primarily scare and thus influence the Democrats. Some of this was media distortion, but some of it represented the thinking of major currents in the NOW leadership. The voicing of such views is not totally absent today. In the three years that followed, NOW leaders—including Eleanor Smeal, Dolores Huerta, and Patricia Ireland, all co-conveners of the 21st Century Party—have given some of the most passionate and convincing arguments for breaking from the Democratic Party I have ever heard. Over the months, their analysis has become sharper and clearer, and yet they do not seem to consistently draw the same conclusion. So, while work on founding the 21st Century Party went forward, these same leaders encouraged financial and other kinds of support to candidates in the Democratic and sometimes Republican parties. In fact, in many cases, NOW was the main force working to put such candidates on the ballot. The same contradiction was revealed at the 1992 NOW National Conference when the resolution endorsing and calling for support for the 21st Century Party was amended at the last minute by the NOW leadership to include a proposal explicitly calling for NOW's ongoing support to candidates in other parties as well.

At a NOW Regional Conference last spring, the diversity of views on this question was revealed in a panel discussion. One panelist expressed the opinion that the 21st Century Party should act like the Liberal Party in New York and endorse candidates in the Democratic or Republican parties when they are "good," running its own candidates only when there is no other choice. Another panelist wasn't so sure about such cross-party endorsements but thought NOW and 21st Century Party members should make sure "our candidates" from the Democratic and Republican parties continue to get elected at the same time we build a new party. She used as examples Lynn Yeakel, a Democrat running against Arlen Specter in Pennsylvania's race for U.S. Senate, and Barbara Hafer, a Republican who is seeking reelection as auditor general of Pennsylvania. The third panelist rejected both of these approaches and argued that even "good"—i.e., feminist and progressive—candidates in the Democratic or Republican parties inevitably have to bend and compromise to the leadership of those parties, a leadership which does not act in the interests of women or the majority in general. She then pointed to Democrats in the Pennsylvania State legislature—some of whom she claimed "NOW went to the

ground for" during their election campaigns—who are now supporting devastating "welfare reform" proposals and are likely to put up no resistance to the implementation and enforcement of the Pennsylvania Abortion Control Act.

What is revealed by this range of perspectives is that this central issue has not been settled either way simply by the foundation of the 21st Century Party. Rather it is a question around which there is ongoing discussion and debate. How can we best participate in that discussion in order to convince people that the 21st Century Party and other such formations must be truly independent of the Democratic and Republican parties?

As with the issues of class and race, the place to begin seems to be with people's own experiences in Democratic and Republican Party politics and their own arguments about why a new party is needed. NOW members and many others who are supporting the 21st Century Party initiative can give eloquent testimony about the kinds of betrayals and compromises that constitute political life in these two capitalist parties. They have been there in the midst of it all and experienced the dirty-dealing firsthand. Reminding people of these experiences, and encouraging them to trust their own assessments, can play an important role in strengthening healthy impulses toward independent politics. Of particular importance is reinforcement of the responsibility carried by NOW leaders and other leaders of the 21st Century Party to lead people away from this seductive mire and to inspire them instead to begin building the kind of political organizations that are really needed to achieve the goals they espouse.

At the same time we must work with 21st Century Party leaders and members to encourage them to go beyond recounting their individual experiences to develop a more analytic picture of the Democratic and Republican parties. There needs to be a better understanding of who controls these two parties, of why even "good people" have to compromise if they are going to work within the framework of either the Democratic or the Republican Party, and of why these parties and their representatives inevitably undermine if not openly betray feminist demands and the demands of the majority of working people. In other words, the problem has to be seen in structural and ultimately class terms not just in terms of individual political commitments. Otherwise there will be ongoing illusions about working within the Democratic Party to "elect our candidates" or even to "elect ourselves." This kind of analysis is developed in many ways—for example, through individual conversations and through collective discussions at 21st Century Party

and NOW meetings. A thoughtful piece of socialist literature that addresses this question would also be helpful.

Finally, we need to take up the question most frequently asked when people have become at least partially convinced of the need for a break from the Democratic and Republican parties. It usually goes like this: "But what can we do in the meantime until we have a new party that itself can win major electoral victories? Do we simply suspend our political work? Do we just drop out of politics?" This is an important question and one that needs to be taken seriously. Part of its answer, of course, lies in the recognition that political work and activism mean much more than electoral activity. This leads to a whole discussion of the importance of both mass action and grassroots organizing and of their relationship to party politics, including the building of the 21st Century Party. Also, this provides a good opportunity to again urge the collaboration of 21st Century Party members with supporters of the Ron Daniels Campaign for a New Tomorrow and of Labor Party Advocates. If people feel less isolated, the prospect of engaging in politics outside of the Democratic and Republican parties seems less intimidating and much more hopeful. Of most importance is our working together in practical tasks oriented toward actually building the 21st Century Party. This is probably the most effective way to answer the question of "What can we do?" and to reassure people that "No, we are not dropping out of politics."

Party-Building Tasks

This leads to the question of "what to do next" to actually begin making the party a living, functioning reality. Part of the problem is that much time and energy so far have gone into convincing others of the need for a new party and in defining that party's political program, platform, and internal structure. This is very understandable. The next year, however, will be a crucial one for actually building the party and thus for bringing a much stronger constituency into the 1993 National Convention. The most important thing is that all party supporters get actively involved in such strategy discussions and also in carrying out the necessary work. Here I will just offer a few initial suggestions.

First of all, it is clear that the party must be built on a local as well as on a regional

and national level. It is primarily at the local level that new members and supporters will be recruited and where political discussions about the direction and politics of the new party can be held in an ongoing fashion. It is also at the local level that democratic structures can be most easily set up and reinforced. While there is certainly a principle of formal democracy written into the party's constitution and bylaws, there are currently contradictory pressures toward relatively tight control by the central leadership, on the one hand, and the democratic and participatory impulses of the membership as exhibited at the founding convention, on the other. Thus this question of how the party will actually function is quite important and yet to be decided.

In terms of the debate around whether the 21st Century Party should initially concentrate on building a base or on running candidates, a combined strategy seems most effective. Candidates could thus be run at the local, statewide, and eventually the nationwide level while at the same time such electoral campaigns could be used to build the party itself. In other words, candidates should run not simply to win elections but also to win supporters and activists to the party and its program through their own organizing and educational efforts. This approach will help reinforce the idea that candidates must run on and promote the party's platform rather than on their own personalities or prestige.

Part of building a base, of course, involves relating to actual ongoing struggles around a diversity of social issues. This includes national struggles such as that of the pro-choice movement and also local issues and struggles in the communities in which party members and candidates live. Support for and participation in actual social struggles is at least as important in building the kind of party that is needed as running candidates and winning elections. Such struggles include not only those in which party members are already engaged but also other struggles, such as those in the Black community or those organized by poor people or labor activists, about which the current party's membership is inadequately informed. Not only is this link between electoral politics and social movements necessary for recruiting new layers of activists and new constituencies to the party, but it is also crucial in keeping the party oriented in a truly progressive

direction. In fact, it is through such participation in actual struggles that the political consciousness of party members will be most effectively deepened.

Finally, as noted above, one of our primary efforts in the coming period should be to continue to encourage active collaboration between the 21st Century Party and other initiatives toward independent political action, especially the Ron Daniels Campaign for a New Tomorrow and the Labor Party Advocates Clubs. Such collaboration should not be seen as detracting from or undermining the building of the 21st Century Party itself. In fact, party leaders and members need to be convinced that developing links with supporters of these other efforts will help them reach their own goals. Through such mutual collaboration, the efforts of the 21st Century Party will be reinforced while feminist demands of the other two initiatives will be supported and if necessary strengthened. This is in addition to the importance of the eventual convergence of these efforts with their different political bases. Collaboration of these forces in local independent electoral initiatives may be one of the most practical ways of advancing this process.

Such a process of political clarification and practical collaborative work could result in the current initiatives toward independent political action leading to the crystallization of a party—committed to the interests of women, the oppressed, and working people in general—capable of challenging the hegemony of the Democrats and Republicans. What is most important is that those of us who have been calling for the building of such a party for years, even decades, get involved in the actually occurring efforts that are moving in that direction. As one such initiative, the 21st Century Party is far from perfect and exhibits a number of serious weaknesses and contradictions. It is also not a finished, definitive formation. Rather it is in the midst of an important transitional process, a process in which each of us should actively participate—helping to build and strengthen the party in the present while also helping to transform it into a strong component of the future organization that will be needed to win the upcoming struggles that together we must face. □

September 29, 1992

International Capitalism in Crisis —What Next?

The following were presentations given by Anwar Shaikh and Ernest Mandel in a panel entitled "Talk on the International Crisis of Capitalism" at the Socialist Scholars Conference in New York City, April 25-26, 1992.

Anwar Shaikh is professor of economics, graduate faculty, New School for Social Research, New York. Ernest Mandel is a leader of the Fourth International, resident of Belgium, and author of numerous books on economics.

Anwar Shaikh

I want to talk about some of the patterns of the capitalist world economy. I realize that in the present state of the world that is a kind of old-fashioned topic because all the attention seems to have shifted away to the collapse of Eastern Europe. But I'd like to tie it in to what is happening in Eastern Europe because the really *fundamental* question is, "What are the basic structural patterns of capitalist systems?" How are they expressed in the advanced capitalist countries? We know how poorly the system functions in the third world. What implications does all this have for countries trying to switch over to capitalism?

Let me begin by reminding you that if you look at virtually any part of the world in the 1980s and 1990s you see a pattern of increasing economic and financial instability. That economic and financial instability is then transmitted to, and reflected in, political instability. One doesn't even have to document this for the third world with its huge debt, crushing economic problems, massive poverty, and unemployment. It has been mired in that for decades with little or no way out, now turning—in many cases desperately—to the market as a kind of solution, a fictitious solution, to its problems.

I want to focus instead on the advanced capitalist countries. I'm going to focus particularly on the United States because the United States, in spite of its slippage in the world economy, is still the central capitalist power. And even if you think of it as nothing more than a kind of statistical sample of the capitalist world economy, it occupies a large space in that world economy. We know that in the last few years there has been increasing concern, even among the most positive proponents of capitalism, about economic and financial instability. It is now not even a secret on Wall Street that the years of the 1980s, all over the world, were years in which the economy was pumped up through credit.

If any of you have to suffer through economic textbooks then you know that most economic textbooks, at least liberal Keynesian textbooks, argue that credit has no particular cost to the economy as a whole because what you pump in stimulates the economy, and what you have to take out and pay for in interest is simply a transfer from one group of people to another. I'm going to argue just the opposite: that there are major and systematic costs to the extension of credit. We see this in the gyrations of the stock market, we see this in the increasing rate

of business failures, in the problems in the insurance industry in the United States, in major banks, in the decline of the real estate market all over the world, and in the decline in real wages and employment in many—if not most—parts of the advanced capitalist world. It doesn't do us any good to say "well, it's general," we need to know whether this generality is an accident or whether it is a structural pattern.

I have already given the game away by saying that it is a structural pattern which is expressed with different rhythms and different timings in different capitalist countries. I believe that it is a very fundamental pattern that has occurred in the past, including the economic situation which preceded the 1929 crash. That crash itself was a kind of visible, most acute marker of the problems. The period in the 1920s and perhaps even earlier signaled the stagnation of the world economy. If we could get data for these kinds of things going back to the 1860s and 1870s on profitability on a world level I believe one would find a similar pattern there. Many people have written about this, the most prominent of whom is Ernest Mandel who has written about long waves and about the structural patterns. I won't repeat what he's said.

I want to focus on the present period. I want to try and show you in some concrete detail how this structural pattern unfolds for the United States. It is important because we are here and it materially affects our lives, but it is also important because it is a representative pattern for the overall world economy. Everybody, I think, knows by now that the Japanese economy is no longer this invulnerable monolith which it had previously been portrayed as being. The stock market in Japan has been declining for the last two years. In nominal terms alone it has fallen 50 percent. That is an *astonishing* unraveling of the credit structure. Japan's economy has been heavily dependent on credit. The real estate market in Japan has also been unraveling. The economy has been so inflated that the land prices in Japan have risen to levels certainly never seen before in human history. It has been widely cited that the land value in the region around Tokyo is greater than the whole land value of the United States. That is quite an astonishing statistic. It is some indication of the extent to which the Japanese real estate market has been pumped up, blown up. Well, that blowing up is no longer working. The air is leaking out and it has been deflating for some time in spite of every attempt to keep it up. I will get back to that with some data which is really striking.

All of this is about, as I said, an old-fashioned topic, What are the structural patterns of capitalism? Because all fashionable people now turn their eyes toward the restoration of capitalism in what used to be called the Soviet bloc, in Eastern Europe and also in the third world, and many people have concluded that there is really no alternative to capitalism. I don't believe that's true, and I think that the fact that we are dispirited—and rightly so—about the general collapse of these alternatives does not mean that capitalism will function better simply because we now believe it will. It has its own rhythm and it has its own way of coming to its critical moments. Whether we wish to see it or not, the question of alternatives to capitalism will arise again. Its functioning and its patterns and its malfunctioning will bring these items back to the agenda. I say this with some caution because the alternatives to current forms of capitalism are not always outside of capitalism. The alternatives to current forms of capitalism can well be more restrictive and more brutal forms of it.

To jump to the question of the present. The present period, in my opinion, has many significant parallels with the 1920s: the instability in the world economy, the pile-up of debt, worldwide economic and political turmoil. Already a great stock market crash, at least one that we know of, in 1987, and a very rapid deflation in Japan which is in all effects a stock market crash, as everybody in Japan knows. The stock market crash in 1987, for instance, was a drop of about 22 percent in the space of a day or two. Roughly one trillion dollars in financial assets of the world market were wiped out in a single day. That was 60 percent *more* than the whole third world debt. Yet the market bounced back within a few days and essentially recovered its levels within months, if not years. The stock market crash did not trigger an economic crash.

That raises a very important point, namely, that one must not associate the idea of persistent economic crises with the idea of an off-the-cliff collapse. Historically, capitalism displays more than one form of crisis. We find in the earlier periods, such as the 1870s, a long drawn-out period of stagnation with instability and eventual recovery. We find in the 1920s a period of stagnation and instability marked by a sharp financial collapse. Those two patterns can be found in other periods as well. We have to keep in mind that the pattern as well as the recovery itself are things which are more concretely determined. What is striking to me is Marx's argument that even though the pattern and the recovery are historically and conjuncturally determined the movement from a period of boom to a period of crisis is something built into the very nature of the reproduction of the system. I don't want to talk about this at an abstract level alone, so I'm going to present some data about this pattern.

I want to remind you about the basic argument—in Marx, which was presented in a very fragmentary way in *Capital* and more or less was lost to the Marxist tradition, or at least became a minority position. The argument concerns the falling rate of profit; accumulation itself lowers the rate of profit and thereby undermines itself. There are certain elements to the argument. I want to briefly mention them. The principal thing that drives the falling rate of profit according to Marx is the idea that the capital intensity of production, the amount of capital tied up per worker or tied up per unit output, rises. If that is true then it can be shown that it inevitably will lead to a profit rate which

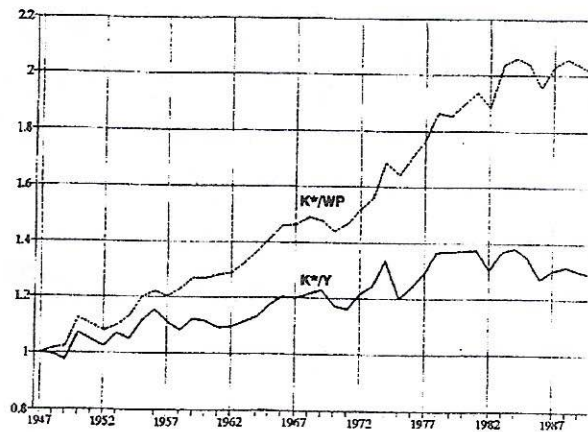


Figure 1: Capital/Output and Capital/Wages, index numbers, adjusted for capacity utilization.

will fall. This falling rate of profit undermines the growth in the mass of profit.

Well, that's quite reasonable, because the mass of profit grows when you accumulate, but it declines when the rate of profit falls. So, those two factors work against each other. If it were just left at that, then either factor could dominate. But, in fact, the accumulation of capital, the growth factor in the mass of profit, itself depends upon the rate of profit. So the growth factor itself is undermined by the falling rate of profit and relatively weakened. From this one can argue quite formally and systematically that the eventual net effect is a stagnating mass of profit. I have been doing a lot of work recently on what is called macro dynamics; non-linear representations of the accumulation of capital, because those are formal tools which are very handy. One can show that when this mass of profit stagnates the system changes behavior. It becomes literally and mathematically—so to speak—unstable and therefore politically and economically unstable.

This instability, then, is a series of pattern changes which show up in a variety of ways which are more concretely determined, more conjuncturally determined, but nonetheless systematically produced.

So let me try and show you the pattern for the United States. The first graph [figure 1] concerns the famous organic com-

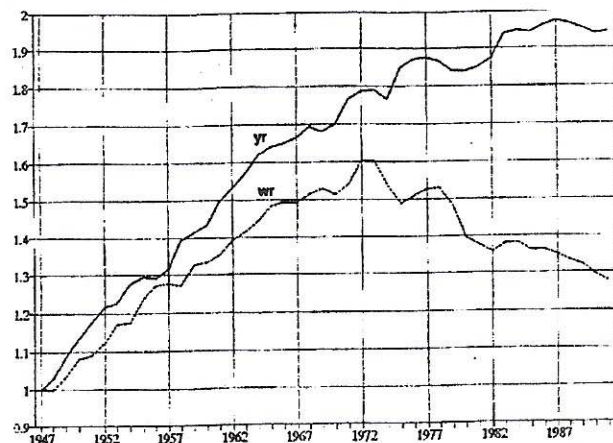


Figure 2: Productivity and Real Wages; y=productivity, wr=real productive worker wages

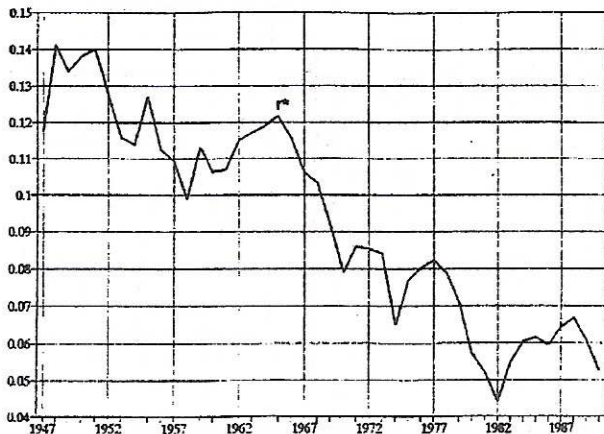


Figure 3: Rate of Profit (Corporate), adjusted for capacity utilization

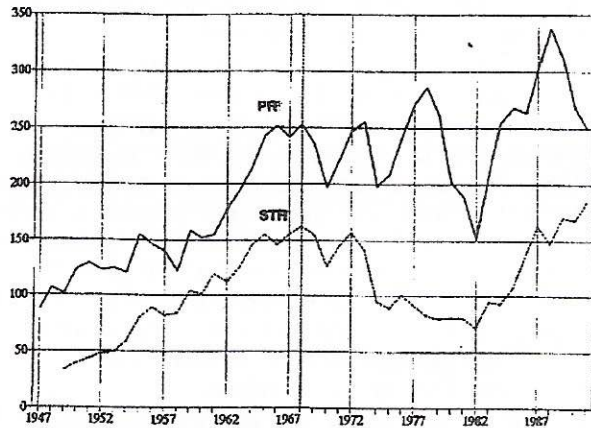


Figure 4: Real Profits and Stock Market Index; PR=real profits, STR=real stock market index

position of capital. This is data from the United States Economic Report to the President and from the Survey of Current Business. The only thing that is not conventional is my own measure of capacity utilization, and if there are economists here, I can talk about that, but I have written about that and published the data and the techniques in URPE and in a pamphlet put out by *Against the Current* ["The Current Economic Crisis: Causes and Implications," \$2]. So this is the data of the stock of capital relative to the wages of production workers (K^*/WP), the money equivalent of what Marx called the value composition of capital. And you can see that everything is index numbers, so that in the beginning it's 100 percent, so we can judge the relative rise, because that's the question. You can see that it starts off at one (by construction) and rises to over two, which is a 100 percent rise in the value composition of capital in the United States over the postwar period, from 1947 to 1990. All my data goes up to 1990, which is the last sort of systematic update I could make.

A crucial associated ratio is a ratio of capital to net output (K^*/Y), which again is adjusted for capacity utilization, and that rises by about 40 percent at its peak here and then has come down a bit. The movements of that are cyclical still, but the overall trend is very clear and substantial.

The second argument in Marx, which is crucially related to this, is the anticipation that productivity will rise faster than real

wages, i.e., the rate of exploitation, the rate of surplus value, will rise. So here [figure 2] we have one line representing productivity (yr), and one line representing the real wages of production workers (wr). This is standard data (BLS—Bureau of Labor Statistics; Economic Report of the President; Survey of Current Business). You notice that they spread apart, indicating that even in the period of normal boom accumulation, productivity grows faster than real wages. What is even more striking is how great the gap is since the economy began to stagnate in the 1970s. Not only have real wages now grown more slowly than productivity; they've actually declined absolutely for production workers. Many families have had to make it up by having more than one worker, having two people working in the family, working extra jobs, since per worker the actual rate of pay in real terms has declined.

This third graph [figure 3] is the punch line, the synthesis of all those previous tendencies, the rising rate of surplus value with a rising value composition of capital. It is the rate of profit, the corporate rate of profit, in the United States, adjusted for capacity utilization, beginning in 1947 and ending in 1990. Now I don't think it's hard to see that it is falling. Capitalists will tell you this, and in this context, at least, some of us are on the same side as business in terms of its actual descriptions as opposed to its prescriptions. The rate of profit falls from about a high of 14 percent to the present level of about 6 percent, which is an enormous drop in terms of profitability.

The next anticipation of the theory is that the mass of profit will rise at a slower rate, and at some point will switch over to an essentially stagnant tendency. You can see here [figure 4] that up to about 1967, which is the dividing line, the real (i.e., constant-dollar) mass of profit (pr) rises and then switches over to an essentially stagnant level. Notice the difference in the patterns. In the first period (1947-1967) you have a strong growth pattern, and you can see that the mass of profit has a very strong upward trend. You can also see how strongly the real New York stock exchange index rises until about the 1967-68 period. Now look at the pattern in the second half of the period. Stagnation for the mass of profit, but also very rapid and violent oscillation. That's a hallmark of structural instability. Notice the corresponding decline in the real stock market index (str). To a bottom in 1982, a rise till 1987, and now a kind of hesitation, but it's only basically reaching back

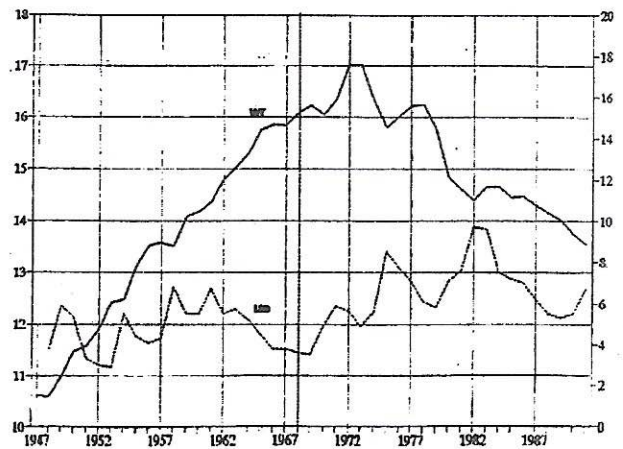


Figure 5: Real Wages and Unemployment Rate; wr=real productive worker wage, ue=unemployment rate

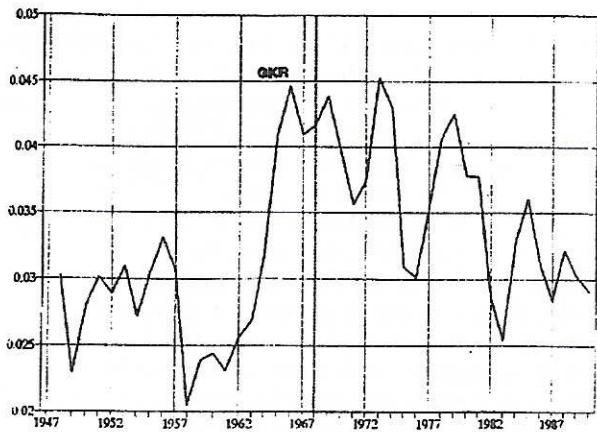


Figure 6: Rate of Growth of Capital; GKR = growth rate of total real capital

to levels of 1967. You'll see next how that pattern is even more striking in Japan.

Next is the real wage of production workers (wr) [figure 5]. I wanted to show the different patterns in the two phases. You see the real wage rising in the first half of this period, sharply and upward, while the unemployment rate is stagnant and relatively stable. Now look at the pattern in the second half of the period. The real wage peaks in the 1970s and then declines. The unemployment (ue) rises and is much more erratic in the second period.

The next graph [figure 6] is of the rate of accumulation, the growth rate of real capital stock, and you can see that it has lots of oscillations because it's a growth rate. But you can see a strong upward trend in the first half of the postwar period. Now look at its pattern in the second half. Notice the characteristic oscillations and the general downward tendency of the rate of accumulation. This is a very crucial rate. Obviously capitalists care a great deal about this, but it's also the rate that determines, in some sense, a fundamental stability of the system.

Now look at the real federal budget deficit [figure 7]. Up until 1967 you can see the pattern of slight movement towards a persistent budget deficit, especially because of the Vietnam war, but the pattern afterwards is structurally very different. That difference is true in many advanced capitalist countries, in fact in most capitalist countries. I don't need to remind you,

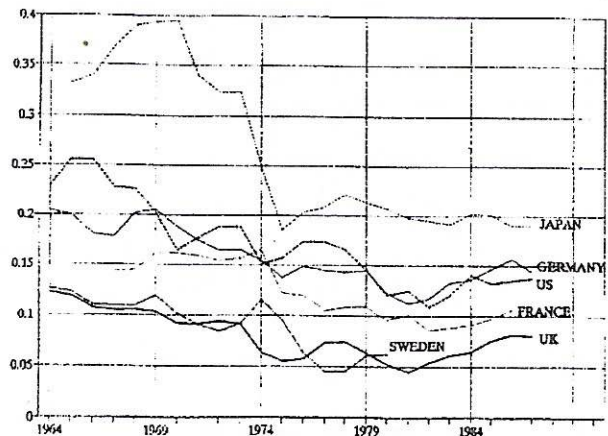


Figure 8: OECD Profit Rates; Mfg gross profit rate, $r = \text{GOS/GCS}$

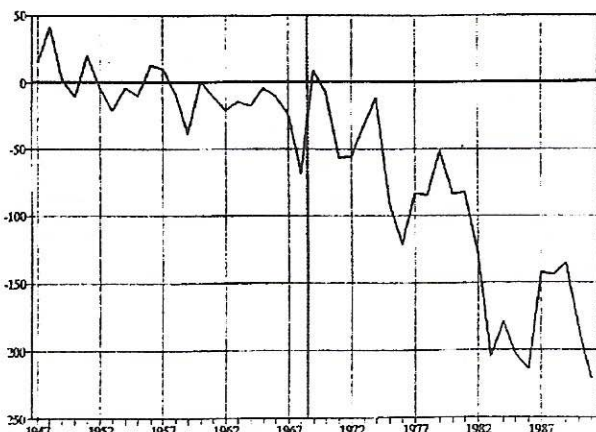


Figure 7: Real Federal Budget Deficit/Federal Budget Surplus/ppi

of course, that Reagan and Bush are probably the biggest deficit spenders in the history of the world!

The next graph [figure 8] shows profit rates in other advanced capitalist countries. This is from 1964 to 1988-89, because the data is not always available on a systematic basis. It is from the OECD yearbook, and it shows manufacturing profit rates. Of course there are different patterns and different conjunctural factors. Yet the overall pattern is clearly downward, substantially so in most cases. You will note that in almost all of these countries there is a kind of recovery in the 1980s. That recovery can be tied to the cutback of social programs, the decline in real wages, and increased unemployment. These are basically recovery methods which are built into the system. They are not accidental. You can see that sharply in the United States, and also the sharp rise in the United Kingdom. This is not an accident at all.

The last graph [figure 9] depicts the Japanese stock market. This is from 1987 to 1992, and you can see the stock market rising until about 1990, and then it declines down to 50 percent of its level since its peak in 1990. In the last year alone (1991-92) it has declined by almost 40 percent of its 1991 level. Many people are extremely frightened about this because it seems improbable that it will not infect the rest of the system.

I want to emphasize that this argument does not imply that we have to put up with the consequences of a crisis. The argument is specifically that the system has structural forces,

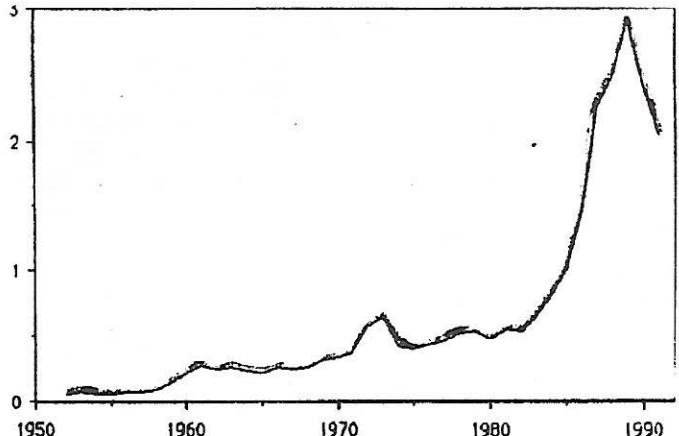


Figure 9: Japanese Stock Market

a momentum which produces these patterns and brings us to the crisis and therefore raises the issue of the viability of the system itself. The recovery from a crisis requires certain things which we do not have to accept. It is not natural or automatic or inevitable that capitalism will continue, that wages will have to be cut back, that many people will have to be unemployed. These are political questions. Questions which we are forced to face by the system itself. This is most evident, not so much in the advanced capitalist world, but in the third world where this crisis came much earlier and it is much deeper. Huge numbers of people suffer to the extent of dying from *these* consequences of *this* system. Any discussion about the great virtues of capitalism in Eastern Europe or in Peru and so on should keep in mind what it is that capitalism actually does. □

Ernest Mandel

My remarks will complement what Anwar [Shaikh] said because there are no differences between us.

We start from the assumption that a long depressive wave of capitalist development began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Like all long depressive waves it has a certain number of general characteristics to which have to be added some specific characteristics.

One general characteristic is the significant decline in the rate of growth, of output, of national income, in the most general sense of the word. The average of output in the capitalist world since the beginning of this depressive long wave is less than half of what it was in the previous period of the expansive long wave. Secondly, there has been a constant buildup of unemployment even in periods of recovery. Although the data are in dispute, I would say roughly that unemployment in the imperialist countries has grown, since the beginning of this long wave until today, from around 10 million unemployed to around 50 million. It continues to rise practically uninterruptedly. This is according to the real figures, not the government figures which are fake. Even the right-wing trade union bureaucracy and the International Labor Bureau in Geneva admit that the official government figures are false. In the third world the figures are horrendous. They go into the hundreds of millions.

The third characteristic, to which less attention is generally paid by many economists who consider themselves Marxists, is a deep crisis of capitalist leadership, the inability of capitalist governments or states to impose political lines and political solutions, from their point of view, on the system as a whole. This is a recurrent characteristic of a depressive long wave.

In an expansive long wave there is generally one hegemonic imperialist power which imposes its will, never mind whether or not it is good or bad for the system as a whole; it imposes it. After 1945, American imperialism imposed its will on the formerly defeated countries of Germany, Japan, and Italy, as well as Britain and France. Today it can't impose its will. Today that hegemony, in spite of its big weight from a military point of view, has been eroded. If you see one characteristic of the so-called "G-7" meetings it is that they achieve nothing. They talk, they give advice, but everybody does as he wants.

Now, we can add that there are at least two additional *specific* aspects to this current long depressive wave which make it a bit different from what happened in the past. Anwar has said that credit expansion, credit explosion, generally occurs in the second part of each expansive wave. It is a means of the system

to overcome partially its basic contradictions for a certain period, a means of postponing the moment of reckoning, but thereby also making it worse by postponing it. This is true. But in this postwar boom, the credit expansion took on a quantitative aspect which is completely new, an aspect that has never occurred before in the history of capitalism: long-term superliquidity.

The phenomenon of floating money has grown to a point which very few people in the world are really aware of. Even amongst the functioning bourgeoisie: industrialists, bankers, etc.—I don't speak about the ideologues who are generally not serious people—there are very few people aware of this fact. I will just give you a figure to indicate what I'm talking about. Every working *day*, about 150-160 days a year, on the currency exchange markets of the world the total volume of trading equals the *annual* volume of foreign trade. Can you imagine? Every working day it equals the annual volume of foreign trade. It's hard to believe, but believe it. Originally, currency exchange markets were tied to foreign trade, they were just supposed to facilitate the balancing of import and export of goods and services. Today this connection is broken. One could say that currency speculation has become completely autonomous from the volume of trade.

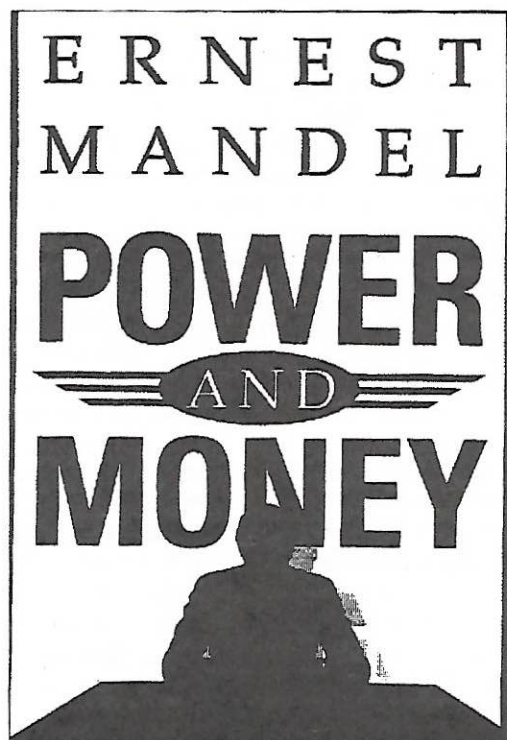
I'll give you a second figure which is linked in a certain sense—not totally—but in a certain sense to the first one. This is the fact that the real amount of floating money capital—liquid or semiliquid capital—in the world today is unknown. This is also hard to visualize. The money is there, it hasn't disappeared, but even its approximate amount is unknown in the literal sense of the word. The Bank for International Settlement is generally called the central banks' "central bank," but the term is wrong because it has no real power. It can just accumulate data and give advice. In its two latest annual reports the governor of that bank states that to evaluate the total amount of this floating money there exists a margin of error of 200 to 300 billion dollars! It is obvious that if nobody knows the exact amount then nobody can control it. You can't control something that you don't even know. This money is just floating around in the literal sense of the word, from one country to another. Now, what is behind this? Here I come to something which is really structurally new in this phase of late capitalism: a qualitative increase—not a total increase, that is impossible—but a qualitative increase in the *privatization of money*.

One can question that thesis by saying that this privatization of money due to the growth of multinationals and the speculators—many straightforward crooks like those who help the Mafias' laundering of money—is possible only because, in the last analysis, of a green light from the central banks and the governments. They couldn't play with hundreds of billions of dollars if the Federal Reserve System put its foot down and said, "We are not going to allow it. We are going to prevent the banks granting more credit by increasing the interest rate to 20 or 25 percent." But what would be the price for an interest rate of 20 percent? It would not be just a recession, but a slump as grave if not graver than that of 1929-36. So when I say that they get a green light, to a certain extent, it is because the capitalist class or the leaders of the government have no choice. They are really caught between two evils. They have chosen up to now what seems to them the lesser evil. Whether or not that choice will continue to remain the same we will see when we conclude

these remarks. This privatization of money also involves an organizational problem. This has been a point made by many experts in the banking and financial community. There is also the issue of the invasion of finance business by electronics, the possibility of transferring money with lightning speed. Huge amounts of money can now be transferred from one part of the world to the other in thirty seconds' time. This has a certain dynamic of its own. But it is, of course, completely wrong to detach these mechanics, these organizational and technical aspects, from what's going on in the real economy. As I said before, you have behind all that the operations of the transnational corporations, a qualitatively new stage in the internationalization of capital. That is the real key problem.

I have argued for more than 20 years that the main characteristic of late capitalism is precisely this: a qualitatively higher stage in the internationalization of capital and the international concentration and centralization of capital. Nearly everybody was arguing in the other direction, not only Marxists, but people like Galbraith and other prominent bourgeois economists. Today there are less than 700 transnational corporations which actually dominate the world market. I don't say every single sector of it. They don't, of course, dominate the grocery trade or the restaurants or even the level of output of agriculture, although agribusiness grows by leaps and bounds and is invading third world countries. But by and large, the key sectors of the economy are dominated by these transnationals which themselves are in the process of centralization of capital.

The figure of 700 will probably go down. Look at certain typical branches of industry. The high point is the aerospace industry where you have only three dominant corporations left on a world scale. That's a tremendous centralization of capital on a world scale, which has never existed before. These transnational corporations themselves are faced with a tremendous problem. They are not united. They have no common



interests except those of exploiting the workers and the poor population of the third world countries. As they group and regroup themselves in power blocs, they need a congruent bourgeois state to obtain basically two things: crisis management and the disciplining of workers. But the only states which exist today are nation-states whose area of operation is completely out of touch with the area of operation of the multinationals.

Capitalism has made an attempt to overcome that gap by trying to create supranational states: states of a regional nature; geographical power blocs. For example, an East Asian "state" around Japanese imperialism, a European "state" around German imperialism, a North American "state" around U.S. imperialism. But they do not really exist, are only semi-states or quasi-states. And even before coming into existence, they have already been surpassed by the radius of activity of the multinationals. What the multinationals really need is an at least partially efficient instrument of state regulation, crisis management, and disciplining of the workers. This would be a world state. But we are not going to have a world state under capitalism. That's out of the question. It's in complete contradiction to private property, competition, and all kinds of other phenomena intrinsic to capitalism, including a phenomenon of a political and cultural nature which one should not underestimate. This is one of the reasons why crisis management and keeping the workers down becomes more and more difficult; why the structural crisis of late capitalism deepens in this whole period of long depressive wave, and why the other side of the barricades, so to speak, is in for a lot of trouble.

We socialists have trouble, but I sincerely wouldn't like to exchange our trouble for their trouble! They are in more trouble than we are. And we at least can sleep calmly with a good conscience; they can't! Because in addition to their trouble they have a very bad conscience. And this is the case because in the world as it is today there are terrible things going on. In the third world there is hunger, misery, death. And epidemics which tend to flow over into the "first world," coming back here; coming back right here! That's like Montezuma's revenge from a world point of view! An epidemic like tuberculosis—everybody in the richer countries thought it was licked once and for all—but it's knocking at the door. Cholera is knocking at the door. And many other things.

Now I want to make a purely economic balance sheet of everything which I have said and Anwar has said. Why could this credit expansion not go on indefinitely? There are two curves which inevitably intersect at some point. If you have a declining average rate of profit and a stable rate of interest, from a certain point on you get a *negative* real rate of interest. And from that point on it doesn't pay to invest anymore from a long-term point of view. You lose by investing, instead of winning. From that point on the credit expansion stops being an element operating in favor of expansion of capitalist production. It becomes a brake on capitalist production. That's the basic explanation of this big speculation wave. Since it pays less and less to invest, owners of capital use money increasingly for speculation and similar purposes.

Now we come to the social-political aspect of the process. That is the key problem which we have to face as socialists. We are not observers sitting on the sidelines thinking all is

wonderful, all these bad things about capitalism and capitalists. Let them suffer. Unfortunately they are not the only ones to suffer. If you have a long depression hundreds of millions of people suffer. We don't take that lightly. We don't accept that as inevitable. We want to do something about it. The question is, What can we do about it? That's the real problem.

There are two basically different views of how long waves end. Everybody would agree that an expansive long wave turns into a depressive long wave practically automatically. A boom generates all the forces for self-destruction, for stopping itself. One of the basic theses that I've been defending for 30 years is that the same is not true for a long depression turning itself into a long expansion. I do not accept that. I have not invented that proposition. It comes from Trotsky. I have just spelled out the arguments to it. That is why you should not use the words "long cycle" because the word "cycle" implies automaticity and that automaticity only applies from up to down. It does not function from down to up.

That can be confirmed chronologically by showing that the average duration of downward long waves is irregular, while the average duration of upward long waves is more or less regular. The average duration for downward long waves can last for 20 to 40 years or more. There is no regularity in this. My contention is that the turn of the present depressive long wave into a long-term upswing, not a conjunctural upswing—the business cycle continues to operate within the long wave—but an upswing returning to the average rate of growth of the 40s, 50s, and 60s is completely unlikely in the foreseeable future. This is not going to occur before many, many things are changed.

This is not in and of itself an optimistic prediction. This means that we are in for a long period of instability, of growing unemployment, of growing misery, of growing chaos. But the final outcome is not predetermined for one basic reason: the relative autonomy of the class struggle cycle. Its outcome is not totally and mechanically determined by what happens in the economy. Increased crisis and increased unemployment do not necessarily lead to crushing defeats of the working class.

You are better placed in the United States than probably any other country in the world to understand that. Look at the effects of the depression starting in 1929 in different parts of the world. In Europe it led to crushing defeats. The working class was defeated first in Germany then in Spain and France. The same happened in Japan. But in the United States it did not. In the United States, in spite of mass unemployment, you had the biggest rise of workers' struggles and workers' self-organization in American history: the rise of the CIO and everything that accompanied it. That was not a crushing defeat. On the contrary, it was a tremendous step forward. It is true that it was historically limited because political class independence was not achieved, but it was a tremendous step forward. This means that there is no automatic link between economic depression and crushing defeats of the working class. These defeats depend, in the last analysis, on subjective factors, the capacity of the workers to fight back, the nature of workers' leadership, and so on.

This capacity is by and large a result of the *previous* cycle of workers' struggles. In the 1930s the working class came into the depression after previous defeats: the victory of Italian fascism, the defeat of the British general strike, the defeat of the German revolution in 1923 and so on. This is not the case today. Today the labor movement enters this long depressive wave with built-up strength as a result of a long period of high employment. There is absolutely no question of a crushing defeat even in Britain, not to speak about France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and the smaller countries. So the relative relationship of forces between the classes, built up as an end result of the previous cycle of class struggle, is more favorable today. It has evolved at the expense of labor, to be sure, for at least 15 years, but not in the disastrous way as in the thirties and forties.

It is my contention that the really central question of the future of the world economy is that of the class struggle. I believe this question to be more central than the question of technology, which is serious, and more central than the question of the partial reintegration of Russia, East Germany, and China on the world market. It is this class struggle question which is the question of the possibility of capitalism to trigger off a new long wave of expansion. In order to do that they have to decisively defeat the working class of the main imperialist countries, the masses of the third world, and the working class of the former Soviet Union. That has not yet occurred. The capitalists do a lot in that direction. They try. Do not underestimate their attempts, which are clever. These are attempts especially at division of the working class on a world scale, division along geographical lines, between genders, young against old, skilled against unskilled, unionized against non-unionized, partially unemployed against permanently unemployed. They tend to institutionalize a dual society in order to freeze the splits of the working class worldwide, nationwide, and regionally.

But they have not yet succeeded. The capacity of the working class and other exploited and oppressed to fight back is still very much there. The outcome of this struggle in the coming years will decide what will happen, and the stakes are very high. Today fascist or semifascist dictatorships are not on the agenda. The relationship of forces does not allow that. But if there was a new significant rise of unemployment, for example, if the 50 million unemployed in the imperialist countries became 75 or 80 million, if a steady breakdown of elementary union and workers' solidarity occurred, and if there was a continuous extension of marginalization, casual labor, and semicasual labor—then the fascists would get a chance. We should be very conscious of that. That would be, under the present circumstances, with the present weapons technology, a disaster for humankind without comparison to even Hitler's taking of power.

So by helping the workers worldwide and the exploited of the third world to fight back, to win defensive struggles first, so as to go over to the counteroffensive after that, by fighting for socialism we are literally fighting for the physical survival of the human race. □

Leninism as a Revolutionary Orientation Today

by Paul Le Blanc

*The following talk was presented as part of a discussion with Erwin Marquit of the Minneapolis Committees of Correspondence, Samuel Farber, author of *Before Stalinism—the Rise and Fall of Soviet Democracy*, Lee Sustar of the International Socialist Organization, and chaired by Lloyd D'Aguiar at the Socialist Scholars Conference in New York, April 1992.*

I want to begin by stating my fundamental thesis. The basic programmatic orientation of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the Bolshevik party, and the October 1917 revolution in Russia were profoundly revolutionary and democratic. In this, Leninism is the opposite of Stalinism. This is suggested, for example, in these comments of Leon Trotsky, a close comrade of Lenin's, characterizing many leaders of Stalinized Communist parties of various countries in the 1930s: "The predominating type among the present 'communist' bureaucrats is the political careerist, and in consequence the polar opposite of the revolutionist. Their ideal is to attain in their own country the same positions that the Kremlin oligarchy gained in the USSR. They are not the revolutionary leaders of the proletariat but aspirants to totalitarian rule."¹

Trotsky's estimate of the Communist Party membership was quite different: "The CP also has Jimmy Higginnes [that is, hardworking and dedicated rank-and-file members] who are honest and devoted. . . . A worker who is awakened by an organization is thankful to it and it is not easy to break with it, particularly if he cannot find a new road." Later he added: "In France the Stalinists show courage against the government. They are still inspired by October. They are a selection of revolutionary elements, abused by Moscow, but honest. . . . We must consider them from the objective Marxist viewpoint. They are a very contradictory phenomenon. They began with October as the base, they have become deformed, but they have great courage. We can't let the antipathies of our moral feelings sway us. Even the assailants on Trotsky's house [that is, during the first assassination attempt on him in Mexico] had great courage. . . . We must set the base against the top. The Moscow gang we consider to be gangsters but the rank and file don't feel themselves to be gangsters, but revolutionists."²

The grotesque corruption that is Stalinism—a vicious perversion of Marxism and of the Bolshevik tradition, not to mention the greed and mismanagement which became predominant among government officials and party chieftains—did not pass away with the death of Stalin. The bureaucratic system and the internal norms remained, in spite of periodic "de-Stalinization" campaigns, and in spite of honest rank-and-file pressures for reform and renewal. This bureaucratic system had nothing to do with socialism or with the dynamic Marxist and revolutionary organizational orientation of Lenin. Finally—in the late 1980s and early '90s—it has led to the collapse of the so-called "socialist camp," the USSR, and the once massive, revolutionary and proud world Communist movement.

One of the founders of that movement was James P. Cannon, who was also an early opponent of Stalinism and a founder of American Trotskyism. In a 1951 essay on "The Bureaucratic Mentality," he described U.S. Communist Party leader Gus Hall as "strutting over the platform in imitation of an all-powerful Soviet bureaucrat laying down the line, [resembling] a rickety dead-end kid in a marshal's uniform with a sword too heavy for him to lift and a pistol he can't shoot. The will is there, the expressions and the gestures—everything except the power. And

if you want my opinion, that's a good thing for this country and its working people."³

At the time, Hall was complaining that "around the country, in almost all the states, there is a core of comrades around the Party that I will call 'the disgruntled type.'" According to Hall, "we cannot have a liberal approach to such an influence," and he went on to defend the old Stalinist norms and perspectives. Trying to sound reasonable, Hall asserted: "We must tell these comrades, 'if you are sincere, if you want to help the Party and you have some beefs, come up to the Party leadership and discuss them!'" Jim Cannon commented: "But what if the 'disgruntled' are against 'the Party leadership?' Suppose they want to throw them out, not to 'come up to them' and talk things over? Hall never considered that possibility. There is no place for such 'beefs' in Stalinist practice."⁴

Today, Gus Hall leads the CPUSA with attitudes similar to those he held in 1951. But a large number of American Communists—extremely "disgruntled" with the persistent bureaucratic mentality in the Communist Party's leadership, and with many "beefs" about the poisonous vestiges of Stalinism that have destroyed their world movement—have found themselves forced out of the organization to which many of them had devoted "the whole of their lives." They have gathered together into Committees of Correspondence for the purpose of critically evaluating their experience, critically reviewing their own political traditions, and working to build a strong socialist movement in the United States. It is worth carefully considering the comments of one of the most well known of these "disgruntled types," the historian Herbert Aptheker:

To speak of a systematic source of the crisis and collapse in the USSR—and in Romania, Bulgaria, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland and Hungary—is to insist that the nature of the governing parties in all these cases was the basic source of the crisis. And what was the *nature*—that it was authoritarian, domineering, brutal, guilty of colossal *crimes*—not only suppression but also massive human extermination.

It is possible to understand—not excuse—these distortions and aberrations: backward societies, fearful suffering, the assaults of imperialism from Woodrow Wilson to Adolph Hitler to John Foster Dulles, the terrible burden of the arms race, the significant shouldering of assistance to national liberation movements, etc. But the fact remains of the terrible repression, domination and slaughter. . . .

Monstrous *crimes* . . . had been engaged in for years, involving mass murder; and these revelations also showed that *comrades* of other countries had been systematically deceived. And—for many and weighty reasons—many of us were easily deceived; we were credulous because we felt we had to be. Hence the revelations were stunning; and while some change occurred this change was partial. And clearly the monstrous reality had induced profound popular hostility among large masses in all of the nations named above. Hence this mass

hostility could not be withstood. And for those of us in the movement but outside the affected countries the blow was two-fold—first the stunning reality, and this compounded by the fact that we had consistently denied that reality. Hence our credibility—our honesty—is decisively questioned; for a revolutionary nothing replaces honesty. Without integrity revolutionary commitment is impossible.⁵

Comrades from the Communist Party who say such things as this deserve our respect. All serious revolutionaries should seek to engage in serious “give-and-take” discussions with such people. Here I want to raise two points as part of such a discussion. The first point involves this comment by Aptheker: “The colossal victories of the Soviet Union, its historical contributions . . . were due to *socialism*; but the collapse, the present crisis of the world of socialism, rests fundamentally upon the Stalinization of Lenin’s party.”⁶

First of all, I want to agree with Aptheker’s continued embrace of the Leninist party, and his sharp differentiation of that from Stalinism, even though our analyses may differ in important ways. This assessment of Leninism is historically accurate and politically essential—though that is at the heart of a controversy which we must focus on in today’s discussion. But I want to criticize the other part of Aptheker’s comment. If by “socialism” he means the idealism and enthusiasm of masses of working people for the *goal* of socialism, there is some truth to his statement. But we must insist that “socialism” in its *Marxist* sense never existed in the Soviet Union. Stalinism may be compatible with a nationalized and bureaucratically planned economy, but that has nothing to do with the socialism for which we struggle. The essential point was made by the Black revolutionary Marxist C.L.R. James in the 1940s: “The struggle for socialism is the struggle for proletarian democracy. Proletarian democracy is not the crown of socialism. It is its basis. Proletarian democracy is not the result of socialism. Socialism is the result of proletarian democracy. To the degree that the proletariat mobilizes itself and the great masses of the people, the socialist revolution is advanced. The proletariat mobilizes itself as a self-acting force through its own committees, unions, parties and other organizations.” This is also the standpoint of Cannon, of Trotsky, of Luxemburg, of Lenin, and Engels and Marx. Such mobilizing organization results in the working class being transformed, as Marx put it, from a “class in itself” to a “class for itself.”⁷

This brings me to the second point. How can the proletariat, the working class, defend its interests *today* in a manner that will lead in the direction of this radical proletarian democracy that can eventually culminate in socialism? Masses of people today are certainly not going to fight for socialism, but masses *are* already fighting for immediate economic and democratic interests and reforms, against reactionaries and capitalists. One aspect of the Stalinist tradition in the United States since the mid-1930s has been to lead working people into support for the liberal candidates of a pro-capitalist political party, the Democratic Party. As Earl Browder put it when he led the U.S. Communists, the New Deal program of the Democratic Party under Franklin D. Roosevelt “provides a People’s Front program of an advanced type,” although “within the Roosevelt following” there are “reactionary and progressive trends and forces.” According to Browder, “in this struggle we will also participate, and we will have many difficult, complicated, and dangerous problems to solve in organizing and influencing the masses in the struggles that take place within the Democratic Party.” Even after Roosevelt and Browder left the scene, and despite a temporary fluctuation in 1948, the U.S. Communist Party continued to be influenced by this general approach.⁸

This is inconsistent with everything that Lenin stood for. As he explained in a polemic with the Mensheviks: “The very notion that

‘our’ demands, the demands of working class democracy, should be presented to the government by the liberal democrats is a queer one. On the one hand, precisely because they are bourgeois democrats, the liberal democrats will never be able to understand ‘our’ demands and to advocate them sincerely, consistently and resolutely. . . . On the other hand, if we are also strong enough to exercise serious influence on bourgeois democrats in general . . . , we are also strong enough to present our demands to the government independently.”⁹

To lead working class activists and mass movements into support for capitalist politicians disorients those activists and derails those movements. As Lenin stressed, the struggle for short-term reforms must be advanced in a manner that integrates these reform struggles into a longer-range revolutionary strategic perspective. One aspect of this perspective is the political independence of the working class, putting mass pressure on *all* of the politicians and on the government, but remaining independent of them. Another aspect of Lenin’s perspective is working to achieve working class hegemony or predominance in the social and political struggles of our time. (By “working class” in the United States, I mean the great majority of our population—white-collar and blue-collar workers and their families, as well as the unemployed, as opposed to those big businessmen and managers who own and control the great corporations.) To the extent that the working class mobilizes itself as a self-acting force through its own committees, unions, parties, and other organizations, it can more effectively win short-term reforms while at the same time pushing more and more against the limits of capitalism, and toward a radical working class democracy that can culminate in socialist revolution.

Such a thing will happen neither automatically nor spontaneously. As Rosa Luxemburg noted from her prison cell during the mass slaughter of the First World War, the triumph of socialism is *not* inevitable; there is a choice: either socialism or barbarism. Socialism will be won only if we work hard and well to bring it about, and to win a working class majority to struggle for the radical democracy that is the basis for socialism. But in order to do that, the relatively small number of us presently committed to that goal must organize ourselves. And this brings us to Lenin’s conception of the revolutionary vanguard party, which I have discussed at length elsewhere. Here I want to concentrate on a question raised about the value of such an organization for those committed to proletarian democracy and socialism.¹⁰

One of the most sophisticated critics of Leninism is Samuel Farber. Along with many others, he suggests that Lenin’s organizational perspectives had more in common with the revolutionary-elitist Jacobin tradition of the French Revolution than with Marxism. In his book *Before Stalinism* he writes: “One of the principal features of what I would call Lenin’s ‘quasi-Jacobinism’ was his frequent emphasis on what the revolutionary dedication and consciousness of a few individuals and groups such as parties could accomplish. . . . Moreover, Lenin’s ‘quasi-Jacobinism’ was also characterized by an insufferable arrogance that is, unfortunately, too often found among revolutionaries in general. This arrogance seems to be based on the attitude or belief that the truth of the revolutionary activists’ vision is sufficient guarantee of their authority to act.” In Farber’s opinion, “this fundamental evolution to an anti-democratic perspective” inherent in Leninist organizational principles was a significant contributing factor in the rise of Stalinism.¹¹

I would argue that Farber’s analysis is historically faulty. This comes through as one reads Lenin’s own works and such histories as those by Trotsky and some of the more recent social historians, as well as reliable memoirs by participants on what the Bolshevik party was really like before the October revolution. Specific critiques of Farber’s book—by John Rees in *International Socialism*, Steve Bloom in *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, and David Mandel in *Against the Current*—strike me as quite sound, and

seem to demolish the thesis of an “anti-democratic” essence in Lenin’s organizational perspectives.¹²

I don’t want to shrug off Farber’s warnings against arrogance among revolutionaries—I think that’s a good point. Nor should we allow ourselves to believe that Lenin, Trotsky, and the Bolsheviks never did anything wrong, undemocratic, or inhumane. Lenin and Trotsky themselves never asserted such a thing. Particularly in the civil war period of 1918 to 1921, many terrible things were done and theoretically justified which run counter to the whole previous history of Bolshevism, which run counter to the main thrust of Lenin’s and Trotsky’s revolutionary-democratic political orientation, and which run counter to the Marxism and socialism to which many of us are committed. If we read Victor Serge’s great novel of this period, *Conquered City*, or Isaac Babel’s short stories on the civil war, we are given a vivid sense of these terrible times.

Isaac Deutscher once described it accurately and poignantly as “the great tragedy of the isolation of the Russian Revolution; of its succumbing to incredible, unimaginable destruction, poverty, hunger and disease as a result of intervention, the civil wars, and of course the long exhausting world war which was not of Bolshevik making. As a result of all this, terror was let loose in Russia. Men lost their balance. They lost, even the leaders, the clarity of their thinking and of their minds. They acted under overwhelming pressures.” All of this introduced serious distortions into Bolshevism and into the young international Communist movement as a whole. It is important to recognize that this *did* contribute to the rise of Stalinism. It is also important to realize that Lenin, Trotsky, and others who remained committed to the revolutionary Marxism that is at the heart of Bolshevik tradition struggled against these distortions and against the early manifestations of Stalinism.¹³

The primary importance of all this, of course, is not to get the history right, but to orient ourselves in present and future struggles. (It’s harder to do that, however, unless we *are* able to get the history right.) What *Leninism* implies, as an organizational orientation, for many on the left: developing collective structures to clarify, advance, and implement revolutionary socialist theory and program in a manner that helps build revolutionary class consciousness among working people and that provides guidance and coordination in the multifaceted struggles of the working class. It is intimately connected to a political orientation grounded in a substantial body of Marxist analysis and based on an uncompromising determination to build practical struggles for democratic and economic reforms, to defend the interests of working people and the oppressed, but to do this in a very particular manner. Such struggles must be integrated into a strategic orientation which advances the *political independence* and *hegemony* (predominance or leadership) of the working class. If the political independence and hegemony of the working class is achieved on a significant scale, the result can be socialist revolution.

Such an orientation was certainly not the monopoly of Lenin and those following him. Marx and others (such as Rosa Luxemburg, Eugene V. Debs, and a variety of “pre-Leninist” revolutionaries) also represent such an orientation. But Lenin and the early Bolsheviks symbolize the most consistent and successful effort to realize this project. A conscious and informed rejection of “Leninism” as such, in the late 20th century, implies far more than simply the refusal to uncritically endorse everything done in the name of “Leninism,” and it implies far more than simply the insistence that we must learn from the many profound mistakes

made by Lenin and the Bolsheviks. If this were all that is involved, Lenin himself would be the foremost “anti-Leninist.” Rather, anti-Leninism among most of today’s socialists represents at least a tentative retreat from, if not an outright rejection of, the traditional revolutionary socialist project.

I want to conclude with a very brief critical note about those in the International Socialist Organization and in the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (which happens to be my own organization), and in various other small groups that may agree generally with what I have said here. The relevance of these Leninist ideas for the present and future is seriously compromised by the fact that you are what you are—small groups competing with each other, with very few people listening to you, let alone following you. To the extent that you see yourselves as *the revolutionary vanguard*, you are being silly. Such a vanguard, as a coherent entity, does not exist in this country. Those who genuinely believe that a revolutionary working class vanguard *should* exist in this country have a lot of serious work to do. And that will necessarily involve moving beyond petty-bourgeois competitiveness, toward a more cooperative, proletarian collectivist mode of relating to each other—as much as possible working together in the class struggle and social movements, while critically sharing ideas on how to build the revolutionary socialist movement. □

Notes

1. Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939–40*, ed. by Naomi Allen and George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), pp. 350–351.
2. Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1938–39*, ed. by Naomi Allen and George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974), p. 243; *Writings, 1939–40*, p. 282.
3. James P. Cannon, *Notebook of an Agitator* (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1958), pp. 235–236.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 236–237.
5. Herbert Aptheker, text of remarks to 25th convention of the Communist Party USA, reprinted in *CrossRoads*, January 1992, pp. 10–11.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
7. C.L.R. James, F. Forest, and Ria Stone, *The Invading Socialist Society* (Detroit: Bewick Editions, 1972; first published 1947), p. 4. On “class-in-itself” and “class-for-itself” see Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Moscow/Leningrad: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R., 1935), pp. 145–146, and Ralph Miliband, *Marxism and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 22–23.
8. Earl Browder, *The People’s Front* (New York: International Publishers, 1938), pp. 13, 135.
9. Quoted and discussed in Paul Le Blanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1990), pp. 95–96; for a slightly different translation, see V.I. Lenin, “The Zemstvo Campaign and *Iskra’s* Plan,” *Collected Works*, vol. 7 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), p. 506.
10. Rosa Luxemburg, “The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in the German Social Democracy,” in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, ed. Mary-Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), pp. 269–270; Michael Löwy, “Rosa Luxemburg’s Conception of ‘Socialism or Barbarism,’” *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* No. 26, January 1986, pp. 9–16; Paul Le Blanc, “Luxemburg and Lenin on the Organization Question,” *International Marxist Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Summer 1987, pp. 41–56.
11. Samuel Farber, *Before Stalinism, The Rise and Fall of Soviet Democracy* (London: Verso, 1990), pp. 213, 214.
12. John Rees, “In Defence of October,” *International Socialism* No. 52, Autumn 1991, pp. 3–79; Steve Bloom, “How Should History Judge Lenin and the Russian Revolution?” *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* No. 94, March 1992, pp. 27–34; David Mandel, “The Rise and Fall of Soviet Democracy,” *Against the Current* No. 37, March/April 1992, pp. 48–49.
13. Isaac Deutscher, *Marxism in Our Time* (San Francisco: Ramparts Press, 1971), pp. 85–86.

The Genesis of the Theory of Permanent Revolution

by Michael Löwy

Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution has been one of the fundamental programmatic perspectives of the Fourth International. When the new leadership of the Socialist Workers Party around national secretary Jack Barnes began to break with the program of the Fourth International in the early 1980s, the initial focal-point of this break involved a rejection of the theory of permanent revolution. Those who resisted this break felt that Trotsky's theory remains an invaluable tool for revolutionaries in today's world.

*Michael Löwy, a Brazilian-born Marxist scholar living in France, wrote a brilliant study **The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development: The Theory of Permanent Revolution** (London: Verso, 1981) which was ready and widely circulated (sometimes in photocopied form and semi-secretly) within the SWP by those still committed to Trotskyism. This paper, summarizing aspects of Löwy's book, was presented at an international conference October 7-11, 1980, in Italy. This essay was first published in *Pensiero e Azione Politica di Lev Trotckii*, 2 vols., ed. by Francesca Gori (Italy: Leo S. Olschki, 1982).*

From the end of the 19th century to 1917 there appeared to be at least six different conceptions of the Russian revolution among thinkers and political leaders claiming allegiance to Marx. One can leave aside two of them: the populists influenced by Marx who tried for some years to lean on his writings on the Russian rural commune, and—on the opposite extreme—the “legal Marxists” (like Peter Struve) for whom “Marxism” was simply a form of justifying and supporting the capitalist industrial development in Russia,¹ because for these two tendencies the reference to Marx is rather superficial and will progressively disappear. There remain *four clearly delimited positions* inside the Marxist camp *strictu sensu* (in his well-known essay *Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution* of 1940 Trotsky simplifies the picture and ignores one of these positions):

1) The conception of the Mensheviks, for whom the revolution was bourgeois by its nature and its historical tasks, its driving forces being the proletariat and the democratic bourgeoisie: the power resulting from the revolution should necessarily fall into the hands of bourgeois forces.

2) Lenin and the Bolsheviks' conception, which also considered the revolution as having a bourgeois democratic character, but which excluded the bourgeoisie from the revolutionary bloc and saw only the proletariat and the peasantry as authentic revolutionary forces bound to establish, through their alliance in the struggle against tsarist absolutism, a common democratic revolutionary dictatorship.

3) The conception advanced by Parvus as well as by Rosa Luxemburg, which recognized in last analysis the bourgeois character of the Russian revolution, but

insisted on the role of the proletariat as the main revolutionary force destined to become hegemonic and to establish, with the support of the peasantry, a workers' revolutionary power (led by Social Democracy)—a power, however, which could not transcend, in its programmatic measures, the limits of bourgeois democracy.²

4) Trotsky's conception, which also supposed the hegemonic role of the proletariat in the revolutionary process in Russia and in the revolutionary government resulting from the seizure of power and which proclaimed the possibility of the democracy growing into a socialist revolution.

How was Trotsky able to shatter the dogmatic construction unanimously respected by all other Russian and European Marxists: the (programmatic) bourgeois character of the revolution in Russia? How could he cut this Gordian knot of the Second International's Marxism?

Before 1905, Lev Davidovich Bronstein's writings did not go beyond the political horizon of his contemporaries; for instance, in *Our Political Tasks* (1904) he even takes a stand which is not far away from Menshevism:

It is not yet possible to lead a generalized struggle on the political plane against them (the bourgeoisie)... Only the future free Russia, in which we will evidently be obliged to play the role of an opposition party, and not of a governmental party, will permit the class struggle of the proletariat to develop in all its breadth.³

It is true that in the same work there are some passages which sound quite different and seem to announce another perspective:

We communists neither wish to nor can forget nor postpone our proletarian tasks. It is to these tasks that we must subordinate our revolutionary tactics, not only in grey everyday politics, but also during the revolutionary explosion and in the very storm of the revolution.⁴

Only one month after writing his book dedicated to “My dear teacher Pavel Borisovic Aksel'rod,” Trotsky will break his ephemeral alliance with Menshevism, by refusing to endorse their support of the bourgeois campaign of “liberal banquets.”

The violent criticism of the bourgeois liberals will in fact be one of the central themes of the pamphlet he will write in December 1904, and which will be published a few months later under the heading *Before the 9th of January*. In this work he assigns to the proletariat the role of revolutionary vanguard of the people, and leader of the national revolution, but he limits the aims of the revolutionary movement to bourgeois democratic tasks (establishment of a Constituent Assembly, etc.)⁵

It was during the year 1905 itself, in the fire of the revolution, that Trotsky accomplished “the great leap forward” that put him in the ideological and political vanguard of European Marxism, by formulating the first elements of his theory of permanent revolution. In the preface to the Russian edition of some of Lassalle's works (on the 1848 revolution) written in June 1905, he advanced for the first time his perspective of a proletarian revolutionary government in Russia, opposing it to the Bolsheviks views:

It is clear that the proletariat, in order to fulfill its mission, must rely—as the bourgeoisie at her time—on the support

of the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie. He leads the village and draws it into the movement. . . . The leading force is the proletariat himself. This is not a "dictatorship of the peasantry and the proletariat," this is the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry.⁶

But it is during the summer that he formulated the main heresy: the possibility for the democratic revolution to grow into a socialist one; from his retreat in Finland, between July and October 1905, he wrote an article saying:

The proletariat already occupies the prerevolutionary scene. It is only the Social Democracy that can carry along the peasant class through the intermediary of the workers. This opens perspectives of the conquest of power for the Russian Social Democracy that anticipate those of the Western countries. The direct task of the Social Democracy will be to finish the democratic revolution. But when the

against the populists, the criticism of their "socialist" utopias and of their mystique of Russian specificity, by demonstrating the inevitability of the development of capitalism in Russia. Trotsky, who was 25 years younger than they were, found the field already cleared out and could permit himself a more nuanced view of the Narodniks (Lenin occupies in this respect an intermediate position); he is less obsessed than his predecessors by the need to prove at any price that Russia cannot escape the same fate as Western Europe.⁹ However, it is obvious that this explanation is insufficient: Mensheviks like Martov or Bolsheviks like Kamenev were contemporaries of Trotsky, but all did not share his views on the Russian revolution.

In our opinion, one can find at the roots of Trotsky's political boldness and of his whole theory of permanent revolution a specific understanding of Marxism, an interpretation of the dialectical materialist method clearly distinct from the one prevalent in the orthodox ideology of the Second International. This methodological

to reduce the doctrine to a kind of vulgate or recipe for the interpretation of the history of all times and all places . . . Marxism . . . is not and cannot be confined to the writings of Marx and Engels. . . . Since this doctrine is critical it cannot be developed, applied, and corrected if not critically.¹³

Trotsky himself starts, as Labriola does, from a critical, antidogmatic understanding of Marxism: "Marxism is above all a method of analysis—not analysis of texts, but analysis of social relations."¹⁴ In his polemics against the Mensheviks, who always use quotations from Marx to prove that "the time for the proletariat had not yet arrived," he attacks them as being "scholastics who regard themselves as Marxists only because they look at the world through the paper on which Marx's works are printed."¹⁵ In *Results and Prospects* (1906) Trotsky does not hesitate to criticize a well-known text of Engels (at that time wrongly attributed to Marx) where the historical backwardness of the German bourgeoisie and of the German workers are intimately linked: "Like master, like man." In fact, the essential part of his argumentation is based, as we shall see, on a precise analysis of Russian social formation and not on this or that writing of Marx; textual orthodoxy does not worry him too much. The only passage from Marx that he quotes in support of his thesis is that paragraph of the *Communist Manifesto* where Marx considers the bourgeois revolution in the backward and semi-feudal Germany of 1848 as the immediate prelude to a socialist revolution.¹⁶

This attitude of young Trotsky towards the works of Marx and Engels testifies to his intellectual independence and the originality of his approach, but it is nevertheless surprising that he did not utilize some texts of Marx which manifestly paralleled his own conceptions, particularly the "Address of March 1850" and the writings on Russia from the years 1877-1882. In relation to the first writing mentioned, the only possible explanation is that Trotsky simply did not know, at that time (1905-1908), this document of 1850 (this is quite plausible, since the old republication of 1885 in Zurich was not well known in Russia and a new edition in Germany took place only in 1914) and it is through Mehring's article in 1905 that he discovered the term "permanent revolution." As to the texts on Russia (like the preface to the Russian edition of the *Manifesto*) which he could not ignore, most probably he preferred not to use them because of their affinity with certain populist ideas (the role of the *Obscina*, etc.). To give the impression that one is making the slightest

"One can find at the roots of Trotsky's political boldness a specific understanding of Marxism"

proletarian party conquers power it will not be able to limit itself to a democratic program. It will be forced to take socialist measures. How far it will be able to go in this direction will depend not only on the internal relation of forces, but also on the whole international situation.⁷

We saw that Lenin rejected the Paris Commune as a model for the Russian revolution because it "confused" the democratic-republican revolution with the socialist one. Now, precisely for this reason, Trotsky takes it as an exemplary reference in a preface which he wrote in December 1905 for a Russian edition of Marx's writings on the Commune. For him, the future Russian proletarian power will be forced like the Parisian one in 1871 "by the logic itself of its situation to go over to a collectivistic practice."⁸

Why was Trotsky the one who, for the first time, envisaged such a bold perspective, considered as utopian and adventurist by all other exponents of Marxism in Russia?

It is possible that one of the reasons is a difference of generations; Plekhanov, Axelrod, Vera Zasulich, etc., belonged to the first generation of Russian Marxists, the one which had as its main task the struggle

peculiarity, which differentiates him from the dominant trends of Russian Marxism, is perhaps related to the author from whom Trotsky first learned the foundations of historical materialism: Antonio Labriola.

In his autobiography Trotsky remembers the enthusiasm with which he read (during his imprisonment in 1898) his first Marxist book, Labriola's writings on historical materialism, which revealed to him the essence of "materialist dialectics."¹⁰ His initiation into Marxism took place through a thinker who was thoroughly opposed to the neo-positivist and vulgar-materialist trends which were richly represented in Italian Marxism (Turati); a writer formed in the Hegelian school who constitutes a very special case in the panorama of prewar European Marxism, and who, according to Gramsci, was "the only one who tried to build scientifically the philosophy of praxis" as a self-sufficient and independent theoretical system, not to be reduced to other philosophical trends.¹¹ An author who was one of the first to reject the economist interpretation of Marxism by putting at the center of his method the category of *totality*.¹² A Marxist finally who always refused the scholastic dogmatism, the talmudic cult of the textbook, and criticized explicitly all tendencies

concession to the *Narodniks*, even indirectly, through a quotation from Marx, would have only aggravated his isolation inside Russian Marxism and facilitated the polemics of his adversaries.

It is at the level of method that Trotsky will be most faithful to the spirit of Marx's work. From the methodological viewpoint, his writings distinguish themselves by a truly *dialectical* approach, which radically differentiates him from most of his contemporaries, and particularly from Plekhanov and the Mensheviks.¹⁷ The following are some of the elements of this method, which is the foundation of the theory of permanent revolution as a quite important and peculiar political breakthrough:

1) From the vantage point of a dialectical understanding of the unity of opposites, Trotsky criticizes the rigid and frozen separation between the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat (nonexistent) and the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants—separation on which the Bolsheviks insisted—as an “operation of a purely formal logician”; this abstract logic

thesis. Indeed, one of the essential sources of the superiority of Trotsky's revolutionary theory and of the boldness of his political perspective is the fact that he observed *from the viewpoint of totality*, seeing capitalism and class struggle as a world movement, as an international system of contradictions. In the preface to a Russian edition of Lassalle, which we mentioned above (from June 1903), Trotsky wrote:

Binding all countries together with its mode of production and its commerce, capitalism has converted the whole world into a single economic and political organism. . . . This immediately gives the events now unfolding an international character, and opens up a wide horizon. The political emancipation of Russia led by the working class . . . will make it the initiator of the liquidation of world capitalism, for which history has created all the objective conditions.²⁰

It was only after the problem was posed in these terms that it was possible to

This point of view has nothing in common with Marxism.²²

Some of Trotsky's modern critics, though recognizing the absence of economist tendencies in his writings, try to detect in them some other “deviation”:

We may call this, for the sake of convenience, “sociologism.” Here it is not the economy, but *social classes*, which are extracted from the complex historical totality and hypostasized in an idealistic fashion as the demiurges of any given political situation. . . . In his (Trotsky's) writings, mass forces are presented as constantly dominant in society, without any political organizations or institutions intervening as necessary and permanent levels of the social formation.²³

In his answer to Krasso, Ernest Mandel has quite clearly shown this imputation of “sociologism” totally irrelevant for Trotsky's works after 1917 (it is enough to mention his articles on Germany in the '30s, for instance). Now, in our view, this charge is also not valid for the young Trotsky of *Results and Prospects* (1906). Krasso himself honestly recognizes that in this book “Trotsky shows a great awareness of the state as a bureaucratic and military apparatus.”²⁴ Now, isn't the state an “institution intervening as necessary and permanent level of the social formation”? In fact, the only concrete element that Krasso can advance as a proof of his thesis is the underestimation of the party in Trotsky's views on the revolutionary struggle in 1905-1906—an error that Trotsky himself will designate later as the main weakness of his political thought in that period. This being said, the statement of Krasso that “indeed, when Trotsky writes of the political struggle in Russia he never simply refers to the role of revolutionary organizations—he only speaks of social forces”²⁵ is in our opinion far from being exact. It suffices to refer to the leading role that Trotsky attributes to the revolutionary party in the seizure and maintenance of proletarian power in Russia, for instance, when he writes: “Collectivism will become not only the inevitable way forward from the position in which the party in power will find itself, but will also be a means of preserving this position with the support of the proletariat.”²⁶

4) Trotsky's method is resolutely *historicist*; the historical peculiarity of Russia, the historical roots of her development as concrete social formation are a central element of his reasoning, as we shall see. However, his historicism is not an impotent fatalism in which the dead seizes the living and the past determines the future; it is an *open* historicism, a rich and dialectical con-

“It is at the level of method that Trotsky will be most faithful to the spirit of Marx's work”

is even more sharply attacked by him in a polemic against Plekhanov, whose whole reasoning can be reduced to a “worthless syllogism”; our revolution is bourgeois, *ergo* let us support the Kadets. In an astonishing passage of a discussion with the Menshevik Cerevanin he explicitly condemns the *analytic*—i.e., abstract, formal, antidialectical—character of his procedure “Cerevanin develops a tactic the way Spinoza constructed his ethics: by the geometrical method.”¹⁸ Of course, Trotsky was not a philosopher and almost never wrote specific philosophical texts, but this makes only more remarkable his clear-sighted grasp of the methodological dimension of his controversy with the stageist conceptions.

2) Lukács stressed in *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) that:

The category of totality, the all-pervasive supremacy of the whole over the parts, is the essence of the method which Marx took over from Hegel and transformed in an original way. The primacy of the category of totality is the bearer of the revolutionary principle in science.¹⁹

Trotsky's thinking is an exceptionally significant illustration of this Lukacsian

transcend the traditional perspective, which denied the socialist-revolutionary “maturity” of Russia exclusively in terms of a *national* economic determinism; the question was now situated (by Trotsky) at the level of the “maturity” of the capitalist system *in its totality*.²¹

3) Economism, the tendency to reduce, in a non-mediated, mechanical, and one-sided way, all social, political, and ideological contradictions to the “economic infrastructure,” is one of the most essential characteristics of the dominant trends in Russian Marxism before 1914 (of which Plekhanov is the most coherent expression) explicitly rejected by Trotsky. This break with the economist tradition is one of the most critical methodological starting points of the intellectual and political itinerary which will lead Trotsky to the theory of permanent revolution. A key paragraph in *Results and Prospects* defines with precision the political stakes of this controversy:

To imagine that the dictatorship of the proletariat is in some way automatically dependent on the technical development and resources of a country is a prejudice of “economic” materialism simplified to absurdity.

ception of historical development as a contradictory process, where at every moment *alternatives*, different possibilities, are confronted. The task of Marxism, according to Trotsky, is precisely to “discover the ‘possibilities’ of the developing revolution by means of an analysis of its internal mechanism.”²⁷ In *Results and Prospects* as well as in his later essays (see for instance his polemic in 1908 against the Mensheviks, *The Proletariat and the Russian Revolution*) he tends to view the process of permanent revolution towards a socialist transformation as an *objective possibility*, legitimate and realistic, whose outcome depends on innumerable subjective factors and/or unpredictable historical events—and not as an inevitable necessity whose triumph is already assured. It is this understanding of the open character of social historicity that gives to revolutionary praxis the decisive place it occupies in the architecture of Trotsky’s theoretical-political system in 1905-1906 and later.

5) In the heat of their controversy with populism, the Russian Marxists—and

adopted dogmatic positions, as if it had wanted to throw away the baby with the bathwater.²⁸

The combination of these different dimensions of a truly dialectical method, clearly distinguishable from the dominant tendencies of pre-1914 Marxism, is without doubt one of the reasons that explains why *Results and Prospects*—a pamphlet written in jail in 1906 and which contains the first systematic formulation of the theory of permanent revolution—is a document unique of its kind for the prophetic quality of its predictions and the world historical scope of its perspective.²⁹

The starting point of the work is an analysis (inspired by Parvus and Miliukov) of the genesis of the Russian social formation and its peculiarities (developed and deepened in his next writings during the years 1906-1909, like the book *1905*, etc). The ancient towns of tsarist Russia, similar to those of Asiatic despotism, were mainly fortresses and administrative centers, and not nuclei of commercial and artisan ac-

capitalist countries like Germany; comparing statistics from the end of the 19th century he reveals that the percentage of the labor force employed in very big factories (more than 1,000 workers) was much higher in Russia (38.5 percent) than in Germany (10 percent). Through this analysis, one can see the emergence of a *first sketch of the theory of uneven and combined development*: in the book *1905* (written between 1905-1909), Trotsky stresses that in Russia one can find an articulation of “all the stages of civilization” from the most primitive and archaic agriculture to the most concentrated modern industry of Europe. From the vantage point of the concrete dialectical approach of synthesis between the particular and the universal, he criticizes the dogmatic and superficial conception of the Mensheviks on the nature of the Russian socio-economic structure:

They do not perceive the processes, unique to our time, of the world capitalist development which is the same for all countries to which it extends and creates, by the union of local and general conditions, social amalgams whose nature cannot be defined by looking for historical commonplaces, but only by means of an analysis with a materialist basis.³¹

This interpretation of Russian reality is intertwined in Trotsky’s thought with a broad and original conception of the world-historical movement. By a comparison between 1789, 1848, and 1905, he distinguishes three periods in modern class struggle: the first when the revolutionary bourgeoisie led the rebellion of the plebeian masses against despotism, the second when the bourgeoisie was no longer revolutionary but the proletariat was too weak, and the last one when the proletariat appears already as the leading force of the anti-autocratic struggle. The Russian bourgeoisie is more afraid of the armed Russian proletariat than of the tsarist soldiery; it betrays the revolutionary ideals of the historical youth of its class, ideals of which the proletariat is now the inheritor.³² One can to a certain extent explain the gap between Trotsky’s and Marx’s views on these questions by this difference of historical epoch; Trotsky lived in the period of actuality of the proletarian revolution which begins with the 20th century, and of which he will be one of the first to grasp the universal-historical significance.³³

The practical conclusion of this whole socio-historical analysis, at the level of *political action*, is the famous formula proposed by Trotsky since 1905: “the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry.” This slogan was of course considered as heretical by most Russian Marxists, in particular by the Mensheviks, for

“Trotsky shows that the concentration of workers in Russia attained truly gigantic proportions”

above all, the Mensheviks—insisted on the unavoidable similarity of the socio-economic development of Russia and Western Europe. Every specificity of Russia was denied, and the “universal laws of capitalist accumulation” pure and simple were extended to the Tsarist Empire. One of Trotsky’s merits was to have succeeded, to a certain extent, in operating a dialectical synthesis of the particular and the universal, of the specificity of the Russian social formation and the general tendencies of the development of capitalism. Thanks to this dialectical orientation he will be able to transcend, negate-serve (*Aufhebung*), the contradiction Populism\Menshevism, and formulate a new perspective, many-sided and more concrete. Later on, in a remarkable passage in the *History of the Russian Revolution* (1930) he will explicitly formulate this viewpoint, which is implicit in 1906:

At bottom . . . the populist conception . . . was not at all a vain speculation; it was based on real and profound peculiarities of the evolution of Russia, but understood in a one-sided way and not fully appreciated. In its struggle against populism, Russian Marxism, which demonstrated that the laws for all countries were identical, frequently

tivity as in Western Europe. At the end of the 19th century, the modern European capital was brought to Russia, suffocating the seeds of a Russian artisan, and destroying therefore the social basis for a massive democratic-bourgeois movement: the popular plebeian and petty-bourgeois urban layers. Russian large industry did not develop as in the West, “organically” from small crafts and manufacture, but was to a large extent directly established by great Western capital (German, French, English). This foreign and very modern origin of a great part of Russian industrial capital was one of the reasons for both the weakness of the Russian native bourgeoisie, and the relatively large socio-political weight of the young Russian working class:

The proletariat immediately found itself concentrated in tremendous masses, while between these masses and the autocracy there stood a capitalist bourgeoisie, very small in numbers, isolated from the people half-foreign, without historical traditions, and inspired by only the greed for gain.³⁰

Trotsky shows that the concentration of workers in Russia attained truly gigantic proportions, even compared to advanced

whom the role of the proletariat could not be but the direct expression of the level of economic and industrial development; it implied therefore that Trotsky explicitly rejected economism and that he understood the relative autonomy of the political sphere.³⁴

What was the main divergence between Trotsky and the Bolsheviks at that time on the problem of the social nature of the revolution? He agreed with Lenin that the revolutionary power to be established in Russia should be some sort of coalition between the proletariat and the peasantry; but he insisted that the proletariat should necessarily be the strongest, dominant, leading, in a word, hegemonic force in this alliance. In support of this thesis, he developed three kinds of arguments: 1) the inevitable subordination of the country to the town, since the advent of capitalism; 2) the impossibility for the peasantry to play an independent political role and its necessity to follow one of the urban revolutionary classes; 3) the absence in Russia of an authentic revolutionary bourgeoisie which

by Parvus, Rosa Luxemburg, and even (partially and intermittently) by Lenin himself. *The radical novelty of the theory of permanent revolution was located less in its view of the class nature of the future revolutionary power than in its conceptions of its historical tasks.* It is the idea that the Russian revolution could transcend the limits of a deep democratic transformation and take anticapitalist measures, measures with a *socialist* character, that constitutes, as we already stressed, the most original, bold, and decisive contribution of Trotsky's writings 1905-1906.

How does Trotsky justify his iconoclastic hypothesis? The key argument of his demonstration is that "the political domination of the proletariat is incompatible with its economic enslavement." If the proletariat holds political power and its means of coercion, it has indeed no reason to continue to tolerate capitalist exploitation. And even if it would only want to implement the demands of its minimum program, the dynamics of class struggle would force the workers' power, willing or

self-defense by the bourgeoisie confronted with the breaking down of institutional (state) guarantees of private property and profit, and with the permanent danger and insecurity which a workers' (revolutionary) political power represents. In other words: the contradiction between the political domination of the proletariat and the economic power of the bourgeoisie is unbearable for both classes; it cannot be but an ephemeral situation, which must rapidly be resolved in favor of one or the other social force.

Trotsky believes that this uninterrupted revolution will take place not only in the towns but also in the country, where the dictatorship of the proletariat will necessarily be led to take socialist measures (in the form of cooperative production on state farms), because the division of the great properties producing in large scale would be an unimaginable regression.

This thesis, which is far from being evident (the experience of the October revolution squarely contradicts it), leads us to the most debatable section of his conception in 1905-1906: the relation between the proletariat and peasantry. For Trotsky, the alliance between the two classes and the support of the whole peasantry for the dictatorship of the proletariat are transitory, and will not last longer than the period of abolition of feudalism; after that, the proletarian power will necessarily implement measures favoring the rural proletariat, and will stimulate class struggle in the village, resulting in the active hostility of the rich peasants and the indifference or passivity of the rural masses, which are not sufficiently socially differentiated. The pessimistic conclusion being that "the more definite and determined the policy of the proletariat in power becomes, the narrower and more shaky does the ground beneath its feet become."³⁵ Under such conditions, how could the dictatorship of the proletariat sustain itself? The only solution that Trotsky envisages is the extension of the revolution in Europe:

Left to its own resources, the working class of Russia will inevitably be crushed by the counterrevolution the moment the peasantry turns its back on it. It will have no alternative but to link the fate of its political rule, and, hence, the fate of the whole Russian revolution, with the fate of the socialist revolution in Europe.³⁹

The main obstacle to a socialist policy of the proletarian power in Russia is not economic (the backwardness of the technical and productive structures of the country) but *political*: the isolation of the working class, the inevitable break with its peasant and petty-bourgeois allies. Therefore, only

"Trotsky believes that this uninterrupted revolution will take place not only in the towns but also in the country"

forced the peasantry to support the power of workers' democracy; moreover, "it will not matter much even if the peasantry does this with a degree of consciousness not larger than that with which it usually rallies to the bourgeois regimes."³⁵ Lenin directly polemicized against this last view of Trotsky, by stressing, not without reason, that "The proletariat cannot count on the ignorance and prejudices of the peasantry as the powers that be under a bourgeois regime count and depend on them, nor can it assume that in time of revolution the peasantry will remain in their usual state of political ignorance and passivity."³⁶ Nevertheless, in last analysis, his disagreement with Trotsky was not so deep, since he also, at various occasions, insisted on the need for proletarian hegemony in the revolutionary movement. Besides, at the conference of the RSDLP in 1908-1909, after proposing the formula "the proletariat which carries behind it the peasantry," he finally rallied to the slogan advanced by Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg ("dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry"), explaining that the idea behind this different formula was in the last analysis the same.

As a matter of fact, Trotsky's perspective of a workers' power in Russia was shared

not, to clash with the capitalists: "the very logic of its position will compel it to pass over to collectivistic measures." For instance, it is probable that actions like state aid to strikers would provoke as a reaction of the employers the closing down of the factories (lockout); confronted with such a challenge, the proletarian power would be obliged to expropriate the factories and organize production. To put it in a nutshell: "The barrier between the minimum and maximum programme disappears immediately when the proletariat comes to power."³⁷ Obviously the revolutionary proletarian power Trotsky is referring to has nothing to do with the participation in government of a reformist workers' party in the framework of the bourgeois state (like Jaurès in France at the beginning of the century).

Trotsky's conception is in the last analysis founded on the understanding that during a revolutionary transition the political sphere becomes dominant: the political power of the proletariat becomes immediately a social and economic power, a direct threat to the bourgeois domination in the factories. In this condition the lockout or economic sabotage under various forms (stopping of investments, flight of capital, etc.) is a normal and inevitable reaction of

international help could save the Russian socialist revolution:

Without the direct State support of the European proletariat the working class of Russia cannot remain in power and convert its temporary domination into a lasting socialistic dictatorship.⁴⁰

These two predictions, intimately linked—the impossibility of keeping the workers-peasants alliance after the establishment of the proletarian power, and the need of a socialist revolution in Western Europe to assure the maintenance of this power—were subjected to frequent criticism by Trotsky's adversaries. Were they confirmed by the course of events in Russia? It is difficult to give a clear-cut answer to such a question. It is true that during the '20s the workers-peasants alliance broke down and a violent confrontation took its place. But was this inevitable, as Trotsky foresaw in 1906? Or was it rather the result of the disastrous policy of Stalin-Bukharin (support to the kulaks) in 1924-1927, and later of Stalin alone (forced collectivization) 1928-1930? The struggle of Trotsky himself and of the Left Opposition during the '20s against these policies supposed the possibility of a different orientation.

On the other hand, it is also true that workers' democracy, the proletarian power in isolated Russia, was not able to hold on after the defeat of the European revolution (1923); but it did not give way to a return of the bourgeoisie, as Trotsky thought in 1906, but to a bureaucratic layer issued from within itself, which politically expropriated the working class.

Besides, could it not be that these two series of events are interrelated? Did not the contradictions between the proletariat and the peasantry facilitate the emergence of the bureaucracy as an all-powerful arbiter? And did not the repression against the peasantry in the late '20s play a role in the monstrous growth of the GPU as a coercive apparatus? These questions are beyond the subject matter of our work, insofar as Trotsky's predictions do not constitute an organic part of the theory of permanent revolution. It is enough here to note that this aspect of Trotsky's view in 1906 is the most doubtful one and the most vulnerable to criticism.

Results and Prospects remained, for a long period, a forgotten book; it seems quite clear that even Lenin did not read it (at least before 1917)⁴¹ and its influence over Russian Marxism was minimal, if not nonexistent. As every forerunner, Trotsky was in advance of his own time and his ideas were too novel and heterodox to be

accepted or even simply studied by his party comrades. □

Notes

1. In an article published in 1908 at the "Neue Zeit" Trotsky shows how Marxism, understood above all as a doctrine of the "necessity and the historical progressive character of capitalist development," became at the end of the 19th century in Russia an ideology for the "reconciliation of a large strata from the intelligentsia with the role of intellectual servants of Capital"; Trotsky, *Über den Marxismus in Russland*, "Neue Zeit," XXVI Jahrgang, Stuttgart, 1908, p. 3.

2. Kautsky, in his famous article on Russia from 1906, could be located halfway between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg. In 1917, as it is well known, he will entirely accept the Menshevik viewpoint.

3. Trotsky, *Nos Taches Politiques*, Paris, 1970, p. 120.

4. *Ibid*, p. 44.

5. Trotsky, *The Proletariat and the Revolution*, in I. Deutscher, *The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology*, New York, 1964, pp. 42, 44, 49.

6. Trotsky, Preface to F. Lassalle, *Reo pered sudom prisjarnich*, St. Petersburg 1905, p. 27.

7. Quoted in Trotsky, *Ma Vie*, Paris, 1953, p. 133.

8. Trotsky, Preface to K. Marx, *Paritskaja Komuna*, St. Petersburg, 1906.

9. See on this question D. Avenas, *Economie et Politique dans la Pensée de Trotsky*, Paris, 1970, p. 7.

10. On the role of generations in the process of knowledge Mannheim shows that every generation "eliminates from the beginning a great number of possible ways and means of experiencing, thinking, feeling, and acting, and restricts the space of expression of the individuality to certain limited possibilities"; K. Mannheim, *Wissen-soziologie*, Luchterhand, 1964, p. 528.

11. Trotsky, *Ma Vie*, cit., p. 134.

12. Gramsci, *El Materialismo Historico y la Filosofia de B. Croce*, 1958, p. 85.

13. "Those who designate the new materialist conception of history as an economic interpretation of history are wrong. . . . It is rather an organic conception of history. In it the totality and the unity of social life is reflected. The economy herself . . . is dissolved in the flow of a process . . . and is historically conceived . . ."; A. Labriola, *La Concepción Materialista de la Historia*, La Habana, 1970, p. 115.

14. *Ibid*, p. 243.

15. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, London, 1962, p. 196.

16. Trotsky, *Le Proletariat et la Révolution Russe*, in 1905, Paris, 1969, p. 373.

17. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, cit., pp. 217-218.

18. Considering this methodological dimension of Trotsky's work it is quite astonishing to read in the pamphlet from the Communist Party of Great Britain, in 1977, that the decisive difference between Trotsky and the Mensheviks "was not theoretical, but a very specific tactical-political difference"; Lorzos Michail, *The Theory of Permanent Revolution, a Critique*, London, 1977, p. 28.

19. See Trotsky, *Nos Differences*, and *Le Proletariat et la Révolution Russe*, cit., pp. 378, 383, 374.

19. G. Lukács, *Histoire et Conscience de Classe*, Paris, 1960, pp. 47-48.

20. Trotsky, Preface to Lassalle, *Rec vered*, cit.; quoted in *Results and Prospects*, cit., p. 240.

21. See on this subject the remarkable essay of D. Avenas, *Economie et Politique*, cit., pp. 12-15.

22. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, cit., p. 195.

23. N. Krasso, *Trotsky: The Great Debate Renewed*, St. Louis, 1972, p. 22.

24. *Ibid*, p. 17. Some pages later, Krasso seems to forget this affirmation, since he writes without hesitation that "Trotsky's indifference to political institutions divided him from Lenin before the October Revolution"; p. 89. Would the State be a non-political institution to Krasso?

25. *Ibid*, p. 17.

26. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, cit., p. 212. The party referred to is the RSDWP. As a matter of fact, one could criticize Trotsky in this respect for giving a too preponderant place to the party in the structure of the proletarian power, to the detriment of the Soviets.

27. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, cit., p. 168.

28. Trotsky, *Histoire de la Révolution Russe*, volume 1, Paris, 1950, p. 419.

29. Deutscher has aptly described the historical significance of this writing: "Whether his work inspires horror or hope, whether one takes its author as an inspired hero of a new era, unique in history by its grandeur and its accomplishments, or as a prophet of catastrophe and misfortune, one can only be impressed by the scope and the audacity of the vision. He took in the future as one discovers, from the top of a high mountain, an immense unknown territory in which one distinguishes the great axes of orientation in the distance."

30. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, cit., p. 183.

31. Trotsky, 1905, cit., pp. 31-32. Comparing the number of workers in big factories (more than 1,000 workers) in Russia and in Germany, Trotsky shows that in the first country, the backward and semi-Asiatic one, it was three times larger (in absolute numbers): 1,115,000 as against 448,731 in the German Reich, *Ibid*, p. 369.

32. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, cit., pp. 186, 193.

33. A. Brossat, *Aux Origines de la Révolution Permanente*, Paris, 1974, pp. 186, 193.

34. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, cit., p. 197: "Between the productive forces of a country and the political strength of its classes there cut across at any given moment various social and political factors of a national and international character, and these displace and even sometimes completely alter the political expression of economic relations. In spite of the fact that the productive forces of the United States are ten times as great as those of Russia, nevertheless the political role of the Russian proletariat . . . (is) incomparably greater than in the case of the proletariat of the United States."

35. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, cit., p. 205.

36. Lenin, *The Aim of the Struggle of the Proletariat in Our Revolution*, 1909, *Complete Works*, XV, pp. 333-337.

37. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, cit., pp. 232-234.

38. *Ibid*, pp. 208-209.

39. *Ibid*, p. 247.

40. *Ibid*, p. 237.

41. Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*, London, 1962, p. 42.

Statement of the Russian Group, 'Revolutionary Socialism'

The following is the draft of a declaration signed by participants in a meeting on May 25, 1992, in Chelyabinsk (an industrial city in the Ural mountains) of "representatives of left parties and movements of Russia." The signers were A. Grushtilov and V. Volkov, from Chelyabinsk, and B. Semyonov, from Volgograd. As we understand it, the Volgograd and Chelyabinsk groups come from a three-way split in Boris Kagarlitsky's Socialist Party, with the other two groupings heading in different directions. The grouping led by Kagarlitsky is reportedly moving toward merger with Roy Medvedev's Socialist Party of Working People and the third grouping, headed by Mikhail Malyutin, is said to be moving toward Social Democracy.

The roughness or historical inaccuracy of some of the formulations in this draft, which may well be corrected in a final version, of course reflect the difficulties faced by numerous small groups in the former USSR that consider themselves revolutionary Marxists and Trotskyists and are trying to understand and apply that tradition after decades of Stalinist miseducation, destruction of older revolutionary cadres, and isolation from the rest of the world.—George Saunders.

1. Beginning of a New Era

The events that unfolded in Eastern Europe and the USSR beginning in 1989 have put an end to all of postwar history. The headlong collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracies laid bare the inner rot and profound demoralization of these antidemocratic regimes. Lacking any mass support, they collapsed like a house of cards. The culmination of these events was the juridical dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the policy of capitalist restoration being pursued by Yeltsin in Russia, Kravchuk in Ukraine, etc.

The postwar geopolitical balance has been destroyed. The confrontation between world capitalism and the Stalinist bureaucratic regimes has ended with the complete capitulation of the latter. There has arisen a new historical situation, in which the world working class again finds itself face to face, one on one, with the world bourgeoisie.

2. The Nature of Stalinism

It would be the greatest illusion to regard Stalinism as one of the varieties of socialism. The Stalinist bureaucracy established itself in power in the 1920s and carried out a counterrevolutionary coup, drowning in blood the revolutionary socialist movement of the workers of Russia. The bureaucracy quickly found a common language with the ruling bourgeois democracies of the West and was transformed in fact into an ally of world imperialism within the workers movement.

There emerged in the Soviet Union a deformed [izvrashchennoye] workers' state. Its historical uniqueness consisted in the

fact that, while maintaining the appearance of workers power, the Stalinist bureaucracy (the so-called nomenklatura) in fact ran everything. The existence in law of public ownership of the means of production in no way altered the fact that the economic wealth of the country was actually controlled by the state, while the state was in the hands of the bureaucracy. The workers were stripped of access to any lever of power.

In going over to a policy of restoring capitalism in the guise of Gorbachev's perestroika, the bureaucracy did not change its main aim—to suppress the independent workers movement. The forces of the new and old nomenklatura [privileged officialdom] are united in their common struggle against the foundations of nationalized industry and planned economy. Their goal is to entrench themselves in new property relations, while retaining political power. They see in this the guarantee of preserving and multiplying their own wealth and influence. These people are a danger to the interests of the majority of the population; they are dragging our country into the abyss. Our aim is to prevent them from carrying out their criminal intentions.

3. No to the Restoration of Capitalism in Russia

The dominant factions of the old and new nomenklatura are campaigning for the restoration of capitalism in Russia. The working class of our country once again stands face to face with a social system in which the main aim is the extraction of surplus value and the uninterrupted search for new markets to exploit.

Russia undeniably needs the closest integration into the world economy. But the conditions for this integration offered by the world capitalist market, as it exists today, would be ruinous for the people of Russia. They would be advantageous only to a narrow group, the privileged minority.

We must state with the fullest clarity that capitalism not only will not solve our problems but will greatly worsen them, throwing the bulk of the population of our country into conditions of poverty and destitution. This is a fate that most of the third world countries today are forced to endure. Our task is not to let these catastrophic consequences occur.

4. For a Mass Movement from Below

The policy of the present administration in power is incapable of making the profound changes that we need today. Yeltsin's innovations are the logical continuation of Gorbachev's perestroika. They will cast us into poverty and hunger. Those who call themselves democrats, liberals, radicals, and social democrats are trying to create a new nomenklatura on the Western model. These forces will not allow our society to really be changed. It can be radically restructured only by a democratic and socialist revolution from

the bottom up. The emancipation of the workers is the task of the workers themselves.

5. Our Ideal Social Structure

The Stalinist dictatorship betrayed and debased the ideals of the 1917 October revolution, drowning them in the blood of millions of workers and peasants. Having carried out its historical counterrevolutionary coup, the bureaucracy seeks to impose on the working people of Russia an outdated social order characterized by the zoological struggle of each against all.

We need a new society in which genuine freedom, democracy, and social justice will be realized, a society without oppression or any form of exploitation. We need a society without bureaucracy, without a state, without any form of privilege. We are for a government of the working masses, based on independent organizational structures of the mass movement.

6. The Proletariat—The Only Revolutionary Force of Modern Times

Neither the power of international capital nor that of the new nomenklatura and the nouveaux riches of Russia can or want to solve our problems. The only thing they think about is their personal power and profits. They promote democracy and progress only to the extent that those do not conflict with their interests. Only the proletariat, the working class, is not bound by any conscious restrictions in the fight for personal freedom and full democracy.

Only the oppressed and exploited population can bring us out of the crisis. It is the only creative force in the country. It is the only force that remains uncorrupted, with clean hands. Only through the utilization of its tremendous energy, held back until now, can our country be saved from final destruction.

7. For an Independent Workers Movement

After decades of Stalinist reaction the workers movement in Russia is fragmented and demoralized. The workers, to the extent that they take part in the political struggle, have so far supported and fought to assert not their own, but someone else's interests. The workers are being used as draft horses to cart the wealth of others from one palace to another, free of charge. At first the Stalinist bureaucracy carried out this maneuver with the workers; today the forces of capitalist restoration have foisted the same kind of "collaboration" onto the people.

The workers must free themselves from all forms of political dependence and become conscious of their own true interests. We fight for an independent workers movement which relies on its own experience of struggle and its own consciousness of the need to continue and develop that struggle.

8. Direct Action

Formal democracy cannot provide the masses with the possibility of direct participation in government administration, that is, deciding their own vital problems. Only direct action of the mobilized masses can push the situation forward toward change.

The peoples of Eastern Europe, who have thrown off the yoke of the Kremlin bureaucracy, and the working people of Russia, who decisively rebuffed the Stalinist nomenklatura's attempt

in August 1991 to reassert its former influence, provided vivid models of the kind of action we are talking about, demonstrating convincingly that the mass of the people is the only decisive force for historical progress.

We by no means reject the possibilities offered by formal democracy, but at the same time we advocate the all-round development and the closest possible coordination of efforts in struggle for the political mobilization of the masses and the satisfaction of all the demands of working people in general and the various peoples.

9. The Fight Against the New Government and Its Plans

We do not share the conviction that today, as before, the old Stalinist bureaucracy remains the main enemy of the workers. The new nomenklatura, which is heading up the drive toward capitalist restoration, represents the greatest danger to the interests of the workers. It not only defeated the old nomenklatura politically but, along with that, has subordinated to itself all the dominant factions of the bureaucracy, convincing them that the capitulation of Russia to the interests of the world market is the only possible future for our country.

All the burdens of this "joining the civilized world" are placed, as an unbearable load, upon the toiling masses of Russia. Yeltsin, who today embodies all the rapacious interests of world capitalism, has doomed the peoples of Russia to poverty, unemployment, and oppression. Since workers would never voluntarily allow such deadly experiments to be carried out on them, the new government, putting on democratic masks, is forced to resort to increasingly cruel measures of governmental coercion, unavoidably degenerating into a new system of authoritarian rule.

Before the working people of Russia stand two alternatives: either submission to a cruel dictatorship in the interests of capitalist restoration; or a new political revolution of the workers.

10. The Fight for a Way Out of the Crisis

We think that today it is necessary to begin an immediate discussion and search for ways out of the crisis in every neighborhood and at every workplace and school. This would be the first step toward drawing the entire mass of the population into the business of decision making on issues of public importance. Only a policy appealing to the cultural level and consciousness of the masses can create and organize a truly broad democratic movement of the people.

We fully share and support the full program of civil rights and civil liberties, as proclaimed by formal democracy. Among these we stand for the right of all the peoples of the former USSR to self-determination, and for a voluntary unification of nations on a basis of equal rights; we are against any forms of discrimination or racism; for full freedom of speech and expression (which implies the right of access to printing plants, radio, and television for anyone who is not a convicted criminal); for freedom of movement and choice of place of residence, including emigration. We are for preserving the system of free education and medical care. We are against the destruction of nature on our planet.

(Continued on page 46)

On Opposition and the Need for It

by M. Baitalsky

*Readers of the **Bulletin In Defense of Marxism** from December 1986 through February 1992—issues 36-93—are familiar with the memoirs of Mikhail Baitalsky, **Notebooks for the Grandchildren**, which appeared in the magazine in monthly excerpts.*

Mikhail Baitalsky was a teenager at the time of the Russian Revolution and with his friends became actively involved in the revolutionary movement in a small village in Ukraine where he lived. He and his friends went on to fight in the Red Army in defense of the revolution as the counterrevolution took up arms and with imperialist backing swept across the Ukrainian territory. They continued to be active with other youth in discussion clubs where they read, discussed, and organized. They moved to larger cities, became members of the Young Communist League, and entered adult life as rank-and-file revolutionary cadre.

As the consequences of the New Economic Policy in the 1920s gave rise to profiteers and crooks and as the bureaucratization of the revolution began to be felt, Baitalsky and his friends joined the Left Opposition led in Moscow by Leon Trotsky and other leading Bolshevik party figures. They became victims of the repression of the Opposition beginning in the late 1920s, when Baitalsky himself was also arrested for the first time. Although he recanted in 1929, a move which he later deeply regretted, most of his circle of friends did not recant. They were exiled and imprisoned in the labor camps set up by Stalin in the 1930s. Some of them were among the Oppositionists who launched the hunger strike in the Vorkuta forced labor camp in the winter of 1936-37, demanding to be treated as political prisoners, and who perished in the mass executions at the Brick Factory in Vorkuta in the early spring of 1938.

In fact, it was in honor of these comrades executed at the Brick Factory that Baitalsky wrote his memoirs for the new generation—"the grandchildren"—so that they could know that such a struggle was waged by the Opposition and what happened to them and why. Baitalsky survived two terms in Vorkuta. He was there in 1938 during the executions at the Brick Factory, which he barely escaped. After his release in 1956, he began to write his memoirs. His account is one of the few that remains of the activities of the Left Opposition in Ukraine in the 1920s, written by a participant still loyal to the ideas the Opposition was defending against the Stalinist bureaucratic degeneration. Most of the participants were shot and the written records of their work destroyed by Stalin and his police apparatus.

*We received this manuscript in 1976. Baitalsky died in Moscow in 1978. Although he had written numerous other works using pseudonyms—which were printed in "samizdat" or self-published journals—this work had never been printed anywhere when Baitalsky died. As far as we know, it has only appeared in **BIDOM**. Readers who are interested in this unique and remarkable historic material, which has such relevance today, can refer to past issues of **BIDOM** containing the entire nine Notebooks.*

*Interested readers will also soon be able to read the Notebooks in book form, as we have just signed a contract with Humanities Press to publish **Notebooks for the Grandchildren** next year. The Humanities Press edition will include Baitalsky's own introduction, which **BIDOM** did not include. This introduction also contains material that we believe will interest our readers, and to commemorate **BIDOM**'s 100th issue we are publishing an excerpt from it. Although it was written in 1976 under conditions very different from those existing today in the former USSR, Baitalsky's introduction still has a great deal of relevance. Indeed, the works of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, although published more than 15 years ago outside the USSR, have only recently been published in Russia in the Russian language so that Baitalsky's criticisms of Solzhenitsyn would ironically be quite timely to Russian readers today.*

*Although we have made some modest progress, we have yet to raise enough money to make arrangements to publish Baitalsky's Notebooks in Russian for the audience, after all, for whom Baitalsky wrote his manuscript. We hope that readers who share our appreciation of this work will help with this project by sending contributions payable to **BIDOM**, 27 Union Square West, Room #208, New York, NY 10003, earmarked for the Russian-language Baitalsky project.*

—Marilyn Vogt-Downey

In the name of justice, I must write here about those most outstanding activists of the Communist Party who as far back as a half-century ago summoned the courage to speak out about the dangers threatening the party (and the entire population) from inside the party itself. Now, fifty years later, it is easy to see for ourselves the reality that they were only predicting. Moreover, that is with the benefit of hindsight.

Having noticed the onset of changes that had not been anticipated, the Opposition of those days began warning of

dangers, expressing their thoughts in the terminology of those times and of those doctrines which were theirs. They called these changes degeneration, or Thermidor. The threat of Thermidor was the main source of their anxiety.

Now, of course, it is easy to declare not only that the degeneration took place but that the process has gone much deeper. For the dissidents of our era, it is easy to throw out everything that was known and forgotten before they came along, and begin the struggle for freedom of thought in the

Soviet Union with themselves. Is such self-reliance the sign of a broad mind and deep historical understanding? There were thinking people even before we came along, my friends. They used other terminology which is perhaps not yours and which may even be unpleasant to you. But they spoke about the same things as you do: freedom of thought and expression.

The Communist Party succeeded in coming to power. What party does not have this ultimate goal? And having come to power, it set to work trying to stay there. The possession of power has its own logic, determined not only by internal party factors but by external circumstances as well: by the present state of the country and by its past. Power has its own logic, but it also has its own inertia.

Opposition to the powers-that-be is necessary in any country, and in Russia it was probably even more necessary than elsewhere. If there is no opposition, the powers roll along, meeting no resistance, in one direction—toward omnipotence—trampling the very people for the sake of whom (and with whose blood) power was won.

The logic of power and the logic of opposition are radically different. The powers-that-be experiment on others. The Opposition proposes not only to alter but to cancel that experiment. If it is subjected to repression, as it was as early as the 1920s, it becomes itself the object of an experiment. The Opposition becomes a test of how far those in power are prepared to go. The Opposition frequently pays for this test with its life.

Power can attract careerists, rogues, cowards, and other dubious types. Such types can also join the Opposition, but not for very long, particularly if there is repression. The more severe the repression of the Oppositionists, the more accelerated the process of differentiation within its ranks. The only ones who remain are those who are prepared to sacrifice not only their secure positions but their freedom and even their lives for what they consider to be the interests of the revolution and the future well-being of their country.

I wrote a great deal about the Opposition in my book. I believe that it is necessary to write about it.

By the way: In *The Gulag Archipelago*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn tells about the Vorkuta hunger strike and, independently from that, speaks of Vorkuta Mine No. 8.¹ I want to clarify the facts: All these events occurred in the same place. Mine No. 8 was the name later given to what in previous years had been simply called “the pit.” Everything that has to do with the hunger strike and the executions began at this mine (“the pit”) and ended at the Brick Factory. Variations in the names can be explained by the varying sources of the accounts. But the overall picture readily emerges and the conclusion is clear: at the Brick Factory the definitive Opposition to Stalin was executed.

* * *

I participated in the Opposition inside the party in the 1920s, but in 1929 I abandoned the Opposition after Smilga and Preobrazhensky did. Now, I think, we need to focus not so much on the history of the Opposition (many books have been written about it although not in the USSR, of course), but on an aspect of the question that is topical even today: the role and

significance of a minority in winning, preserving, and reinforcing freedom.

The one-party way of thinking beguiles itself with high-sounding conceptions about the collective intelligence of the majority being superior to the intelligence of the minority.

This is not always true, and in cases where the scientific understanding of phenomena is at stake, it is never true.

When speaking of the sciences, there is no need, I would assume, to demonstrate that the intelligence of one individual (for example, Newton or Darwin) at first represents a minority view and only subsequently wins over the majority. But sooner or later, another lone individual or small group must come along to move science along and win a new majority of adherents.

There is no alternative route for the science of human society either. It can either move forward the way all science does—with a minority proposing amendments to the old, generally accepted truth (sometimes even totally repudiating it) as new data accumulate; or it can resolve all doubts and problems by a simple majority vote of the adherents—which has nothing to do with science at all. All we have in the latter case is one group or party with a platform battling for power against all other groups or parties, each with its own platform.

A party can have its own program, tactics, regulations, emblem, banner, and slogans. However, it can have a theory only under conditions required of all theory: that is, it is constantly being checked, analyzed, and consequently reexamined in practice. A theory, whose main essence was expounded more than a hundred years ago, and subsequent additions more than fifty years ago, could not foresee, for example, the modern revolutions in science and technology, which require decisive adjustments in any old theories of social progress. And was it only the scientific-technological revolution that the old theories did not foresee? Dozens of contemporary phenomena cannot be comfortably squeezed into them. What is needed is not only another approach; even new terminology is required. To analyze new phenomena in terms of old categories means to pour new wine into old wineskins.

Naturally, in the 1920s, we could not understand this. Filled with confidence in the scientific force of our views, we began to try to make decisions about the future course of development of Russia by majority vote. And I, fool that I was, consoled myself by thinking that with time I would comprehend the scientific wisdom of the party majority in rejecting Trotsky's conceptions and adopting Stalin's.

The greatest issue of divergence between them concerned the course for the development of the peasants. They both based themselves on the same article by Lenin which we call Lenin's cooperative plan. In it, Lenin proposed a gradual (only gradual!) introduction of peasant cooperatives. Both based their arguments on different interpretations of this plan. I had not yet managed, however, to absorb all the majority's wisdom in this regard when Stalin, with the wave of a hand, totally repudiated it and announced the 100 percent collectivization of agriculture, which no one had ever even contemplated.

All the theoreticians quickly began to play the tune that 100 percent collectivization was, in fact, precisely what Lenin's theory was all about (and those who played poorly were quickly shot). But what about the recent majority decision

which said nothing about total, immediate, rapid collectivization of the peasantry?

That is how the Great Seminarian [Stalin] proved that theory is no more than a piece of paper for others to read, but which he will use as he sees fit.

Then began the epoch of unanimity in the ranks of the party as well as among the masses. The liquidation of the Opposition in the party and of the kulaks (along with the "subkulaks") among the peasantry had a single unmistakable aim: to annihilate the minority who disagreed and actively objected so as to frighten and terrorize everyone else whose disagreement had not yet been expressed or who simply wanted to think about it.

Who were labeled "subkulaks"? This is clear even from reading Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned*: "Whoever is not with us is a subkulak." With the annihilation of the subkulaks, all protesting minorities among the peasantry disappeared.

The time of unanimity arrived and the 100 percent epoch began: all the peasants were 100 percent bound into collective farms, all the cows (those that survived the knife) were 100 percent driven into common sheds, and all the workers were voting 100 percent for a happy life, made possible for them by the great father and teacher.

In the absence of a minority to advance it, science stagnates. This is self-evident. New ideas—scientific, technological, social—are born from individuals, sometimes from two at the same time. They are carried into the atmosphere of the epoch. We recall the history of the telephone, the rise of Darwinism (Huxley), the meeting between the young Marx and Engels. Once the first person says out loud that the old no longer works because it constricts the development of the new, people begin to group around that person because they find these words express their own thoughts. Out of this minority comes progress.

Sometimes the minority succeeds in winning the masses so quickly and thoroughly that the masses will unanimously or almost unanimously support it. However, this only occurs in exceptional cases and cannot last for long. Life goes on and inevitably a new minority is born, putting forth new ideas. These need to be publicized and examined to find out which is best and, with its help, to improve the old doctrines. Constant affirmation of unanimity for years and decades on end means that all the newly emerging minorities who are proposing new ideas have been gagged and have barely uttered a squeak. Saturn devoured his children because he feared that one of them would overthrow him.

Until people have been turned into an army of robots, eternal unanimity in human society is impossible.

Society lives, people think and change: one has shifted from the minority to the majority; another on the other hand shifts from being satisfied or indifferent to being dissatisfied. The dissatisfied (whether they be called troublemakers, Oppositionists, innovators, revisionists, or anything else) are striving for change. So, in their day, the Social Democrats—including the Bolsheviks—sought social changes. Society needs the discontented.

Between the rulers and those who are ruled, there are direct links of administration and subordination. But in a state that calls itself free, there need to be mutual links through which the rulers can learn the reactions of the citizens to the rulers' actions. In human society, there has never been and in the

foreseeable future it is inconceivable that there could ever be only positive reactions from all of society's members. This is unthinkable if only because the rulers cannot fulfill their task of defending human freedom (all the rulers of our day proclaim that this is their task) without limiting the freedom of some.

Overall freedom requires that I can in no case violate the freedom of another; restrictions must be imposed on me. This is the job of the rulers who must publish laws and organize forces for public order so no one will get out of hand at the expense of others: the freedom of each individual is limited by the freedom of others.

The rulers must—this is imperative—restrict the freedom of the ruled. But what are the limits? Do they always remain the same?

They are changeable just as our conception of freedom is changeable. In different realms of human activity (expressing views, reading books, transmitting information, corresponding, moving from one place to another, etc.) the boundaries of freedom and its denial shift. Moreover, the rulers and the subjects have different understandings of where these boundaries should be.

For example, the authorities consider it proper to limit travel from village to city and from small towns to big ones. But the masses of citizens try by various means to circumvent this restriction; the citizens try to get to the city and do not believe they are doing anything wrong. Here we have two opposing views as to what the limits of freedom should be.

Only mutual links between the electors and those who have been elected can safeguard the proper functioning of a system of democracy that regulates the vast scope of human laws and freedoms.

Genuine democracy includes, in addition to laws about electing and recalling officials, a third most important element: the element that says that the Opposition minority can at any time raise a question of confidence in someone elected by the majority.

The fall of Nixon was the result of an article written by one person.²

There is no other reliable mutual link between the rulers and the people except freedom of expression—adopted as the guiding principle of democracy. No one must be silenced.

Freedom of speech guarantees any citizen the right to declare his or her opinion. Perhaps no one will support it or perhaps the majority will rally to it. The majority itself is guaranteed the right to verify each day whether it is right and to correct its mistakes. Finally, of course, it keeps the rulers from ossifying into smugness and complacency.

Glasnost can be likened to the arrow of a gauge, constantly displaying how the machine of democracy is functioning. If there is no glasnost, it is the same as having no gauge.

The bourgeoisie—it and no one else!—invented the main modern instruments of glasnost: the press and radio broadcasting. The prebourgeois means for mutual links was (and has remained) the "chelobitnaya."³

A foot messenger, chelobitnaya, declaration, or petition are pathetic little means for illusory and futile mutual links. They could be more accurately called anti-links. Their positive effects are negligible and their negative effects are enormous, which is why I call them anti-links. They train us all not to speak out publicly, nationally, openly, and bravely with all our might.

They teach us to humbly request when we have a right to unabashedly demand. The danger of anti-links grows many times more threatening in a country where chelobitnaya is all people have known for centuries.

Replacing the system of “majority-minority” with a system of unanimity simply meant the liquidation of the minority. It is a leap from the realm of necessity, as Engels described it, into the realm of totalitarianism. In this sacred realm, if anyone should appear proposing a road into the realm of freedom, he or she will be immediately apprehended and sent to a psychiatric hospital. In fact, perhaps one does have to be truly insane to imagine that there is a road from totalitarianism to freedom.

* * *

It is appropriate here to recall again that during the first decades of Soviet power, it was precisely the Opposition that was demanding freedom of expression. Forty years before the “samizdat” artistic literature appeared, before the memoirs and novels began to be circulated in the 1960s, there existed the samizdat political literature of the 1920s. It was attacked as counterrevolutionary, and for it brave people went to prison and exile. However, the breach we had made in the people’s consciousness then was too small, and Stalin through Vyshinsky and other top leaders quickly patched over the breach, reinforcing the cement with the blood of those executed.⁴

How can our failure be explained?

By the fact that we were not audacious enough and that the authors of the samizdat of the 1960s are bolder than us? Or was it because the Opposition had a poor understanding of history? Or because it started from a vanguard doctrine while authors of samizdat today understand history better because they have almost all thrown away this doctrine?

The answer is neither of these. In order to see how inadequate such explanations are, it is enough to imagine what would have happened, for example, to Shalamov or Solzhenitsyn had they lived in those years and had they been able then to foresee what the leaders of the Opposition foresaw. They would quickly have been taken away, just as all the Opposition was, no trace of their writings would remain and no one except the investigators would have ever seen their works.

No matter how powerful may be the works of writers whose themes are a past epoch, their power comes from the fact that they are interpreting what already was. They are describing what has already happened—long ago, or not so long ago, but it is the past all the same. However, the Oppositionists of the 1920s tried to convince society to focus its attention not so much on the past or the present as on their projections, their predictions, and their apprehensions regarding the future.

Fears about the future arouse few people when circumstances are tranquil. From 1924-28 the situation was not so troubling that the broad masses (of the party or the people) could believe the Opposition’s prognoses and warnings. Only a few years had passed since the civil war. The country was in a hurry to relax and get back into a stable routine. Everyone was trying to get reestablished. The peasants had received land from the revolution—which was mainly what they craved and why they had supported the Bolsheviks in 1917. They were now busy

coaxing their plots into production. The average harvest in 1924-28 almost reached 1913 levels (760 kg per hectare as compared with 820 kg per hectare in 1913). I recall that in the five years 1951-56, a quarter century after collectivization, the average harvest—800 kg per hectare—had not yet reached the 1913 levels.

A mood of conciliation reigned among the people during those bygone years. The New Economic Policy was in full bloom. People felt they had enough to eat for the first time since 1914. The cities had meat and there was plenty of bread. After many years of world and civil war, the village and city alike longed for peace.

I lived then in the Donbass [industrial and mining region in eastern Ukraine], where I worked for a newspaper and read thousands of letters from workers. The Donetsk workers in those years were for the most part seasonal workers—semi-peasantry who came to the mines to work during the winter to supplement their income. The main themes of the letters to the newspaper were the bureaucratism, the inattention to the workers’ needs, and the disorder in the mines. One general demand emerged: put things in order—not to change things or restructure them or come up with innovations; just put things in order. Thinking back over this epoch, I think that the sentiment in the Donbass reflected the mood of the entire country in those years, among the workers and among the peasantry: we want peace and quiet!

In such a setting, it was useless to turn to the country with dark forebodings about imminent degeneration, about the difficulties involved with industrialization, the dangers of anti-democratic practices, etc., about all those things that concerned the Opposition. The so-called Lenin levy, which brought an enormous number of people pouring into the party overnight, brought this mood right into the party with it.⁵ We want peace! We don’t want changes! We don’t want arguments! Leave us alone!

Of course, this was not the only reason why Stalin managed so easily to take reprisals against those who spoke out against him, but it was a very important one. The other, more general reason I named earlier: predictions by their very nature will not arouse the same response in society as will an account about something that has already taken place. This is especially true if it is an account about something that has been concealed for several decades. In that event the account takes on the element of surprise. It explodes like a bomb. Such a bomb was *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, in which Solzhenitsyn told succinctly but with enormous feeling not only about a ZK [prisoner] but about a whole period in the life of the Soviet Union.

The Gulag Archipelago was an even more powerful bomb. It had a big impact in the West, not on everyone, of course. But its impact could hardly have been much greater. What about its impact in our country? In our country, people do not know about it. When will they ever know about it?

The Communist Party initiated an extraordinary number of changes in Russia. But there is one change that neither the party, nor the working class, nor the Great Russian people, nor any great revolution whatsoever, nor even an almighty god can produce: the elimination of centuries of its historic legacy.

The servility inherited from the past is the main brake to Russia’s development. The two reasons listed above for the

defeat of the Opposition (their focus on fears for the future and the popular longing for stability in the country) were serious. But more serious still was historic inertia. This is a very general but at the same time very specific factor determining our entire life.

However, “brake” may not be the right word. To think that the inertia of the past affected Russia only as a force holding it back, fostering only stagnation and reaction, is convenient but untrue. In any society, the grip of yesterday over today never totally ceases. But it both restrains and pushes forward at the same time.

Whether we are moving forward or backward, we comprehend the new and the old in our own way, depending on the means for comprehending them that history has provided. Russia, like the previous Moscow state, was always an authoritarian society. It was not just an authoritarian state, however; this would be a superficial understanding; it was an authoritarian society.

The well-known peasant commune had little role in administration. It was mainly an instrument for apportioning duties and (in its early phases) an echo of the patriarchal unit. But it was never a school for popular power.

In an authoritarian society there is no such school. The masses are deprived of any opportunity to learn to use freedom. Having never had it, the masses cannot master it. A democratic tradition is acquired only through broad popular practice, assuming across-the-board equality and democratic rights. There was not a breath of this in Russia before 1917.

And after 1917? All right, let us accept for a moment the persistent assertions of our propaganda that Soviet democracy is the highest form of democracy in the world. Asserting this, our propaganda carefully avoids the epoch of Stalinism when there was no democracy at all in the society and not even a hint of any so-called collective leadership inside the party itself. There was one, sole leader; he thought and made decisions for everyone. As regards the first years after the revolution, even our own propaganda does not count these as years that saw the triumph of democracy, and refers to them as a period of dictatorship. Thus, the period of the maximum freedom and the maximum democracy in our country amounts to some 20 to 25 years at the very most. Is this not too little time to create a tradition of freedom and acquire training in it so that protests become a conditioned reflex in response to any attempt to impose restrictions?

Even if these two decades unleashed the full impact of the freedom-loving spirit (where is it?) and all the energy of the liberated, self-aware individual, and all the courage of love for freedom, what does this mean against seven centuries of the prerevolutionary cultivation of servility, and the additional deadly silence and submission of the Stalin epoch? Of contemporary Soviet adults, not more than one-third studied in schools where they no longer had hammered into their heads that we owed all our happiness to Comrade Stalin. However, even this one-third were bombarded in kindergarten with: “Thank you, Comrade Stalin, for our happy life.” It turns out that anyone over 28 years old learned this litany at some point: some when they were small children, others in later youth.

An ancient Jewish legend prescribed 40 years as the term necessary in order for a generation of slaves to disappear and

a generation of free-spirited people to arise. That is why, as the story goes, Moses led the Jews who were fleeing Egyptian slavery through the desert for 40 years. And there is a grain of truth in this legend: human psychology is stable. Attitudes are changeable but things that are deeply ingrained change only very slowly.

The average life span in those ancient times was most likely not even 30 years (in tsarist Russia even in the twentieth century it was 32 years). So if we start from the average life span today (70 years), in order to expunge from our minds all slavish habits beaten into our heads over the preceding centuries and modernized by Stalin, we need today some 100 years.

When elaborating their philosophy of history, thinking people have no right to ignore their country’s past or to pluck from it only the short periods that suit them so as to be able to confirm a preconceived schema. Russian history cannot be made to fit the ideological molds advanced by the Russophiles, or the similar philosophical molds of Solzhenitsyn or any all-encompassing doctrine.

Freedom alone can teach us freedom. For all its shortcomings, for all its limitations, only freedom opens a road to the future. Enslaved minds are the number one enemy of contemporary humanity. The right to express your views out loud is a prerequisite in our epoch for all other freedoms. How could the struggle against exploitation of one person by another have begun if freedom of the press had not allowed the works of socialists to be made readily available, if it had been impossible to publish an appeal to the workers, if speaking at public meetings had been forbidden? *Capital* was aimed squarely at the bourgeoisie, but the bourgeois governments of the West did not prevent Marx from either writing it or publishing it, although the tsarist censor banned it for a time. More than 100 years ago, Marx was able to read in the Library of the British Museum books that were unavailable in the Lenin Library in 1976, and which I fear will not even be available in the year 2000. Our plans project progress in any branch or sector you may want to name; but they say nothing about the future of censorship. They remain silent about it while it lives on. It lives on with the silence of society.

Without freedom of thought, speech, and press, the workers’ movement—and any other movement—cannot advance beyond underground cells, unable to win a single programmatic aim. That was the case in tsarist Russia. In fact, the Russian Marxist parties are indebted to Western bourgeois freedoms. If not for them, for example, where would Russian revolutionaries who had escaped from tsarist prisons and exile have gone?

These are the thoughts that come over me when I recall how I was imprisoned not once but twice in Butyrka, for copying Lenin’s letter to the party congress, a letter that was made public in the Soviet Union only 30 years after it was written.⁶ Some say that we wrote in vain, that we went to jail for nothing.

Are struggles for freedom that lose fought in vain? How many struggles have been lost and how few have been won! The memory of a defeat holds back those who are timid. However, that same memory can inspire those with courage and teach them caution and perseverance. But this can only happen if the memory is not allowed to die away—only if people can find out that it really happened. □

Notes

1. The Vorkuta hunger strike the winter of 1936-37 was organized by Trotskyist prisoners in the Vorkuta forced labor camp to demand treatment as political prisoners. Few accounts remain of this remarkable and unique political protest in Stalin's camps, which one account indicates may have also been a protest against the first of the three infamous Moscow show trials. According to Baitalsky, 300-400 prisoners took part. They won their demands and for a time the situation took a positive turn. However, as the mass arrests and executions of the purges reached their peak in 1938, Stalin ordered the execution of all the participants, a sentence that was carried out in March 1938, according to Baitalsky's report. At least two of Baitalsky's friends were among those executed.

2. The article was actually co-authored by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

3. A "chelobitnaya" was a communique in the form of a petition or complaint to the tsar or to local authorities in the Russian state from the 15th through 18th centuries.

4. Vyshinsky, Andrei (1883-1954), State prosecutor in the three Moscow trials 1936-38 during which all the prominent Bolshevik leaders from Lenin's time were systematically accused of monstrous crimes, forced to confess, convicted, and shot. These show trials were accompanied by mass arrests and executions throughout the country taking millions of victims. Vyshinsky went on to serve as Soviet foreign minister 1949-53. After Stalin died he served as the Soviet delegate to the United Nations until his death.

5. The Lenin levy or Lenin enrollment was a conscious attempt by the developing bureaucracy under the triumvirate of Stalin, Kamenev, and Zinoviev immediately following Lenin's death in January 1924 to flood the Communist Party with new, inexperienced cadre who were more amenable to

control from the top. First "workers from the bench" were drafted into party membership and then, in 1925, the peasantry became subject to the same campaign. As a result, party membership ceased being a matter of conviction or ideals; quantity was substituted for quality as most of the new recruits were unfamiliar with the basic program and history of what they were involved in.

A look at the figures allows one to glimpse the numbers and the enormity of the changes and the impact they would have on inner-party life: At the beginning of 1924 there was a total of 472,000 full and candidate party members. By the beginning of 1925, this had increased to 772,040 members and candidate members and by the beginning of 1926, to 1,078,182. "In two years, the number of party members had almost doubled and the total of members and candidates together more than doubled." See E.H. Carr, *The Interregnum 1923-1924*, pp. 358-63 and *Socialism in One Country, 1924-1926*, p. 193; Penguin Books, Baltimore, Maryland, 1970.

6. Baitalsky refers here to what is called "Lenin's Testament," a "Letter to the Congress" dictated by Lenin, then nearly incapacitated by illness, on December 23, 24, and 25, 1923. In this letter, Lenin sought to find a way to offset the influence of the rising layer of bureaucrats controlling the party by significantly expanding the Central Committee. He wanted to infuse it with new people "closer to being rank-and-file workers and peasants." In the last part of the "Letter"—dictated on December 25—having learned more about Stalin's rude and crude methods of functioning, Lenin called for his removal. The letter was read to the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1924 following Lenin's death but was subsequently concealed until the late 1950s, when limited copies were distributed after Stalin's death during the "de-Stalinization" period under Khrushchev. See *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*, edited by Russell Block, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1975.

Political Declaration (Continued from page 40)

At the same time we understand that only a mass socialist (that is, independent) movement of working people is capable in practice of carrying these demands through to the end, of transforming declarations into living reality.

11. For International Solidarity and a New International

The workers will not be able to win other than on a worldwide basis. Six decades of existence of Stalinist national socialism in Russia showed once and for all the complete mongrelism, from a scientific standpoint, and the political criminality of the attempts to build isolated workers' states. The world capitalist economy is one [or unified; yedino]; and therefore, world socialism, which must grow upon the soil of that world economy, can only be one as well. The workers "have no fatherland," not because they are not patriotic but because they are people of modern civilization, which has far outgrown national boundaries.

We favor support for all the forces and classes of oppressed working people in the world, who are fighting against imperialism and bureaucratism. We are for international cooperation in any form. Our goal is the coordinated efforts of all forces that defend the rights and interests of the exploited masses and

who share the position of the present declaration and stand on the principles of building a new International.

12. For a New Concept of Revolutionary Socialism

Never before in Russia has there been such a situation, opening up such broad and clear perspectives for a mass workers movement. We must build new forces that will act without any dependency on the government or the bureaucracy and that will appeal directly to the energy and initiative of the masses. In this we see the assurance of the invincibility of this movement, as well as the guarantee against its degeneration. The strength of the masses lies in constant motion, uninterrupted mobilization to build a better society in the interests of all the people.

Being convinced that the achievement of the goals of the present declaration requires the immediate unification of the new socialists and all our supporters, and proceeding from the above considerations, we are hereby founding a group by the name of Revolutionary Socialism and establishing an information bulletin *Mezhraionka*. □

[The publication's name is evidently derived from the name of Trotsky's Interdistrict Organization, or *Mezhraionnaya Organizatsiya*, in Petrograd in 1917.—G.S.]

The *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* had an unusual beginning, unlike any other political journal that I know of. *BIDOM* was born of necessity, and its early contributors responded as duty dictated. The initiators were few in number. They represented only one tendency among the Trotskyists who had been bureaucratically expelled from the Socialist Workers Party in 1982 and 1983, and others slated for expulsion in early 1984. The Trotskyist movement in the U.S. seemed then to have been decimated, its political mission abandoned. Altogether there were about 150 Trotskyists purged from the SWP out of a total party/Young Socialist Alliance membership of around one thousand five hundred. And these expelled were not in agreement on what to do.

Background

Inside the SWP those still considered "orthodox Trotskyists" by the party leadership, which at the end of 1981 had openly repudiated the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution, were hounded daily to demonstrate loyalty to the apostate party functionaries. The purge took the form of frame-ups, each suited to individual circumstances and all transparently fraudulent. On May 14, 1982, three members of the Minneapolis branch were expelled for organizing themselves as "the Cannon-Trotsky Faction" and for circulating a letter to party members which said in part, "We believe the party leadership has attempted to crush democracy inside the party." Among the three were Harry DeBoer and

Jake Cooper, union leaders in the 1930s and defendants in the infamous Minneapolis Smith Act trial on the eve of World War II. Both were among the 18 SWP victims who were jailed during the war. The third "factionalist" was Gillian Furst, active in the women's liberation movement of the time and in Irish solidarity work. Her husband, Randy Furst, had been previously expelled for persisting in angry denunciation of the SWP's condoning the renting of non-union buses for the 1981 Solidarity Day labor demonstration in Washington, D.C.

Throughout the year the "central leadership" of the SWP kept constant watch for infractions of "party norms" by unsuspecting members thought to be potential oppositionists. In November 1982 Anne Zukowski was expelled by her eight-member Minnesota Iron Range branch, acting as a "trial body" under instructions from the SWP national office. She was charged with revealing party information to a non-party member of the YSA. Charges were filed under article 8, section 1 of the SWP's organizational principles: "at no time are members of the SWP free to organize or participate in tendencies in the YSA based on positions not adopted by the party's leading bodies, unless a specific decision to allow SWP members in the YSA to do so has been made by appropriate bodies of the party." No evidence was submitted to show that any violation of this peculiar "principle" had ever occurred. Zukowski was expelled nonetheless. Her name was on a secret purge list.

Harassment of this kind continued without letup until all on the purge list had been forced out of the party, either by resignation or expulsion. Two of the SWP's most able trade union activists, Walter Lippmann in Los Angeles and Ray Markey in New York, were driven out. Lippmann was expelled on a flimsy excuse, and Markey resigned with a blistering letter that reviewed the record of expulsions to mid-1983 and accused the entrenched party leaders of converting the SWP into "an irrelevant sect."

Michael Smith was an early expellee, kicked out for writing about party problems to a friend in another branch. In the course

of his trial he protested against the secret taping of a telephone conversation between him and a top party functionary assigned to conduct the witch-hunt. Smith was then accused of exposing the party to FBI investigation because he had revealed the practice of making secret tapes of phone talks, strongly implying that Smith could be collaborating with the FBI. Such was the character of the frame-up technique inside the SWP at the end of 1982.

The Opposition

Under these circumstances the Trotskyist oppositionists on the SWP National Committee had maintained or reconstituted their organized tendencies following the 1981 SWP convention: Nat Weinstein and Lynn Henderson of the Trotskyist Tendency and Frank Lovell and Steve Bloom

of the Fourth Internationalist Caucus. Both tendencies tried to explain and expose the bureaucratic practices of the party officials who had usurped organizational control of the party, but these efforts were strictly limited to members of the National Committee because of restrictions imposed by the party leadership. This prevented the opposition from reaching the SWP ranks.

In anticipation of the constitutionally required 1983 convention the opposition tendencies formed a bloc based on a common program in defense of party democracy and a number of basic programmatic positions on which they had agreement, hoping in this way to elect a strong opposition delegation. But the party functionaries, including the handpicked National Committee, countered by canceling the convention. Instead, they organized an "educational conference," in early August, under their control at Oberlin College and mobilized the SWP membership to attend for the purpose of anti-Trotskyist indoctrination. At a plenum of the SWP National Committee following this 1983 conference the four NC oppositionists were suspended on the excuse that they had failed to properly report the dissolution of their convention electoral bloc. After that the purge was intensified until by mid-January 1984 all on the original purge list were finally out of the SWP.

This background information is essential to an explanation and understanding of the launching of the new Trotskyist

Along the Road to the First Hundred

by Frank Lovell

organization, Socialist Action, at a conference of expelled SWP members in Chicago, October 29-30, 1983. Following this conference *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* appeared in late November, issue No. 1, December 1983.

Division and Controversy

BIDOM was controversial from the beginning, the result of long-standing differences between the two opposition tendencies inside the SWP. The Trotskyist Tendency of Weinstein and Henderson was convinced soon after the 1981 SWP convention that the prospect of winning opposition forces inside the party was dim. They knew the purge would lead inevitably to their expulsion. They advised the formation of a new Trotskyist party, one that would compete with the SWP in the mass movement (unions, minority groups, organizations of social protest, etc.). They argued that the new Trotskyist party with a clear class struggle program and a fresh start could easily outdistance the declining and moribund SWP. Consequently they were anxious to get out of the SWP, bring all supporters with them, and launch the new party as soon as possible, instead of wasting valuable time inside the SWP. This is what the majority at the founding conference of Socialist Action hoped to accomplish. They hoped that if they adopted carefully written resolutions that could be interpreted as the programmatic and organizational basis of a new revolutionary party such a party would thereby come into being, with the help of hard-working and well-intentioned comrades, of course.

The Fourth Internationalist Caucus of Lovell and Bloom, advised by the veteran SWP leader George Breitman, had a different perspective. We urged all supporters of our caucus to try and stay in the SWP as long as possible, to recruit among SWP members to the basic program of Trotskyism which they had subscribed to when they joined. Under the harsh conditions already described this was not easy, but we believed it would benefit us in the long run to try in all ways possible to remain in the party. We argued that it was necessary to conduct an ideological struggle against the revision of Marxism introduced by the SWP leadership, and that in order to do this we had to challenge the new theories and document our struggle on all the disputed issues of the time, especially the political character of the Castro regime in Cuba and derivative questions.

When *BIDOM* first appeared a fairly large number of Trotskyists had not yet been expelled from the SWP. For example George Weissman and Breitman, both widely known in the radical movement as among the most articulate representatives of American Trotskyism, remained in the party. But not for long. Their names were high on the purge list, and in the first week of January 1984 both were visited and notified that charges of disloyalty were being filed against them. Weissman's appeal against his unjust expulsion describes the rationale and method used. He was visited by three SWP members representing the Political Committee. They told him that they were authorized to ask questions "about a matter that had arisen at the state convention (of the SWP) in California during a report on Socialist Action." He was told that he was suspected of having an "affinity" for Socialist Action, and that this was grounds for his expulsion from the SWP. This had been rehearsed by the inquisitors and was used as a standard routine. If not this then another excuse would undoubtedly have been

found at that time to expel from the SWP all remaining known Trotskyists. But it was clear that the founding of Socialist Action coincided with and facilitated the culmination of the SWP purge.

At the Beginning

These are the circumstances that conditioned the premature birth of *BIDOM*. The need to launch an ideological campaign against the systematic undermining of basic Marxist concepts by the assemblage of self-styled scholars at Pathfinder Press, directed by SWP secretary Jack Barnes, was urgent. The Fourth Internationalist Caucus had documents of the struggle inside the SWP waiting to be published. An effort to reach members of the SWP, for example through a magazine of Trotskyist theory (in defense of Marxism) had been projected at the conference in Chicago that launched Socialist Action, but the majority there showed little enthusiasm for it. And the leaders of the Trotskyist Tendency who had turned their backs on the SWP were less enthusiastic. The Fourth Internationalist Tendency had not yet been organized. Only a handful of comrades who were committed to the principles of Marxism and supported the strategy of the Lovell/Bloom caucus in the SWP could then be mustered. We talked about the *possibility* of getting out a magazine with such limited resources, financial and human. We had a small legacy bequeathed by Anne Chester for this purpose. But we lacked technical equipment. And, more importantly, we lacked technical skills and the necessary personnel. About all we had was determination, combined with ignorance of the magnitude of the task we were about to undertake.

George Breitman was skeptical but he said to me, "Well, Frank, if you want to go ahead with this I'll help you." And that is how *BIDOM* got started. At that time we didn't even have the name of the magazine. But we had a few willing comrades, anxious to get started and try and make something happen. Evelyn Sell designed the cover and proposed the name. While we were selecting the proper items for the first issue, Steve Bloom was also busy finding a printer in Brooklyn who could photocopy and staple the magazine. It had 38 pages and front and back covers. The first press run was two hundred, which had to be supplemented by another 100 or so. We mailed copies to a list of SWP friends and sympathizers, and to some ex-SWP members and all expellees. On the front cover we solicited "requests, materials, financial contributions," and we had a return address which would remain unchanged through the following 99 issues.

We thought the first issue looked pretty good and hoped others would like it. But we wanted most of all to reach readers who would welcome and appreciate its contents. We announced our intention to continue in the Marxist tradition, to identify with the program and policy of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, and to launch an ideological campaign against the SWP-Barnesite revisionism of Marxist principles. We fully expected at that time that this ideological campaign would be taken up by other sections of the FI and by the United Secretariat.

The contents of *BIDOM* No. 1 were five items: "Statement by Members of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International Invited to Attend the SWP National Committee Plenum,"

August 8, 1983 (where the four NC oppositionists were suspended); "Sound the Alarm!" by the four suspended SWP National Committee members, drafted September 7, 1983; "The Political Purge in the American Socialist Workers Party," a statement adopted by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, October 1983; "Declaration of 19 Members of the United Secretariat" (on the SWP purge); "Resolving the International Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership Today" (draft resolution submitted to SWP National Committee plenum by the four suspended NC members, before their suspension, August 6, 1983; "New International Slanders FI," translated and reprinted from *Quatrieme Internationale*, December 1983.

The Documentary Record

This was the first public announcement with documentary materials on the struggle inside the SWP. Most alert radicals knew that something was going on by what had been published in the *Militant*, *Intercontinental Press*, *International Socialist Review*, *New International*, and other Barnesite outlets. But this was the first release of opposition documents. A quick response came from some of the curious, but the most enthusiastic responses came from members and close sympathizers of the SWP and from the growing ranks of expellees. In due time we also received encouragement from Trotskyists in several other countries, from as far away as China and India and, eventually, Japan. From here in the U.S. we have in *BIDOM* files a note of January 14, 1984, from Dayne Goodwin of Salt Lake City, Utah, with a financial contribution. At the same time we heard from Bill Breihan in Milwaukee, requesting more copies. Adam Shiels, a supporter of our caucus while still in the SWP Chicago branch, sent a letter of congratulation. These are three examples of early reactions to the first issue of *BIDOM*. All three of these working class militants mentioned here would eventually become identified with *BIDOM*, and involved in the continuing production of it. These early words of encouragement were most welcome at the time because we needed reassurance that there was a genuine interest in the complete documentary record of our ideological struggle against the SWP revisionists. That record is only now available in its entirety, completed with the publication in September this year of the three-volume set *In Defense of American Trotskyism*. We expect that these books will receive the same appreciative responses that greeted the emergence of *BIDOM* from the crevices of the SWP.

Louis Sinclair, the bibliographer of the complete works of Leon Trotsky (in all languages), was probably the first, certainly among the first, to hail the appearance of *BIDOM*. When the first issue reached him at his home in Glasgow, he immediately sent back one of his typically cryptic notes wishing *BIDOM* a long and expansive life. He had his reasons. While researching Trotsky materials, in New York and at the Harvard library in Boston, Sinclair had encountered SWP "leaders" of the Barnes school long before any of them began to explain publicly "Trotsky's differences with Lenin," and he was quickly convinced that they were anti-Trotskyists and would eventually destroy the SWP. He was not shy in expressing his perception and prediction to Breitman and others. Consequently, he felt vindicated in his judgment of the Barnesites by the documents that were being published in *BIDOM*. There must have been

another reason for Sinclair's enthusiasm as well. That was his close association and collaboration with George Breitman on the 14-volume collection of Trotsky's writings, edited by Breitman. The friendship and respect between the two was mutual. Breitman had recommended Sinclair's *Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography* as "essential reading for all serious students of Trotsky's work." They also shared common opinions of the weakness and limitation of the SWP leadership in 1980, although Breitman was less harsh.

The record of the ideological struggle inside the SWP and the publication of a Trotskyist theoretical journal was and is most important to us who are engaged in the revolutionary socialist movement because we are always confronted with the need to explain ourselves and justify our cause. We must be able to say where we came from and keep unblemished the record of our past. This was one of the deep divisions between *BIDOM* supporters and Socialist Action builders from the beginning. We tried to explain that it is better to fight at every juncture for the gains made by our predecessors, rather than walk away and try to start over again with nothing to show for past struggles. We believe that the struggle to build the socialist movement in the U.S. is continuous, that those in the vanguard must explain where they came from, and that past struggles are the essential schooling and necessary preparation for coming battles.

More Encouraging Responses and Other Kinds

Each succeeding issue of *BIDOM* continued to publish more documentation on the struggle inside the SWP, and to analyze the shifting political course of the party. Our primary audience was the SWP membership. And we constantly sought ways to circumvent the prejudice against us and against Trotskyism that was deliberately and subtly fostered by the Barnesites. This was in addition to the organizational barriers erected between us and the SWP membership, prohibitions against speaking to us or reading our magazine or allowing us in their public meetings and bookstores. From the start we mailed *BIDOM* to the home addresses of all SWP members we knew, and to the branch headquarters. What came back was mostly silence. We received only one angry denunciation, and this from an ex-SWP "leader" in Salt Lake City who said he had left the party because he was tired and demoralized. He urged us to follow his example and quit politics. To offset this we received several anonymous notes of encouragement and a few changes of address with requests for future issues of *BIDOM*. There were also the exceptions of SWP comrades who began supplying us with internal party directives and discussion material. In some instances it was several years later that we learned who these comrades were.

During its first year *BIDOM* seemed almost exclusively preoccupied with internal affairs of the SWP and the responses of the party to the shifting political situation in the U.S. and internationally. A half dozen or so expellees of our tendency attended the site of the 1984 SWP convention at Oberlin, Ohio, in August of that year. All SWP members were cautioned not to talk to us, and one who did was summarily expelled and physically removed from the convention's housing facilities. She came to our hotel to tell us what happened and to express satisfaction in the fact that the SWP did not at the time have

state power. We continued to show our slogans for party democracy and invited private discussion with party members. During this past year Glen Munroe sent me a personal letter to say that our early efforts were not wasted, that he and several others became aware for the first time at the 1984 SWP convention that something was seriously wrong with the party.

Additional Dimensions

The impression that *BIDOM* in the beginning was devoted entirely to SWP politics and problems of democracy inside the party is not completely accurate. We had our own problems that had to be resolved, and these were reported in the pages of our magazine. *BIDOM* No. 3, February 1984, carried a "call for the Fourth Internationalist Tendency," signed by Naomi Allen, George Breitman, and George Saunders. The next issue, No. 4, announced that FIT had been organized nationally at a conference in Minneapolis on the weekend of February 3-5. *BIDOM* then became the official publication of FIT, its first editorial board being Naomi Allen, Steve Bloom, George Breitman, Frank Lovell, Sarah Lovell, Bill Onasch, Christine Frank Onasch, George Saunders, Evelyn Sell, Rita Shaw, Adam Shils, Larry Stewart, Jean Tussey, George Lavan Weissman.

Coincidental with the formal organization of FIT we began recruiting new members, facilitated in large part by the "mopping up" of the SWP purge in January 1984. Seven of the most experienced and politically active members of the Minneapolis branch were expelled as a group. They identified immediately with *BIDOM* and hosted the founding conference of FIT. Their trial statements and accusations of frame-up were published in *BIDOM* No. 2, January 1984. Dave Riehle, one of the Minneapolis group, quoted James P. Cannon from the "Platform of the Communist Opposition, 1929," comparing the SWP Barnesites to the Stalinists of the 1920s in the U.S. Communist Party. Cannon had said, "All talk of party democracy in the face of suppression on all sides and wholesale expulsion of comrades for their views is a swindle."

More Writers and Some Staff Members

Growing circulation of *BIDOM* helped bring new recruits to FIT, some former SWP members and others still in the party periphery. Among these first recruits were some writers and former party organizers, including Tom Bias, Laura Cole, Carl Jackson; and others came later. I have written elsewhere that Bill Onasch moved to New York later (in 1987) and finally managed to move us into an office on Union Square. In the meantime articles by Samuel Adams, Dave Riehle, and others on the unions had begun appearing and *BIDOM* was gradually expanding.

Before it was a year old *BIDOM* was beginning to take on the character of a theoretical political journal preparing to survey the world scene. *BIDOM* No. 15, January/February 1985, carried several articles, "Toward the 1985 Congress of the Fourth International"; an article by Ernest Mandel, "Road to 'Socialist Democracy'"; and a feature From the Arsenal of Marxism, "How Trotsky and Cannon Saw the Fourth International." At this time Paul Le Blanc began submitting articles on a regular basis. He had been collaborating with George Breitman on Marxist research prior to that.

This marked the beginning of *BIDOM*'s second year. The following notice appeared: "During our first year we published 14 issues of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, but at irregular intervals. Starting with this issue, No. 15, we will appear as a monthly journal. In order to regularize the schedule of printing and mailing, this issue, mailed in the middle of January, is dated January/February 1985." This showed progress on the management side, and promised future regularity. The typography had also begun to change for the better. *BIDOM* No. 11, September 1984, had appeared with some pages printed in two columns, justified. This marked the beginning of a change from the electric typewriter we began with to the computer, introduced by Steve Bloom. But at this time, and for some time to come, Sarah Lovell continued to paste up the pages by hand. It took modern technology a while to catch up to *BIDOM*. Not until No. 42, June 1987, were we able to find a print shop in our price range. That was when *BIDOM* began to look like a "real magazine," as one of its readers said. But it wasn't so much the "look" of the magazine as its content and the continually increasing number of writers and variety of subject matter that attracted new readers all the time and held the first subscribers. It was as if our subscription list grew almost by word of mouth, one subscriber telling others about the magazine.

A noticeable change in interest occurred in the first year when *BIDOM* began to carry analyses of developments in the antiwar movement, women's liberation struggles, and in the unions. Of course, the main interest in this magazine from the beginning was the struggle inside the SWP, the struggle in defense of Marxism from which its name derives. But no magazine could survive for long on the publication of political documents from struggles within a small group of radicals, even such a group as the SWP with its historic connection to Trotsky and the Fourth International. *BIDOM* attracted writers with related interests but a broader range commensurate with the inherent potential of the struggle for democracy within the SWP. That's what made the difference during the first year. And I think that is why Breitman said at the time that every issue of the magazine was a miracle. But he contributed to the miracle each time because he was constantly on the lookout for the material, current and archival, that gave new content to the magazine and added to its literary and political quality.

One of the new writers whose name first appeared in *BIDOM* No. 15, as the magazine began its second year, was Chester Hofla. Hofla was not prolific. He wrote only six articles for *BIDOM* during the year, all of them having to do with developments in the SWP. I am sure he contributed to no other publication. Hofla was one of several pen names used by Breitman during his nearly 50 years as a radical journalist. Recently one of the first subscribers to *BIDOM* who had noticed the new writer, Chester Hofla, when his first article appeared, and subsequently learned that this was Breitman, asked me why Breitman would want to use *Chester Hofla*, such an odd-sounding name. I had no answer to that question because I never heard Breitman mention it and I never thought to ask him. I am sure it wasn't because he thought *BIDOM* would benefit especially from the addition of another new writer or wanted to avoid the impression that the magazine was produced by only a small number of people. But he usually had a reason.

He used pen names for different subjects under different circumstances. I think he tried to find a voice that suited both subject and circumstance. He used Albert Parker and Philip Blake at different times when writing about the oppression of Black people and racism in World War II. I suppose these names occurred to him as suitable to the kind of person who was addressing these subjects at the time. Likewise it may have been that Chester Hofla was the name of that person who had something to say about the machinations of the SWP leadership in a different way than Breitman would say it, and his odd name seems to complement the odd nature of the subject matter. More than one reader must have noticed the articles by Chester Hofla without ever knowing he was related to Breitman, but this is one of the ways *BIDOM* acquired its unique character which accounts partly for its ability to survive through most of the past difficult decade.

Harsh Blows and Hard Work

There are other reasons why *BIDOM* has survived. There had to be something especially hardy about it because it suffered severe blows almost from the beginning through loss of experienced and talented comrades, the very ones we counted on most. Larry Stewart died of cancer in October 1984, at the age of 63. He was a veteran of the Trotskyist movement, having joined the SWP before World War II and long before being drafted into the Jim Crow army. He was a Black militant and an industrial worker most of his life. When he retired he was a member of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, helping the SWP to organize a Black workers opposition to the corrupt leadership of the car haulers local in Newark. His later expulsion from the SWP aroused his fighting spirit. At the time of his death he was writing for *BIDOM*. George Weissman, Larry's friend of many years, died in the spring of 1985. George Breitman died a year later, April 1986. Such losses could not have been sustained except for the power of the political cause *BIDOM* was created to serve, and it was destined to survive some of its most important creators.

I attribute the regular monthly appearance of *BIDOM* in the period following Breitman's death to the hard work and dedication of Sarah Lovell and Steve Bloom. They were mainly responsible for selecting, soliciting, editing, typesetting, and proofreading all the copy for each succeeding issue; and in addition to that Sarah kept the financial records, stuffed the envelopes, took the mail sacks to the Post Office, and answered most of the mail. She filled several untitled positions at *BIDOM*: business manager, publicity agent, subscription director, and all-around trouble shooter.

International Appeal

In December 1986 *BIDOM* No. 36 introduced the revealing Baitalsky memoirs series about the survival of a Trotskyist in the Soviet Union under the Stalinist terror during the 1930s and '40s, until the bloody dictator's death and after. This series ran for more than five years, concluding in *BIDOM* No. 83, February this year. Marilyn Vogt-Downey joined *BIDOM*'s

staff of writers when this series began, and in addition to translating the Baitalsky book has contributed extensive analyses of recent developments in the former Soviet Union. At the conclusion of the final chapters of this work, she noted that "those who have followed the story of Baitalsky's life each month have had an irreplaceable experience because many of the chapters had an almost uncanny relevance to each month's unfolding events in the USSR itself."

BIDOM's editorial board added a list of International Contributing Editors five years ago (September 1987), including FI leader Ernest Mandel. This was due in part to *BIDOM*'s expanding foreign readership and its growing popularity abroad, especially in several FI sections. During the nearly nine years of its continuous publication *BIDOM* has remained consistent to its original purpose, as stated in issue No. 1. At the halfway point of its existence (*BIDOM* No. 50, March 1988) to the present juncture, this magazine could restate the same goal proclaimed in every issue before and since: "We have dedicated this journal to the process of clarifying the program and theory of revolutionary Marxism—of discussing its application to the class struggle both internationally and here in the United States. This vital task must be undertaken if we want to bring an end to the domination of the U.S. imperialist ruling class and of establishing a socialist society based on human need instead of private greed."

At that time one of *BIDOM*'s devoted readers in Britain volunteered to do an index of the first 50 issues. Since then it has continued to carry debates on theoretical questions and analyses of major events in the world, especially in Russia and Eastern Europe. The penetrating analysis of Russian political economy, "The Disarray of Social Forces and Political Perspectives for the Russian Workers Movement" by Nikolai Preobrazhensky in *BIDOM* No. 99, is a most recent example. Soon after this appeared a request was received for permission to translate and publish it in French, along with an inquiry as to its publication in Russia. What is badly needed now is an index of *BIDOM* No. 50-100, as requests for previously published material and references are often made.

BIDOM No. 78, October 1990, carried the FIT call "For the Reconstitution of a United Movement of the Fourth International in the U.S." Following that call representatives of the former FIT were engaged almost continuously with Socialist Action, and others in the Solidarity Project (which publishes the magazine *Against the Current*), in efforts to achieve unity among Trotskyists in this country who identify with the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. From time to time *BIDOM* has reported developments on this front, and now these efforts have culminated in members of FIT joining Solidarity and *BIDOM* becoming an independent Trotskyist journal. This holds the promise of a new beginning for the Trotskyist movement in the U.S., with *BIDOM* continuing to be an authentic voice of American Trotskyism. □

September 25, 1992

George Novack, 1905–1992

Meaning a Life*

by Alan Wald

"In everyday political activity we usually see no further than the public face while the inner life of the person remains hidden."—George Novack in a letter to Alan Wald, May Day, 1983

I. George Edward Novack, who died on the morning of July 30, a week shy of his eighty-seventh birthday, was a unique figure in U.S. Marxist cultural history. Of the many left-wing intellectuals radicalized in the early 1930s, he was among a heroic remnant who remained loyal to the revolutionary socialist convictions of their youth. Throughout World War II, the Cold War, and the New Left era of the 1960s and after, George produced numerous essays, and, later, books, defending classical Marxist ideas in history and philosophy.¹ Since his viewpoint was orthodox Trotskyist, and he combined his literary work with almost unbroken activity in a revolutionary political party for nearly fifty years,² he is virtually unparalleled among his generation, setting a high standard of commitment for socialist intellectuals who come after.³

I first established a friendship with George when he stayed at my apartment in the spring of 1968 to fulfill a speaking engagement at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, where I was a student. We stayed up late into the night talking about Marxism and literature. Although his philosophical writing impressed me at that time and later as uneven and sometimes unsophisticated compared to the works by Georg Lukács and Jean-Paul Sartre in which I was then immersed, I was struck by his breadth of knowledge, even-tempered assessments of literary figures (he had known quite a few personally) and their books, and marked enthusiasm for reading and ideas. When I became a graduate student in the English Department at U.C. Berkeley a year later, our association intensified due to my decision to conduct original research about U.S. literary intellectuals drawn to Trotskyism.

By the early 1970s, we were in regular contact through correspondence several times a month, in addition to one or two private conferences a year (many of which were tape-recorded) in his apartment in Greenwich Village or else in Oberlin, Ohio, where the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) alternated a convention and educational conference each summer. In addition,

*I have borrowed this title from Mary Oppen's *Meaning a Life* (1978), a stirring memoir of herself and her husband, George, the Objectivist poet and Communist organizer.

George granted me access to his records at Harvard College, where he passed 1922–27 without graduating; to his younger sister, Helen Hirshberg, who would predecease him; and to his former therapist, Robert Litman, a world-famous suicide prevention specialist who treated him in Los Angeles in 1954. With George's encouragement I also interviewed his first wife, the novelist and biographer Elinor Rice; his college friend, the poet Stanley Kunitz; and several others.⁴

My work thus enabled George to renew some old associations, learn more about his own past and the fate of his friends, and to engage in intellectual exchange about historical and theoretical questions that fascinated him and about which he complained that he found few comrades sufficiently informed to discuss. In addition to all of the above, George reviewed thousands of pages of my manuscripts—not just reading them, but carefully commenting and often making helpful editorial suggestions about them. He never applied pressure to bring me into conformity with his own perspective. Also, unlike so many other intellectuals with whom I have worked, he was neither hypercritical nor defensive in regard to matters pertaining to himself.

Although George knew that my long-term objective was to produce books, he seemed to enjoy the give-and-take simply for itself. Once he learned that Pathfinder and Monad presses (both associated with the SWP) had no interest in publishing any works by me, he was aggressive in encouraging me in my dealings with university and commercial houses (although the latter were uninterested, too). We never discussed any books or articles of mine as "strategic interventions"; he seemed to favor the appearance of such works simply to add to the general community of knowledge about the intellectual left, and he seemed to think their value would be greatest if I went my own way in choice of theme and approach.

The only time our relationship was interrupted was in the winter of 1984, at a time when the SWP was expelling and severing relations with hundreds of members, sympathizers and one-time collaborators — anyone who openly expressed dismay at the bureaucratic way that the SWP was transforming itself from an orthodox Trotskyist to a semi-Castroist organization.⁵ Prior to that time, George was adamant that our collaboration should proceed uninterrupted and unaffected. This was in spite of the fact that I had never cast a vote in favor of an SWP majority political resolution, and had made it known since the early 1970s of my preference for the political views promoted by the Belgian Marxist Ernest Mandel over those of the SWP's major leader, Jack Barnes. George's accepting attitude about my political differences was in marked contrast to the fear and hostility exhibited by the vast majority of SWP and YSA members with whom I came in contact, young or old. It wasn't that George ignored the controversial issues or occluded them out from discussion, but that we both used restraint in expressing our views.

However, as the SWP entered the climactic stages of its transformation that would lead to a political break with the Fourth International,⁶ things became more repressive in the SWP's milieu. Following the meeting of the SWP National Committee after the August 1983 party convention, I sent him a letter vigorously raising concerns about the organizational and political direction of the SWP, to which he responded: "On the issues currently dividing the party you referred to, we shall

simply have to agree to disagree, as we did during the IT episode,⁷ and proceed with our collaboration on your project [the early stages of the book that later became *The New York Intellectuals*] on the same basis as before. I anticipate no obstacle to this at the present time.”⁸ However, in late February 1984, George returned unopened a manuscript that I sent him in Mexico, where he was living with his new companion;⁹ a handwritten note was appended saying that this action constituted the “suspension” of “our long-standing literary collaboration.”¹⁰

This hiatus lasted about twenty months. Communications after that were reduced to only a few times a year. Although his notes grew increasingly friendly, most were brief.¹¹ This may have been due as much to illness and physical enfeeblement as to political differences, since in the same period he also stopped writing for the SWP press.

The last time I visited George was in December 1991, in a Senior Citizens Residence at 300 Amsterdam Avenue, near 72nd Street and Broadway. The previous spring, following an illness and hospitalization, he had moved out of his longtime apartment at 326 West 19th Street. In his room at the shabby residence, he was alone and apparently weak, unable to rise easily from his chair. But he was very friendly, sending through me his “best regards” to mutual friends such as Patrick Quinn and Mike Smith.¹²

On his own, George brought up the subject of the transformation of the SWP, although his language here was less direct and somewhat “Aesopian.” He explained to me, as he had done in discussions we had around 1983, that I should understand that, back when he, Joseph Hansen, and Farrell Dobbs made a decision to transfer leadership of the SWP over to “the Barnes tendency” (this was Novack’s phrase), the three of them made a pledge. They would always give the new people the benefit of the doubt, unless a major “crossing of the class lines” occurred, and not “second guess” them. (In other words, they would keep any disagreements that they had with Barnes’s policies or methods secret from the membership of the SWP, and publicly back up Barnes against his critics.) George said that, in fact, he *did* have his own opinions on some of the questions that had come into dispute in the last years. However, since he had not been on top of things, he didn’t feel that his views were very important. George emphasized that I would understand his position when I, too, became older and less active.

It seems likely that, based on documentation, one of George’s “differences of opinion” was over the decision of “the Barnes tendency” to use the 1979 success of the Nicaraguan revolution to repudiate Trotsky’s “theory of permanent revolution.”¹³ During the heat of this debate, George wrote to me an opinion that I understood to be the same as that of the majority of the Fourth International (and opposed to the views promoted by Barnes): “In their own ways the Sandinistas, Salvadoreans, Grenadians and Cubans are implementing in political practice ‘the revolution in permanence’ heralded by Marx and Engels and espoused by the Fourth International.”¹⁴ In person, George had told me in 1983 that he planned to put such opinions in a document. However, the document never appeared. Within a few months, it was clear that any attempt to promote such a view among the SWP membership brought the likelihood of expulsion—no matter what might have been the previous con-

tributions made by an individual to the party. It seems to me that, if George *had* eventually reversed his opinion on permanent revolution, he would have mentioned it to me in one of our subsequent exchanges, just to clarify the record.

But I think it is highly unlikely that George ever considered breaking with “the Barnes tendency” at any time after 1983, even when the relationship with the Fourth International was terminated later in that decade. He was sufficiently a Marxist to know that political principle comes before organizational loyalty, but whether or not the SWP ever incontrovertibly “crossed class lines” can certainly be disputed. George may well have expressed his opinions privately to Barnes, but publicly adhered to the pledge not to openly contradict him. Moreover, the splits and mutual recriminations of those in opposition to “the Barnes tendency” in the months following the SWP purge certainly gave George, as well as many others, no reason to believe that an alternative, pro-Fourth International movement in the U.S. would survive.¹⁵ Direct affiliation with the Fourth International was also out of the question, considering George’s training. The SWP attitude toward the Fourth International—from historic party leader James P. Cannon, through the Farrell Dobbs/Tom Kerry years of the 1950s and 1960s, and into the Barnes era—had been consistently that the United Secretariat leadership wasn’t really “orthodox” and “proletarian”; SWP members were inculcated with the belief that the real political heart and soul of world Trotskyism actually rested in the U.S. cadres assembled and trained by Cannon’s disciples. Since Novack never challenged that view after the time of the 1953 split in the Fourth International, he had yet another good reason to stay put.

II. Novack’s position in the SWP was generally thought to be that of “intellectual” and “scholar.”¹⁶ In my opinion, these labels may result in some confusion that needs to be clarified in order to gain a perspective on the meaning of his life and intellectual contributions. Since Novack had no academic career, he does not fit the more familiar paradigms of his generation of intellectuals drawn to the socialist movement. For example, the tensions shaping his life and work do not resemble those exemplified by the young Sidney Hook, who attempted to simultaneously straddle positions as the foremost Marxist philosophy professor in the U.S. and a revolutionary leader.¹⁷ Nor does his pattern resemble the career of James Burnham who, in contrast to Hook, threw himself totally and devotedly into the Trotskyist movement for about five years, only to suddenly and completely break, finally moving by direct stages to the far right. Even the lifelong Trotskyist intellectual John G. Wright (a pseudonym for Joseph Vanzler) had an earlier career as a free-lance intellectual and colloidal chemist, and then ran a private business manufacturing contraceptive jelly.

In distinction, *all* of Novack’s successful writing and the vast majority of his work-life came through his association with the Trotskyist movement. An early career in advertising had been quickly dropped, although he at that time learned the technical skills of writing and dreamed of producing a work of philosophy.¹⁸ Only after joining the Communist League of America and working full time at revolutionary activity (except for the summers of 1934 and 1935, spent at Yadoo, a writers and artists residence), did he begin producing the historical essays and studies of intellectuals that comprised the early part of his

career. His “bourgeois” work-life after that was episodic; with the exception of a brief period of factory work in Detroit during World War II, it was usually in advertising, publicity, and research. Nevertheless, his aura in the SWP was so much that of “the intellectual,” that I have heard Young Socialist Alliance members refer to him as a “professor” or even as an “attorney.”¹⁹

Rather than understanding George’s contributions to Marxist culture in terms of the more familiar tension felt by scholars and intellectuals between a career as a professional (academic or otherwise) and a party commitment, several other complicating factors ought to be foregrounded. One concerns his escape from his family culture as refracted through the youth rebellion of the 1920s and New York radical Bohemia in the 1930s. A small part of this was a desire to leave behind the narrow legacy of the European Jewish ghetto and enter the modern world of science and international culture. George’s father changed the family name from Novograbelsky to Novack, but the son went farther and on his own altered his given names, Yasef Mendel, to the Anglophilic “George Edward.” Later he would use the WASP pseudonyms “John Marshall” and “William F. Warde.” Although he belonged to a liberal Jewish fraternity at Harvard for reasons of social life, he became a literary disciple of James Joyce and W. B. Yeats, and a philosophical admirer of his Harvard teacher, Alfred North Whitehead, who was at that time reading draft chapters of *Process and Reality* aloud to George’s class. Even after becoming a revolutionary Marxist, elements of Bohemian rebel culture survived, as in his apparently idealized admiration of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir’s relationship as one based on mutual love and devoid of sexual jealousy.²⁰

However, more significant was his desire to escape from and replace his inherited nuclear family. His father, a gambler who ran a Turkish bath, led what George always referred to euphemistically as “a highly irregular life,” often leaving his son in the embarrassing situation of not having sufficient funds to pay for his college tuition. George’s mother, in response, doted on and sought to entirely control her blond-haired, blue-eyed, slim and handsome son. Years later he recalled to me his humiliation at the memory of himself as a “pampered university brat” who wore “a broad-brimmed black Stetson sombrero, anarchist style, in a luxurious raccoon coat with a wide collar, turned up for show.” His mother had obtained this “rig” for him from her brother, a furrier in Worcester, and George even wore it when he worked for a while selling flowers for a sidewalk peddler on Tremont Street opposite Boston Common in the alley outside his father’s Turkish bath beneath the Tremont Theater.²¹

Eventually a major goal of George’s life became to escape from his mother, although the vehicles of escape became other women—not only several wives, but, also, eventually, his sister. Since George never took any pay from the SWP, the financial resources of his companions became important to his functioning as a revolutionary. These women helped to take care of him and enabled him to carry out his intellectual pursuits. Although this pattern produced hostile gossip about him, usually exaggerated, George accepted and candidly discussed this aspect of his personality.

This dynamic of a very human kind of dependency also bears a relation to the most traumatic episode in George’s personal

life, which came in the 1950s, just prior to the decade of his greatest productivity. Over ten years in our friendship passed before George felt he could fully “dredge up memories of a period thirty years back that were fraught with pain and perplexities and are still not easy for me to recall because the *individual-psychological factors are so intertwined with political-organizational considerations*” (my emphasis).²² The political background for the trauma was George’s intimate collaborative association with Michel Pablo during the early 1950s while he was on assignment for the SWP in Europe. He returned to the U.S. in February 1953 committed to healing the growing political differences between the New York-based SWP National Office and the Paris-based International Secretariat of the Fourth International, but found himself in the midst of a complicated three-way brawl. This was among groupings led by Bert Cochran/George Clarke (who had their own interpretation of Pablo’s views), James P. Cannon/Murry Weiss (who from Los Angeles had been aggressively sharpening the conflict with Cochran-Clarke) and Farrell Dobbs/Morris Stein (who ran the New York center of the SWP and resented the Cannon-Weiss intervention as arbitrary and unwise). At first, George believed he had assisted in creating a “truce,” preventing a split. But when this proved to be short-lived, a severe personal crisis ensued that nearly destroyed his self-confidence and self-esteem.

George felt that he personally had failed in his mission and that the Fourth International would be severely crippled as a result. He was also torn over where his sympathies lay, as he had also been in 1939 during the earlier stages of the political struggle between Max Shachtman and Cannon. George had great respect for Pablo’s leadership capacities, apart from Pablo’s pronouncements about the potential longevity of “deformed workers states,”²³ yet he doubted the politico-organizational stability of Pablo’s U.S. supporters. On the other hand, he sensed that “the steadfast proletarian core headed by Cannon and Dobbs” would survive and become the basis of a new revolutionary socialist movement once the tide turned.

Complicating the matter, his companion, Evelyn, had a long-standing personal animosity to Cochran (they had conflicts while working in the national auto fraction and on the press), and was angry with George for his more nuanced position. As George’s psychological condition deteriorated, he agreed to leave Evelyn for Los Angeles to live with his party friend, Dr. Harry Fishler, where he could hold discussions more directly with Cannon. Once there, his depression precipitated a suicide attempt. During treatment he took a leave from the SWP, found a job as an editor of a commercial paper, and was eventually reunited with Evelyn in November 1954. When his emotional equilibrium was regained, he reintegrated himself into the life of the SWP and its leadership.

As a result, George placed a great emphasis ever afterwards on what he called the “Herculean task” of holding together “a revolutionary grouping, especially in the U.S.”²⁴ A crucial part of George’s admiration for Cannon was that Cannon was almost alone in starting a small oppositional grouping and seeing it through to the end of his life. George’s acute awareness of the contrasting fates of Albert Weisbord, B.J. Field, Max Shachtman, C.L.R. James, Bert Cochran, etc., was, I believe, a determining factor in the kind of politico-intellectual role Novack came to play.

George was in a difficult position. He had no substantial independent life, friendship circle, family, career, or financial base outside the Trotskyist movement. His scholarship was disgracefully ignored by academics, and vilely traduced by political rivals of the SWP on the left.²⁵ Like all of us, George needed a worldview to guide his life and provide a framework enabling meaningful, productive work. Over the decades, and especially after the trauma of 1953–54, this worldview and framework became circumscribed by the Cannon tradition of Trotskyist politics, as it was for so many of the survivors of the 1930s and 1940s Trotskyist movement in the U.S.

None of the above is meant to demean George or narrow the meaning of his life; only to provide a perspective. All intellectuals function within the limitations of institutions and worldviews, and George's achievement has vastly surpassed those of most of his critics. Some of these critics were of the 1960s generation who sneered at him for his "orthodoxy." Others were simply mad as hell at George because he didn't join their faction in one dispute or another.

It is true that, as a consequence of the conditions under which George produced, a strict "orthodoxy" to writings by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky was observed, and his writing was aimed at a different audience than most works of philosophy and history. George once told me that, when he wrote, he always imagined he was in a meeting hall addressing an "educated worker." On the other hand, it is probably true that a good many college-educated activists on the left received a basic clarification about dialectics, materialism, historical interpretation, etc., through reading George's books, which helped them go on to more advanced studies.

It is regrettable how little George's books have been discussed and analyzed. Virtually all of the book reviews of his work that appeared in the SWP press were uninspired and uncritical plot summaries. The only enthusiastic and thoughtful response to the appearance of *Pragmatism Versus Marxism*, which George regarded as the *summa* of his life's work, came from Indiana University philosophy professor Milton Fisk.²⁶ Not a single person has emerged out of the SWP milieu to continue in his field of U.S. history and philosophy.²⁷ When I asked George, in our last meeting, whether there was some individual currently in the SWP engaged in Marxist theoretical work that might be of importance, he said definitively and sadly, "No."

However, it would be a mistake to assume that political exigency determined all of George's major intellectual pursuits. For example, from the 1930s to his death he had a special interest in scholarship concerning the U.S. Civil War and especially the role of the New York anti-draft protesters, about which George had conducted original research. To the end, he persisted in defending his own conclusions against the more prominent view on the left that the uprising was subjectively and/or objectively reactionary. His opinions on this and other scholarly matters never saw publication; they were communicated in private correspondence, conversation, or manuscripts that had no immediate prospect of coming to print. The situation was similar in regard to his ongoing critical study of the writings of Eugene Genovese on U.S. slavery.

III. These observations about the other side of George—the private person behind the public Marxist scholar and political

Salute to George Novack

Like all people George Novack had his strengths and his weaknesses. Unlike most people he was distinguished by his lifelong commitment to the building of a Leninist/Trotskyist revolutionary party in the U.S.

Novack's strength:—His many talents. George Breitman called him a "natural resource." These talents were at the disposal of the Socialist Workers Party during its halcyon days (1937–42). Novack's abilities as a researcher, writer, teacher in the fields of American history and Marxist philosophy are evidenced in the more than dozen titles of his published works. His personal influence is attested to by the support he was able to garner for Leon Trotsky in the fight for his right to asylum and his exoneration by a distinguished commission of inquiry into the Moscow trials. As national secretary of the Civil Rights Defense Committee in the 1940s, Novack organized the fight for the release of the leaders of the SWP and the Minneapolis Teamsters union from the jail sentences imposed upon them for challenging the leadership of the Teamsters union and the drive of North American imperialism towards war. He used his considerable charm to get much-needed financial resources from his wide field of friends as well as from members and sympathizers of the SWP. A minor but memorable talent was George's ability to entertain an audience with a parody of a popular song. I remember a version of "Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, don't mess with Mr. In-between" at an entertainment put on at a SWP summer camp held in Michigan in 1945. These were his strengths.

Novack's weakness:—His inability to stand by his convictions under the fire of a vigorous opponent. In 1952 Michel Pablo headed the Fourth International in Paris. He formed a faction which said that the struggle against Stalinism could not be victorious. He predicted that the Soviet Union and the other workers' states would last for centuries. Novack came in contact with him and was influenced by him. (Pablo abandoned the International to become adviser to the revolutionary government in Algeria.) In a similar manner in 1981 Novack succumbed to the influence of the Barnes clique which was abandoning Trotskyism for Castroism.

We dip our flag in salute to the great strengths of George Novack. We forgive him his weaknesses and know he did all that he could to build the revolutionary socialist movement in our country.

I add my voice to the voices of others who knew him: "Farewell comrade, teacher, and friend of my youth. I mourn your death."

Dorothy Breitman
New York

activist—are not meant as a substitute for the careful, critical reading that his books and articles deserve. While the corpus is uneven, many items should be reprinted; there are also unpublished letters, manuscripts, and even an autobiography going up to the 1970s (in possession of the SWP) that should be considered for publication.

Nevertheless, the meaning of George's life cannot be deduced from the public record alone. He knew this well, although, perhaps because of the strong anti-individualist ethos of much orthodox Marxist scholarship, such concerns are not directly reflected in many of his own publications. Nevertheless, he consumed biographies of the personal lives of intellectuals throughout his life, frequently commending various ones to me. When I saw him in December he told me that, now

retired from political activities, such biographies were all that he cared to read, along with the daily *New York Times*.

At the end of that final interview with George, I took his hand between mine and told him how much I appreciated the help he had given me over the years. I believe that there are many others who owe similar, if lesser, debts, than mine to George. He was a natural educator and the most responsible person I have ever met in terms of providing conscientious feedback and criticisms of ideas and opinions. It is true that he used his charm, his glow of idealism and self-sacrifice, to raise financial contributions for the SWP from people who later on regretted turning over their inheritances and other funds. But, at least through the 1970s, George genuinely believed in the quality of the SWP leadership and its future. Moreover, he also raised money for other worthy causes; for example, in 1983 he was instrumental in securing a \$5,000 grant for processing the Max Shachtman collection at the Tamiment Institute section of the New York University library.

Unfortunately, a number of those who owe a great deal to George have found it necessary to obliterate their relation, or bitterly traduce him for not following their course—very often toward deradicalization or else immersion in sectarian politics. Some pillory him as the archetypal vulgar Marxist or intellectual factotum of the party regime. The flip-side of these caricatures are false idealizations of him as a Marxist “genius” martyred by the bourgeois establishment. None of these exploitations of George’s life and work do much to advance and enrich the tradition of Marxist culture we so desperately need if we are going to sustain the struggle for a humanized society.

George was neither a genius (most geniuses can’t function as part of a team as well as George did) nor a giant among Marxist theoreticians. But he did have exceptional intellectual skills and gifts. What is important is that he developed these to the best of his ability, making full use of them on behalf of the socialist movement. I don’t believe he withheld anything from the cause, and he was incredibly generous with his time to any worker or student genuinely interested in learning Marxism. Of course, George certainly enjoyed it when his writings got some attention, when his books were translated, or when he was invited to speak at scholarly events beyond those organized by the SWP. Yet his motivation was never fundamentally a desire for fame or prestige, and it certainly wasn’t for money. A good deal of it was love of and respect for party leaders and collaborators—especially for Cannon, Joseph Hansen, and Farrell Dobbs, who were unquestionably the new “family” he selected to replace his old one, and to which he became bonded.

George’s example is inspiring not because he went left when so many others did in the 1930s, but because he persisted in his work on behalf of revolutionary socialism through the hard times. I believe that it was important in the 1960s that George was still on the scene as an active revolutionist. He showed the younger generation that, whether or not one agreed with George’s philosophical views or political party, socialism was not a temporary, youthful fad but a lifelong mission. Through his writing, too, George was an authentic culture-bearer from past struggles to the present. And the fact that George survived may well have been instrumental in the survival of other cadres from the 1930s and 1940s into the 1960s, since, under adverse conditions of intense social pressure, every individual who

sticks it out alleviates some of the pressure on the rest of his or her comrades.

The sad fact is that, when the genuine nature of the struggle for socialism becomes clear—that it is not a steady “high” but protracted, complex, and filled with many disappointments—tired radicals can find plenty of reasons to despair, immerse themselves in private lives and careers, or simply switch sides. This was the fate of the preponderance of the 1930s generation; it is perhaps one that will overtake a good number of the 1960s generation as well. But George’s life shows that such responses need not be the case, no matter how hard the times and complex the issues facing socialist intellectuals.

In U.S. Trotskyism, George found a movement compatible with his gifts—a movement that needed him, and that in turn provided the inspiration and support permitting a productive life. Marxist intellectuals and activists of the present generation can learn from George’s accomplishments and limitations for the purpose of constructing a new movement that will address the crises of the present difficult moment. Such a movement will enable us to preserve, advance, and communicate socialist culture to the next generation, as George Novack did to ours. □

(Alan Wald is an editor of *Against the Current* and a member of *Solidarity*.)

Notes

1. Among Novack’s most significant books and pamphlets are: *The Age of Permanent Revolution* (co-editor with Isaac Deutscher), *America’s Revolutionary Heritage* (editor), *An Introduction to the Logic of Marxism, Democracy and Revolution, Empiricism and Its Evolution, Existentialism Versus Marxism* (editor), *Genocide Against the Indians, How Can the Jews Survive?*, *Humanism and Socialism, The Long View of History, Marxism Versus Neo-Anarchist Terrorism, Moscow Versus Peking, The Origins of Materialism, Polemics in Marxist Philosophy, Pragmatism Versus Marxism, Revolutionary Dynamics of Women’s Liberation, The Understanding of History, Uneven and Combined Development in History, Who Will Change the World?, Behind China’s “Great Cultural Revolution”* (contributor), *Black Nationalism and Socialism* (contributor), *The Black Uprisings* (contributor), *Key Problems in the Transition from Capitalism to Socialism* (contributor), *Marxist Essays in American History* (contributor), *The Marxist Theory of Alienation* (contributor), *On the Revolutionary Potential of the Working Class* (contributor), *Their Morals and Ours* (contributor), *Watts and Harlem* (contributor).

2. Originally sympathetic to the Socialist Party, he became active in 1932 in the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, an affiliate of the Communist Party’s International Labor Defense. He joined the Communist League of America in the fall of 1933, assisted its fusion with the American Workers Party in 1934 to create the Workers Party of the U.S. in 1935, and then participated in the entry of the Trotskyists into the Socialist Party in 1936. In 1938 he became a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party, to which he belonged at the time of his death. He served on the National Committee from 1940 to 1973. Among the high points of his political career were his service as secretary of the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky from 1937-1940; national secretary of the Civil Rights Defense Committee from 1941 to 1950; and associate editor of the *International Socialist Review* from 1965 to 1975.

3. I have surveyed Novack’s intellectual and political career in two books, James T. Farrell: *The Revolutionary Socialist Years* (1978) and *The New York Intellectuals* (1987), as well in the entry on Novack in Bernard K. Johnpoll and Harvey Klehr, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of the American Left* (New York: Greenwood, 1986).

4. For the most part, George was regarded as likeable, even by those who abhorred his political views, such as the novelist James T. Farrell in his last decades. A few, such as Sidney Hook and Felix Morrow, utterly despised George all out of proportion to reason, and the former subjected me to a tirade of slander—personally and in correspondence with others—when he mistakenly concluded that I was somehow George’s political pawn.

5. The exact nature of this transformation remains under debate. In general, it appears that the SWP today rationalizes positions taken by the Castro leadership by use of its own interpretation of some of Trotsky’s ideas, such as

his theory of Soviet Stalinism as the expression of a bureaucratic, parasitic social layer.

6. Due to the Vorhees Act, neither the SWP nor any other U.S. organization has actually belonged to the Fourth International.

7. The Internationalist Tendency (IT) was bureaucratically expelled from the SWP in July 1974; I subsequently signed a document drafted by the late Robert Langston warning that the organizational integrity of the SWP was becoming seriously compromised.

8. Novack to Wald, Aug. 3, 1983.

9. His second wife, Evelyn Horwit (better known as Evelyn Reed), died in 1979. He frequently referred to his subsequent companion as his "wife," although I have no evidence that they were actually married, and George returned to live in New York mostly by himself in his last years.

10. Novack to Wald, Feb., 1984.

11. By 1988 he was again closing his letters with the salutation, "fraternally."

12. He said that he regretted not being able to attend the booksigning party for Smith's *Notebook of a Sixties Lawyer* (1991), which was the reason I had come to New York.

13. This was Trotsky's view, announced in 1905 and reaffirmed in 1917, that revolutions in economically underdeveloped countries must combine bourgeois-democratic and socialist demands.

14. Novack to Wald, June 16, 1983.

15. Within a few months the expelled oppositionists split into two, and later three (actually, four, if one counts the North Star Network led by Peter Camejo) hostile groups.

16. Ben Stone's *Memoirs of a Radical Rank and Filer* (1986) contains a useful portrait of how George appeared to many ordinary members of the SWP.

17. Hook wrote the program of the American Workers Party and urged its fusion with the CLA, then surprised many when he did not join the new organization. He next urged Norman Thomas to admit the Trotskyists to the Socialist Party, but, again, held back from joining. In the late 1930s some aspects of his thought appeared to be identical to the Trotskyists, but the advent of World War II brought a decisive switch, although for some time he claimed to be to the left of social democracy, and, even at his death, insisted he was a Marxist.

18. He began work for a lecture bureau in New York in 1927, then was employed by Doubleday and Company, and finally became Advertising Manager for E. P. Dutton where he stayed until 1934.

19. The last was probably due to his prominent association with political defense cases such as the Dewey Commission of Inquiry, the Minneapolis Eighteen, the James Kutcher case, and the Political Rights Defense Fund.

20. Recently published letters of De Beauvoir suggest that the relationship was hardly so mutual or idyllic.

21. Novack to Wald, May 1, 1983.

22. Novack to Wald, April 28, 1983.

23. The term refers to social formations undergoing top-down bureaucratic nationalization, especially in conjunction with the extension of the power of the Soviet Union, as in Eastern Europe; Pablo thought that these might survive for centuries.

24. Novack to Wald, July 3, 1983.

25. The most sickening were the campaigns run against George's work and person by the Workers League, inspired by the British sectarian cult leader Gerry Healey.

26. See Erkennis II (1977): 269-73.

27. The only exception might be Peter Camejo, who was much influenced by Novack in *Racism, Revolution, Reaction, 1861-1877* (New York: Monad, 1976). However, Camejo has not persisted in such work.

life, died of AIDS August 9, 1992, at his home in New Orleans. He was 35 years old. During the final decade of his life radical politics and the decay of capitalism occupied the major part of his attention and compelled him to review the moral and economic values of bourgeois society.

He joined the Boston YSA in the late 1970s. Nearly all his life at the time had been spent in Massachusetts. Before he was a year old his family moved from Milwaukee, where Glen was born June 18, 1957, to Salem. There he spent his childhood, attending public schools. His further education was at Essex Agricultural School in Hawthorne, and at Stockbridge School of Agriculture, University of Massachusetts in Amherst. He managed a greenhouse for several years in Marblehead, and while there he became actively involved in radical politics.

Like most young people who joined the YSA in the wake of the mid-1970s antiwar movement, Glen was anxious to master the Marxist method of social analysis and acquire a better understanding of world politics. He also accepted the organizational structure and mores of the YSA, including the practice of shifting new recruits from familiar regions to other areas where, it was rationalized, they would experience the YSA's "geographic spread" and come to appreciate its organizational needs as dictated by the changing political situation. When Glen joined, the YSA was beginning to shift its main focus from the university campus to work in industry, soon to be followed by what became known as "the turn to industry" which meant that all members were assigned to find work in designated industries. In accordance with this policy Glen moved to New Orleans in the early 1980s with the hope of finding work at the Avondale shipyard where the Socialist Workers Party and YSA had an industrial fraction and hoped to help establish a union.

Unlike many YSA members at the time Glen questioned the wisdom of top-down decision making. He accepted the judgment of party leaders in matters of general strategy but thought local units of the party and YSA would do better if allowed to experiment in how best to implement strategy decisions. He was also uneasy about the SWP purge of Trotskyists which began in early 1982 and culminated at the start of 1984.

Glen attended the 1984 SWP convention in August at Oberlin College where he learned that the anti-Trotsky purge in the party had been conducted in accordance with the adaptation of the Cuban Communist Party to the ideology of the Stalinist regime in Moscow. This was the beginning of Glen's serious and lasting interest in Marxist theory. He began to probe the reasons why the SWP leadership had abandoned the Trotskyist program of socialist revolution.

One reason for Glen's continuing interest in the political degeneration of the SWP was the contact he made at the party's 1984 convention with expelled party members. In this way he first learned about the *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* and became one of its early readers. The documents it published about the struggle inside the SWP National Committee following the party's 1981 convention revealed information about the transformation of the party that was unknown to the membership.

By the time of the 1990 SWP convention in Chicago in June of that year, Glen had become convinced that the party leadership was embarked on a disaster course. The decision taken there to formally sever all relations with the Fourth International came as no surprise to him. He wrote, "Much was made about

Glen Munroe, 1957-1992

by Frank Lovell

Glen Munroe, a former member of the Young Socialist Alliance who remained a Trotskyist and identified with the Fourth Internationalist Tendency from 1984 until the end of his

the 'fact' that the SWP is the 'oldest communist party in the world.' This regards the view that there has been continuity from the beginning to the present, the last decade notwithstanding." From his personal experiences in the YSA and with the party during this period Glen knew that a fundamental change had occurred, from the Trotskyist program of revolutionary Marxism to the reformist ideology of Stalinism. He was fully aware of the party's disorientation. He noted that "everybody seemed to agree that the convention was held in Chicago because the party could not stand the strain of putting together an event at Oberlin. The Chicago branch organized the event without any full-time assistance from the NO. None could be spared. So it must be taken as quite serious." he said, "that a meeting has to take place in Oberlin after all and only because the political resolution came out so late and admittedly incomplete. This single fact ought to have caused quite a stir on the convention floor. You would expect that someone would require or someone would offer an explanation. This did not happen."

The second 1990 SWP convention was held at Oberlin in August. Glen was there. He was attuned to the subtleties of SWP policy shifts. "One thing that seemed pretty clear," he noted, "was a very sober attitude toward the future of the Cuban revolution. Not only did the party seem to be preparing itself for trouble ahead, but I got a real feeling that it's the SWP's confidence in the Cuban leadership that has shifted. It's hard to put my finger on it, but it was there. I had not noticed this in Chicago or in the *Militant*." This was a measure of Glen's political maturity at that time. He spoke about the SWP's "new International," as follows: "The International Communist League is the official name for their international group of organizations. This was not made as an announcement but it was used frequently and exclusively to refer to the group."

He was acutely aware of the problem within the SWP over the leadership's interpretation of events in South Africa. "Right at the start (of the Oberlin convention) it was said that there had been some differences on this resolution expressed in certain branches and that it had to do with two things generally. There was a difference over the role of the SACP (South African Communist Party) and what our attitude toward it should be. The nature of the coming revolution in South Africa had also been in dispute. It was not said, but I assumed that somebody had suggested that the revolution might be more than just national and democratic."

The sixth national conference of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency was held in September 1990, only three months after the SWP had broken all ties to the FI. The FIT, at its conference, issued a call for the regroupment of Trotskyist forces in the U.S., and the reconstitution of a new FI section in this country. This meant that FIT no longer expected to reform the SWP but would instead try to build a genuine revolutionary socialist party to replace it. Glen was delighted when he heard the news of this decision which conformed to conclusions he had reached.

Glen attended the 1991 educational conference of FIT in Pittsburgh where representatives of Socialist Action and Soli-

darity were present and participated. Glen was optimistic about prospects of Trotskyist regroupment. He later wrote (October 1991), "It would be shocking to think that the differences between FIT/SA/FIC/MRSG were so vast that it precluded taking the initial steps toward reunification. FIC (the Trotskyist caucus in Solidarity) does not seem ready but individuals within it no doubt are."

Within the following year "the initial steps toward reunification" were taken, albeit differently than had been anticipated. Glen did not live to see this encouraging development unfold.

During his illness he was supported by family, close friends, and political collaborators. His mother visited him frequently. His closest friends were with him constantly. He communicated regularly with FIT representatives and comrades, always anxious to receive the latest *BIDOM*. His companion of five years, Keith Adam, sent us the following letter which was among Glen's effects.

Dearest Comrades,

This letter is to inform you of my death. Further, I have some thoughts to pass along to you and this is my opportunity.

In the last couple of years, I have often been asked by my family and friends if I had regrets about the course my life had taken. It was a course I had mapped out since my last days in high school, having just met the YSA. There was no grand plan but the direction seemed clear enough. While I could not know how much of my life would be spent in the revolutionary movement, it was my intention and hope that it would always be so. It was my great fortune that it has.

In any case, the question was put to me by those who do not fully understand what it is we do and why. It was a fair question. Had I wasted my life now that I could see it was being cut short? Would I have lived it differently, in retrospect? Those are questions I had already asked of myself.

It is fair to say that you gain a different point of view as you face death with some time to think about it. It's like a new set of glasses. There is nothing mystical about it—the same pair of eyes with new lenses to look through, and it's wonderful. I have deepened my appreciation of the uniqueness and the promise of conscious human life. I can say that there are no regrets and no doubt about the value of a fight to push forward with our class past the bounds of outmoded class society.

So this is where I bow out. While I remain in awe of the struggle ahead, I am confident that you, those who come after you and our class, are up to the task. I have been richly honored to have been with you at all and so, I can make peace with what has happened.

Endorsing your commitment and with the warmest feelings, I say goodbye.

Glen

Intellectuals and Revolution

by James P. Cannon

James P. Cannon (1890-1974) was one of the founders and leaders of American Trotskyism, although his involvement in the U.S. left-wing and labor movements earlier included participation in the Socialist Party of America and Industrial Workers of the World, as well as a top leadership position in the early Communist Party. This letter from Cannon was to George Novack, written in 1961, in the heroic early years of the Cuban revolution. It was found among the papers of George Weissman. (Cannon often sent copies of his correspondence to various friends.)

This letter is of special interest for several reasons. It includes an early assessment of the Cuban revolution and its leadership. It also offers an interesting discussion of the relationship between socialism, democracy, and the working class. And it illuminates his views on intellectuals in a manner that challenges a common view of Cannon as primarily "an organization man" with a superficial grasp of theory and a generalized "anti-intellectualism." To the contrary, this seasoned working class revolutionary had a passionate interest in ideas and a deep respect for certain kinds of intellectuals—including the "M." discussed here in his letter to George Novack.

*The "M." referred to in the letter is well-known radical sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916-1962). Mills was the author of numerous works, including *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders* (1948), *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951), *The Power Elite* (1956), *The Causes of World War Three* (1958), *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), and *The Marxists* (1962). The book discussed here is his controversial best-seller *Listen Yankee: The Revolution in Cuba* (1960).*

Dear George:

* * *

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter and Evelyn's lively note of February 9 about your meeting with M. This is certainly interesting and important news. It is also gratifying to hear that a conversation between us about M. a year or so ago led, in a chain of actions and reactions, to your visit at his home.

But you are not quite accurate when you attribute my earlier suggestion that *you* undertake a serious and critical evaluation of M.'s work to my "customary generosity." This explanation is a bit too generous on your part. The truth, which I began to love and revere in my earliest youth and which, in my later years, I am beginning to worship, compels me to admit that my motive was a little more complicated and devious than you make it. If I had anything to do with it, two other reasons for my proposal strike me as more plausible and closer to the truth.

In the first place, I recognized that you had studied M.'s writings and related material more attentively and thoroughly than I had and were better qualified as a Marxist scholar to analyze them. In the second place, when there is a big job of work to be done my lifelong reflex has been to look around for someone else to do it. In this instance, as in many others, you happened to be the one I pointed at.

Now don't get the idea that this disclaimer is another example of my well-known modesty. My general procedure in these matters is just a sly, Irish trick of turning the defects of ignorance and laziness into merits. I have been getting away with this sort of thing for years and years. And, strangely enough, the movement has benefited most of the time, while I have acquired a reputation as a nice guy who finds jobs for other people. In addition, as a sort of bonus, I have had the special indulgence to loaf and ruminate without being harried too much by my Irish conscience.

I think I agree entirely with everything you say in your letter in evaluation of M. He is different. As you know, I have always had a low, not to say contemptuous, opinion of the contemporary American intelligentsia. And that is not simply a carry-over of the anti-intellectualism of my young Wobbly days. After I became a communist and recognized that the thinkers and leaders of the Russian revolution, like their own mentors before them, were all intellectuals, I made a serious effort at "thought reform" on the subject. But I must say that the intellectuals of our time in this country, particularly those who have made pretensions to radicalism, have done their best to keep me from going overboard.

Experience and observation over a long time have taught me two things about the American intellectuals in general, and the academicians in particular. They lack modesty, which is the precondition for learning things they don't already know, especially about the dark interiors of social problems which have been explored by others but remain an undiscovered country for them. Supplementary to that defect, and holding them back from serious exploration, is the plain and simple fact that they have no guts. They want to keep out of trouble.

In the book of Catholicism, which I studied as a boy, there are three types of sins. The first are *venial* (small) sins, such as my own—work-dodging, procrastination, self-indulgence, shooting pool on Sunday, etc.—which are easily forgiven and which one can even forgive oneself after a few prayers, if a priest isn't available. Then there are *mortal* sins, such as murder, blasphemy, adultery, etc. These can be forgiven by a priest if serious penance is done, but the mortal sinner must still serve time in purgatory before entering heaven. The third sin is the sin against the Holy Ghost. For that there is no forgive-

ness, and there is no place to go but to hell. Well, cowardice is a sin against the Holy Ghost! Or, to turn it around and switch from the catechism to Ben Johnson: "Courage is the first virtue, because it is the condition for the exercise of the other virtues."

* * *

For quite a while I have regarded M. as a maverick on the academic range; his manifest courage and honesty seemed to separate him from the herd. Then his book about Cuba showed another and most attractive side of his character. I read it attentively, and kept assessing it as I went along, on two levels.

On one level it is an absorbing and moving exposition of the revolutionary process in Cuba, as the leaders of the revolution see it. And, to my mind, reading between the lines of their letters transmitted through M., they see more, and have studied and thought and reflected more about what they are doing, than they explicitly acknowledge in the letters.

They explain that they represent a new generation, starting from scratch, without the weariness and disillusionment that paralyzes the older generations of the radical movement. But they couldn't have said that if they had not previously thought and reflected about it. They must have noticed that their youth gave them the energy and drive that youth alone can give, and that their simple ignorance, in contrast to the miseducation and disillusionment of their elders, had a certain positive side. They had less to unlearn.

They frankly say they are improving as they go along. But the remarkable thing is that they have made the right improvisations almost every time, and keep in step with the revolution as it continues to develop. And this course has been continued since the book was written. Castro's speech at the United Nations on the mainsprings of imperialism was the speech of a man who has picked up Lenin's theory somewhere; maybe from the book itself. Then, in the press reports the other day Castro was quoted as saying—for the first time explicitly, as far as I know—that the socialist system is superior to the capitalistic system, and that in a resumption of normal diplomatic relations the United States would have to take this Cuban position into account.

From all this I got the impression that the Cuban leaders knew more about revolutionary theory than they claimed to know when they were talking with M., and that they know even more now, and are still learning.

* * *

On the other level, M. revealed himself as a man more clearly in this book than ever before. I kept saying to myself as I turned the pages from his introduction to his summary: "This intellectual really *cares* about the hungry people of the world. He worries, as he says himself, not *about* the sweeping revolution, but *with* it. He is even capable of *anger*—that holy emotion of rebels and revolutionists—about injustice, oppression, lies, and hypocrisy. What a dangerous wild man to be running loose on the American campus!"

His book moved me deeply. I kept thinking of writing him a note of thanks and appreciation. But with my usual procrastination and bashful reluctance to intrude on strangers, I put it off.

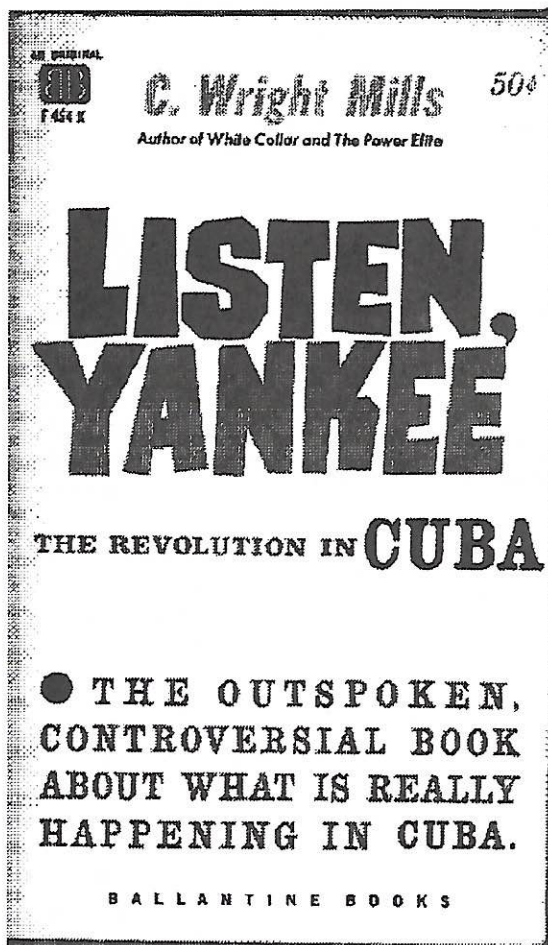
* * *

I would like here to make a brief comment on the important point dealt with inconclusively at the end of your talk with M. For convenience I will first quote a paragraph from your letter:

"If the Soviet economy is more productive, is it not then historically superior?" I asked. "What do you mean by historically superior?" he asked. "That it can produce more goods, more wealth, in less time with less labor per person." "Yes, I think it can be more efficient, but that is not for me the only test of historical superiority. More important is the moral, cultural, and intellectual superiority." The discussion ended when I added that without a superior capacity for material production there couldn't be a superior cultural superstructure.

I don't think the apparent disagreement should be left in that stalemate. The question is more subtle, more complicated. And, for my part, I can see merit in both your criterion and that of M. They should be reconciled, not contrasted.

It is elementary that "a superior capacity for material production is the necessary basis for a superior cultural superstructure." Even the Cuban leaders, who don't profess to be practicing Marxists, know that and are working night and day to improve productive capacities to provide the means for all the other things. But in my opinion, there is also merit in M.'s concern for "moral, cultural, and intellectual superiority," because it cannot be taken for granted that this will follow automatically from the reorganization of the productive sys-



tem. This aim must be deliberately stated and consciously fought for all the time.

The fullest *democracy* in the transition period, *institutionalized* by forms of organization which assure the participation and control of the working people at every stage of development, is an *indispensable* part of our program. This has to be not merely stated, but emphasized. It distinguishes us from, and puts us in irreconcilable opposition to, the “economic determinists” and the totalitarians. It is the condition for the most efficient and rapid development of the new productive process.

And no less important, perhaps even more important: This full and free democratic participation of the working people, in all stages and all phases of the social transformation during the transition period between the old society and the new, is the necessary condition for the *preparation* of the people for citizenship in a *genuinely free society*. It is not enough to learn to read and write and produce material things in abundance. That’s only the starting point. People have to learn how to *live* abundantly. That means they have to learn how to be *free*—in body, mind, and spirit. Where else can they learn that but in the school and practice of ever-expanding democracy during the transition period?

In view of the way things have turned in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China, this part of our Marxist program—workers’ democracy as the *only* road to preparation for the socialist society of the free and equal—must be given particular emphasis in all our propaganda and all our arguments with people who are dissatisfied with capitalism, but don’t want to exchange it for totalitarian slavery.

If we fail to emphasize this fundamental feature of our Marxist program; if we omit it or slur over it in our expositions of the superiority of nationalized and planned economy; if we neglect to speak of *freedom* as the socialist goal—we will never win the American workers and the new generation of intellectuals for the revolutionary fight. And we won’t deserve to.

* * *

My thoughts have turned increasingly to this side of the problem of social transformation in recent years. My speech on “Socialism and Democracy” at our 1957 convention (later repeated at the West Coast Vacation School and subsequently published as a pamphlet) was a first response to the questions troubling many people shaken up by the Khrushchev speech and the Polish and Hungarian events. Our discussion of the Chinese revolution during the past two years has pushed me to think more deeply on the subject, and I will probably have more to say later.

Here I will briefly state my settled conviction, as an orthodox Marxist, in one question and one answer: Will the development of the productive forces by a system of planned economy, under a totalitarian regime of regimentation and thought control, automatically lead to the socialist society of the free and equal?

My answer is No, Never! The workers must achieve their own emancipation; nobody will do it for them and nobody can. If anybody is looking for a fight on this basic postulate of Marxism, just tell him to knock the chip off my shoulder.

From this point of view, it appears to me that M.’s concern, which I fully share, for the “moral, cultural, and intellectual superiority” of the new society—and by that I have to presume that he means a free society—contradicts his denial of the role of the working class as the decisive agency of social change. This stands out all the more glaringly if we recognize that the transformation of society is not accomplished by the single act of revolution, but requires a transition period during which people change themselves while they are changing society.

If the workers are unable to carry through this historical task, it has to be assigned to some kind of elite. But then we come to the embarrassing questions: Will this uncontrolled elite be benevolent? Will it extend freedom, purely from goodness of heart and nobility of intentions? Or will it curtail freedom until it is stamped out entirely? Experience so far in the history of the human race in general, and of this century in particular, speaks powerfully for the latter assumption.

I don’t know whether George Orwell’s *1984* was intended as a prophecy or a warning. But if one grants or assumes that the workers are unable to take control of public affairs and keep control, it is most logical to assume that Big Brother will eventually take over. This is not a new thought of mine, or even of Orwell’s. Trotsky bluntly posed this alternative twenty-one years ago in *In Defense of Marxism*.

He didn’t believe it would happen that way, and neither do I. The working class cannot be written off until it has been definitively defeated on a worldwide scale. That hasn’t happened yet in Europe and America, or in the Soviet bloc, as the events of 1956-57 gave notice.

In this country, where the issue will be finally decided, the working class in basic industry, previously atomized and without experience in organization, showed great power in the thirties. That is too recent to forget. The uprising which culminated in the constitution of the CIO was a semi-revolution. It could have gone much farther if there had been adequate leadership. The workers—who need an “elite” to lead, but not to substitute—have marked time and even lost some ground since then; but they have not been defeated in open conflict.

In my opinion, it would be rash and “unscientific” to assume, in advance of the showdown conflict, that they will be defeated. But if one does assume that, he should not shrink from recognizing the horrifying alternative which first Trotsky, and later Orwell, posed—and quit talking about the future good society of the free and equal. Under such a regime it would be unlawful even to *think* about such things.

Fraternally,
James P. Cannon

Revolutionaries and the Fight for Reforms

by George Breitman

*George Breitman (1916-1986) joined the revolutionary socialist movement at the age of nineteen. He was a founder and for many years a leading member of the Socialist Workers Party. He was also a founder and leader of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, writing frequently for the **Bulletin In Defense of Marxism** before his death. An internationally recognized editor of and authority on the works of Leon Trotsky and Malcolm X, he was a Marxist theorist and educator in his own right.*

*As longtime editor of the **Militant** (where this article first appeared February 28, 1969), Breitman often explained the application of revolutionary Marxist theory to practical political struggles. One of the most complex problems for revolutionary-minded socialists is the relationship of reform struggles to the struggle for revolution. In the late 1960s, when this was written, there was a strong ultra-left tendency among young activists to spurn struggles for "mere reforms." In more recent years some serious activists have wondered if the struggle for real improvements in the here-and-now necessarily means turning away from socialist revolution. Breitman explains the classical revolutionary Marxist orientation.*

Among young radicals, white and black, there is a certain amount of misunderstanding about problems connected with reform and revolution and their relation to each other.

Such misunderstandings are sometimes expressed in current notions:

- That it is incorrect for revolutionaries to advocate and fight for reforms;
- That revolutionaries should not bother trying to organize the masses to fight for anything that can be won under the present system;
- That the only kinds of demands it is proper for revolutionaries to raise and organize around are those that cannot be used, misused, distorted or "co-opted" by the ruling class or opportunists; etc.

Perhaps these questions can be clarified by reexamining the concepts "reform" and "revolution" from a Marxist standpoint.

For present purposes, a reform can be called a change in social, political, or economic institutions or arrangements that does not necessarily imply or require a fundamental change in those institutions and arrangements. In contrast, such a fundamental change, involving the overturn of the socio-political-economic system itself and the replacement in state power of the former ruling class by a new ruling class, is what we usually mean when we talk about revolution.

Examples: When Congress passed laws in the 1930s recognizing the legal right of the workers to organize unions and bargain collectively, that was a reform. When the Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that school segregation is unconstitutional, that was another reform. The New Deal initiated by

Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s was not a revolution, just as the more recent Great Society was not a revolution, because the prevailing class and power relationships were not changed basically, as they were in the Russian, Yugoslav, Chinese, Cuban, and Vietnamese revolutions of this century.

Some reforms are initiated by the ruling class itself, because it thinks them beneficial to the interests of the system. Some are resisted by the ruling class for a long time, and granted only after bitter struggle convinces them that it is a lesser evil. Some reforms are won peacefully, others only through the most violent conflict. Some ruling classes have been known to refuse to grant certain reforms right up to the point where they were overthrown. (Not every ruling class makes all decisions wisely or always acts truly in its own self-interest; this is especially true in revolutionary situations and crises.)

Revolutionary Marxists, starting with Marx, have never been opposed to the struggle for reforms; on the contrary. For revolutionaries to oppose such struggles or refuse to join and try to lead them would be to doom themselves to permanent isolation and futility. Except in revolutionary situations (and not always then) most of the exploited and oppressed masses do not see the necessity or possibility of winning anything but reforms (no matter how radical or numerous the reforms they want may be).

The essence of Marxist strategy, of any revolutionary strategy in our time, is to combine the struggle for reforms with the struggle for revolution. This is the only way in which to build a revolutionary party capable of providing reliable leadership to the masses and of enabling them in revolutionary situations to make the transition, in consciousness and in action, from the

struggle for reforms to the struggle for power and revolution.

The United States is not now in a revolutionary situation. This is unfortunate, but true; and it is from this truth that revolutionaries must proceed in the development of strategy and tactics. On the other hand, it is also true that there is considerable social unrest, frustration, alienation, and the start of sizable radicalization in this country today, especially among young people, who provide the chief forces for revolution.

Favorable Situation

That means there is a favorable situation developing for conscious and dedicated revolutionaries—a growing body of people who can be won to the cause of revolution even before a revolutionary situation arises. The development of significant revolutionary cadres is more possible now than at any time in the last third of a century.

But the gathering, education, and toughening of revolutionary cadres, while indispensable for a revolution, isn't enough to guarantee one. There are still all those people "out there"—the millions and millions who are not ready to make a revolution, although they are certainly in favor of reforms that can affect their living conditions and personal destinies. (This applies not only to the population generally, but also to the overwhelming majority of black people and young people, among whom the radicalization process is more advanced.)

Even though a revolution is not possible today, the development of a revolutionary strategy is. But you can't develop one unless you take into account the way to win those millions toward independent and revolutionary motion.

So revolutionary Marxists cannot be opposed to the struggle for reforms. What we oppose is reformism.

Reformism is the tendency which holds that the basic problems of society can be solved, or even that socialism can be achieved, by the gradual accumulation of reforms, one by one. That concept, not fighting for reforms, is what revolutionaries are and should be against.

Reforms can be sought in various ways. Reformists work for them in a class-collaborationist, conciliatory fashion, attempting to convince the exploited and oppressed masses that the system is "workable," that their interests and those of the exploiters and oppressed can and should be reconciled, that class and national struggles should not be fought out to their logical conclusion.

Revolutionaries fight for reforms, but they never stop teaching the masses the truth about the inadequacies of reforms so long as the ruling class is not displaced from power, about the ease with which reforms can be canceled or withdrawn or made meaningless by ineffective or discriminatory enforcement as long as the ruling class remains in power, about the need to go beyond reforms and reconstruct the foundations of society on a planned and rational basis.

In the struggle against fascism, for example, reformists seek to reinforce illusions about and reliance on capitalist democracy, and oppose antifascist methods that might go beyond the framework of capitalist democracy, and thus incur the displeasure of the democratic capitalists. Revolutionaries, on the other hand, try to help the masses to understand the unreliability and treachery of the democratic capitalists and the need to combine anti-fascism with anticapitalism.

Another distinction is that reformists propose at best halfway measures aimed at avoiding showdown conflicts while revolutionaries encourage independent mass action and independent mass organization as the only way to win and keep reforms, to deepen consciousness, and extend the conditions for continuing social change.

Only Reform?

James Haughton and Timothy J. Cooney of Harlem's Equal Employment Council, which seeks construction work for blacks, think they have an airtight case when they argue that because the U.S. is not about to have a revolution, therefore the black man "has only one course of action; the hard, unromantic road of reform." That they actually mean the road of reformism is made clear when they add: "He [the black man] must have a legislative program and a political strategy for putting it across. He

must grit his teeth and politely testify before hostile Congressional committees. He must make alliances of conveniences with people he doesn't like. He must learn that awful business of compromise," etc. (*Manhattan Tribune*, Nov. 20, 1968).

The flaw in their logic is obvious. Black people have to fight for reforms, but that doesn't mean that they have to fight for them in a reformist way. They have the alternative of fighting for them in a revolutionary way—by militant mass action rather than polite testimony, and as part of a strategy consciously aimed at mobilizing the masses to change the system. You don't have to become a reformist just because revolution is not around the corner. In fact, that is the way to assure that revolution will never come—just as, conversely, a refusal to fight for reforms, in a revolutionary fashion, is also a way of postponing revolution.

In a similar way to Haughton and Cooney, Harold Cruse thinks he is making some kind of telling point when he asserts that Malcolm X cannot be considered a revolutionary because the program of his Organization of Afro-American Unity "was definitely written as a reformist document." (*The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, p. 442) He means, of course, that the OAAU programs of Malcolm's time urged black people to organize to fight for reforms.

But why does that disqualify Malcolm as a revolutionary, any more than it disqualifies Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao Tse-tung, Castro, or Ho Chi Minh? The real question is whether Malcolm intended to fight for those reforms in a revolutionary way, and to utilize the organization, education, and experience acquired in the course of the fight for them to promote revolution. The answer is affirmative, although it will not be found in Cruse's writings. It is clearly apparent from Malcolm's teaching, summarized in his declaration: "By any means necessary."

To approach the problem another way: It is instructive to contrast SNCC with the Black student unions that have arisen in the last year or two. SNCC is an organization to whom all revolutionaries owe gratitude as a pioneer of the present radicalization; historically, it will surely be ranked with the IWW as a forerunner of the American revolution. But its present stagnation and isolation cannot be attributed solely to the savage persecution it has suffered at the hands of the government. In part, it has been hamstrung by its own anti-leadership fetish, by the unfortunate theory held by some of its leaders that "repression" will produce radicalization and revolution, and in the recent period by generalizations about revolution that somehow discouraged or minimized participation in the

partial struggles that got the label of "non-revolutionary."

On the other hand, the black student unions, which might have served as a major base for the revival and expansion of SNCC, have been healthily free of certain abstentionist inhibitions. Without excessive rhetoric, they have struck stunning blows at the status quo from one coast to the other. And what are their demands? Nothing but reforms, and reforms of only the schools at that!

But because they are fighting for reforms in a radical way, they have raised the campus struggles to a new level, strengthening the whole movement immensely, and making possible the widening of the youth radicalization, including whites as well as blacks. And because they are fighting in a radical way, they are winning more than if they had fought in a reformist way, even where they cannot win all of their demands. Dr. Nathan Hare is absolutely correct in his retort to Roy Wilkins when he says, "Our cries for more black professors and black students have padded white colleges with more blacks in two years than a decade of whimpering for 'integration' ever did."

False Limit

If we limit ourselves only to those demands that the ruling class and opportunists will not try (often unsuccessfully) to distort, manipulate or co-opt, there will be very few demands we will ever be able to raise. In a revolutionary situation the ruling class will try to co-opt even revolutionary demands. For example, in the German revolution at the end of World War I, when the masses began to organize workers and soldiers councils (soviets), the ruling class and its Social Democratic henchmen offered to "recognize" the councils and incorporate them into the government as an official institution (where, of course, they would have been subordinated, housebroken, and emasculated).

There are few if any demands so simple that they can be guaranteed forever immune to manipulation by the enemy. The cure lies in education, alertness, flexibility, and in the creation of movements with a high level of revolutionary consciousness—not in the search for perfect but elusive formulas, and not in abandoning or abstaining from the struggle for reforms that have the potential of organizing and educating the masses.

(The Cuban revolution developed as a struggle for reforms—end of the dictatorship, land for the peasant, lower rents, homes, schools, jobs for the workers—but because the Fidelistas mobilized masses in a revolutionary struggle for these reforms and educated them to the need to struggle for these things against any force that op-

posed them, they carried the struggle to a conclusion that brought the first socialist revolution in the western hemisphere.)

Nothing in the world can be done to prevent the government, the Ford Foundation, or various black opportunists from trying to give their content to the popular demand for black control of the black community, from interpreting it as "black capitalism" or "decentralization" or the election of black Democrats, etc., and from seeking to deflect the struggle for this demand into safer channels. (Attempts to dampen down movements with concessions can boomerang too. This, for example, was the intent in giving ghetto youth college scholarships and grants. Now they've got a panther by the tail.)

The way to combat efforts of the ruling class to co-opt demands is not to conclude that such demands are worthless but to give them a revolutionary content. To do otherwise can only guarantee the continued influence of the reformists among the masses.

For example, the school issue is a major one today for black people in New York and other cities. The reformists, supported by sections of the ruling class, try to keep that struggle within the limits of simple school decentralization. It is the obligation of revolutionaries to join the school struggle precisely to counterpose the revolutionary concept of black control of black schools to the reformist concept of an "improved," "less bureaucratic," "decentralized," education system.

The negative attitude of some black radicals to the struggle for black control of the black community has been paralleled by the disparaging attitude of some white radicals toward certain demands and aspects of the fight against the war in Vietnam, which has already radicalized millions of young Americans despite far-from-perfect leadership.

Antiwar Movement

The current antiwar movement had hardly got started in 1965 before some leaders of SDS and certain ultraleftist groups began to complain that they were "tired" of broad antiwar demonstrations and marches

demanding the withdrawal of the GIs from Vietnam. Why? Because they weren't stopping the war, or because they were "too square," or because they weren't sufficiently anti-imperialist, or because they concentrated on trying to reach wider sections of the population instead of seeking "confrontations" with the cops, or (during the 1968 election campaign) because the liberal capitalist politicians were trying (with partial and temporary success) to exploit, deflect, and co-opt the antiwar sentiment and movement.

The Vietnamese liberation movement has a more realistic and a much more favorable estimate about the value of the antiwar demonstrations, and do not concur in the American ultraleftist judgment that they are now "passé."

But independently of the Vietnamese opinion, surely there should be more American radicals capable of appreciating the tremendous contributions the antiwar movement, with all its defects and limitations, has made up to this point, and is still capable of making—providing the American radicals don't turn their backs on it now.

Similar criticisms can be made about some of the current radical attitudes to antiwar referendums, and to electoral activity in general.

Voting Age Issue

Lowering the voting age to 18 is nothing but a reform, and one which has been granted even in reactionary states in this country. But a fight for this reform, led by revolutionaries and conducted with some imagination, could have a profoundly radicalizing-politicizing effect, especially among young people.

I lived in Michigan a few years ago when a referendum on this issue was held in that state, and I must report my disappointment at seeing the revolutionary socialists, adult and youth alike, confining themselves to routine endorsement of the lower-age reform instead of dramatizing and leading the campaign to enact it. Perhaps their underreaction was due to the fact that both capitalist parties, the labor movement, and just about everybody else also endorsed the

proposition. (But it was badly defeated in the referendum vote.)

It is healthy for radicals, old and young, to beware of the dangers of reformism, but it is dangerous to mistake the baby for the bathwater or the bathwater for the baby. The American Communist and Socialist parties did not become reformist because they participated in the struggle for reforms; the reasons have to be sought elsewhere. And the Socialist Labor Party did not remain revolutionary by deciding to oppose participation in struggles for immediate and partial demands; their hostility to every working class revolution of this century testifies to that.

Capitalism always attempts to buy off every popular movement that it cannot pervert, misdirect, or crush. But there are limits on what it can accomplish along these lines, as the fact that one-third of the world has been torn out of its grip demonstrates. The dangers of co-optation must not be underestimated, but neither should they be overestimated. The reforms and concessions of recent years have not mollified, conciliated, or co-opted the masses of black Americans (even though they bought off some potential leaders). It really takes a lot of faith in the power of capitalism to believe that it is capable of satisfying the demands of the black masses—the only kind of "co-optation" that could end their struggle.

Struggle is the school of the masses. All demands that move the masses into struggle and raise the level of their consciousness are worth raising, fighting for, and incorporating into the overall revolutionary strategy.

None should be excluded because they are "only reforms," or because through sharp struggle they may be won partly or wholly under capitalism, or because the capitalists will try to utilize them for their own purposes, or because they don't conform to the dogmas of sectarians and abstentionists, who have so little self-confidence that whenever they get involved in anything outside of their own tight little warm circles they begin to ask, "What are we doing wrong?" □

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