

Information, Education, Discussion Bulletin

In Defense of Marxism

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Revolutionary Struggle in Central America

Guatemala: the First Return

by Janet Melvin

Nicaragua: What Was, What Is, What Will Be?

by Paul Le Blanc

The El Salvadoran Revolution: Victory or Defeat?

by Michael Livingston

Also: Behind the Political Crisis in Russia

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

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Who We Are

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.

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.

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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Behind the Political Crisis in Russia

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

While it is difficult from afar and with the incomplete reports we receive here to uncover all the ins and outs of the government crisis in March in the Kremlin, it seems apparent that a new phase of the reform process is at hand.

The standoff between Russian President Boris Yeltsin and the Russian Supreme Soviet (now usually referred to as the Parliament), which dominated media coverage from the former USSR during March 1993, did mark some important changes. It indicated that there is a new differentiation of forces within the ruling caste. A strong and influential sector, particularly that headed by a corps of factory directors, is no longer prepared to strictly abide by the dictates of the International Monetary Fund. Organized as the Civic Union, a parliamentary faction, this group represents about two-thirds of the enterprise directors in Russia.

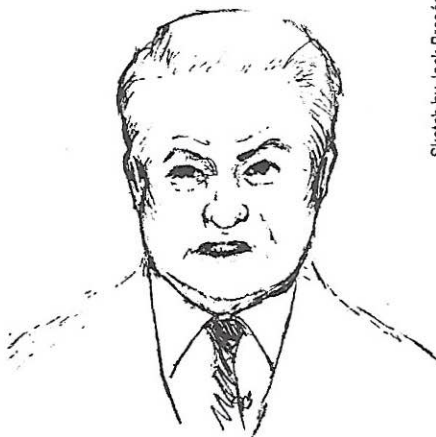
Throughout most of the post-August 1991 period, Boris Yeltsin and his band of advisers had been granted free rein to execute the economic plan dictated by imperialist lenders on the assumption that this would result in large injections of foreign aid. This aid did not come and there is a growing recognition inside the Kremlin that it will not come. This significantly alters the equation.

No Relief In Sight

Throughout the reform process — that is the process whereby the ruling apparatus sought foreign capital and aid from imperialist lenders to overcome the stagnation resulting from bureaucratic planning — Gorbachev, and

after him, Yeltsin had been able to manipulate the political environment by advancing themselves as the standard-bearers of democracy as well as the pall bearers of the totalitarian regime of the Stalin and post-Stalin years. This was the source of their strength.

Any resistance was automatically equated with defense of the old monolithic, totalitarian order responsible for the economic stag-



Sketch by Jack Bresée

Russian President Boris Yeltsin, supported by former black marketeers, racketeers, and imperialism.

nation and repression — falsely portrayed as socialism or communism.

The coverage of the March Kremlin dispute was no different. Yeltsin in his surprise

address televised on Saturday, March 20, defined the battle quite explicitly in those terms: "The choice was extremely acute and responsible: either to slip back into the Communist dead end or...to take the road of progress on which all civilized humanity has embarked." The obstacle to progress he described as "the deep contradiction between the people and the former Bolshevik antinational system, which has not yet fully disintegrated"

But this time, both the relationship of forces in Russia and, above all, Russia's dire economic crisis make this scenario less and less credible, and it seems less and less likely that Yeltsin and his circle will be allowed to exploit this line to win a popular mandate to continue their craven submission to imperialist economic behests.

The basic problem is that their submission has not been rewarded with any significant aid from abroad. Meanwhile, the measures the Russian government has imposed to try to please the imperialist lenders and seduce foreign capital have only pushed the Russian economy further toward ruin.

The funds Russia and the other republics of the former Soviet Union need to begin to extricate themselves from the social, environmental, and health crises at hand amount to hundreds of billions of dollars — minimal help to the victims of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster alone would cost \$55 billion, according to Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk. The Group of Seven (G-7) industrialized capitalist nations offered \$24 billion last year. But only \$12-\$15 billion has actually been made available to the Russians, and this was

Editor's Note

In this issue Janet Melvin, Michael Livingston, and Paul Le Blanc provide important articles which focus our attention on the current stage of revolutionary struggles in Central America — discussing Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Reviews by Carol McAllister (of the classic Guatemalan Memoir, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*) and by Michael Frank (of the new anthology edited by Michael Löwy, *Marxism in Latin America*) add to this special focus.

Marilyn Vogt-Downey analyzes new developments in Russia reflected in the conflict between Boris Yeltsin and some of his former supporters. (Marilyn has edited a magnificent anthology, *The USSR 1987-1991: Marxist Perspectives*, which has just been published by

Humanities Press.) We are also pleased to present Ramsey Clark's critique of U.S. foreign policy, with special reference to the war against Iraq.

Fundamental to the struggle for women's liberation has been the right of women to control their own bodies, including being able to choose to have an abortion. Right-wing forces have relentlessly escalated their assault on these rights, placing the assassination of physicians in their tactical arsenal. Evelyn Sell analyzes the current situation.

Dhoruba bin Wahad, an uncompromising veteran of the Black Panther Party, discusses the impact of government repression in the African American liberation movement. The debate on Black nationalism vs. "revolutionary

integrationism" is continued in the contribution by Vera Wigglesworth and Jim Miles. In future issues we will be featuring additional contributions to conclude this valuable discussion.

We look forward to an exchange of views on additional questions in future issues — including past, present, and future developments of the socialist and labor movements. Readers should also be sure to get a copy of the just-published *Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the 21st Century (Programmatic Manifesto of the Fourth International)*, which sells for only \$1.00 and is available from this magazine. We hope for a wide-ranging discussion of the issues dealt with in that important document.

in the form of credits, which the high cost of imports made it difficult for the Russians to use.

The results of the IMF prescriptions were quite predictable: ending subsidies to industry and agriculture disrupted production and caused even greater shortages and economic dislocation than there was already; production is dropping 20–25 percent annually. Lifting price ceilings under these conditions, as the Yeltsin government did in January 1992, only caused prices for basic goods that were already in short supply to skyrocket out of the reach of most people. Only speculators can thrive in such an atmosphere. With little or no income, factories could not pay their workers; many production plants — 25 percent during the summer of 1992 — were forced to shut down temporarily.

The privatization that has been enforceable, i.e. in housing, shops, and the service sector, has only enriched a few — the nomenklatura, profiteers, and black marketeers — at the expense of the many. Most workers barely make enough to eat.

As if this process were not destructive enough, the IMF plan, agreed to by the Russian government, included additional measures to ensure the destruction of the country's industrial base. These measures are of critical importance.

They were reported in an article by Andrei Konstantinov in *Solidarnost*, a newspaper of the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions, which is published with the collaboration of socialists and supporters of the Party of Labor initiative.

The Deliberate Destruction of Industry

Entitled "The Financial War: The Government Opts to Strike a Massive Blow," Konstantinov explains how the IMF plan works:

Ordinary workers hardly pay any attention to the actions of the Central Bank, which from time to time outrages the deputies in the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation. After all, what difference does it make to the ordinary citizen if the Central Bank raised the interest rate to commercial banks or created a special board to control credit operations? Who cares if some commercial borrower has to pay a higher interest rate!

As a matter of fact, the battle being fought in this arena is one of the most important in the strategy for destroying Russian industrial structures that the government is obliged to pursue in its agreement with the International Monetary Fund of March 4, 1992.

Konstantinov goes on to describe how the banking operations work.

Industries, left with no funds to operate with — or even to pay workers' wages — are forced to borrow from their local bank. The local bank gets its funds from the Central Bank, which charges interest rates to the local banks of say 50–60 percent. The local bank in turn charges the borrowing industry 80–100 percent interest!

These rates have increased considerably since Konstantinov's article appeared.

Konstantinov explains that obviously enterprises must considerably raise the prices of whatever they produce if they are to obtain an "income" sufficient to repay twice the amount they borrowed. These deliberately high interest rates thus not only fuel inflation. They create a permanent crisis for the borrower. Not only are the interest rates high but the loans are a long time in coming, because the Central Bank has set up a special board to "approve" loans. This means that the loan does not reach the borrower for months, so that, with the prevailing inflation, by the time the loan arrives its value has decreased considerably.

This destructive policy has the additional advantage for the capitalist restorationists that if the indebted industry is forced to close, those who wish to purchase it can do so very cheaply. (For a full translation of Konstantinov's article, see the *Bulletin* of the U.S.-Soviet Workers' Information Committee [USSWIC], No. 3, April 1993, Box 1890, New York, NY 10009.)

As we have seen, the bankruptcies resulting from this monetary policy can be presented as proof by advocates of capitalism that state-owned industry is innately inferior to private forms of ownership.

Boris Kagarlitsky, in an article in *Solidarnost* entitled "Time to Draw a Balance Sheet," summed up the IMF's goals:

The course the government is consistently following is one which it deliberately chose and on which it reached agreement with the IMF. This is a course in the interests of the new rich, of the old and new nomenklatura, of the mafia and bureaucratic bourgeoisie — of all the forces which are incapable on their own of ensuring that production goes ahead, but which have a marvelous capacity for growing fat through plundering the assets of the state sector. This is a course pursued in the interests of the Western banks and of the transnational corporations, who need Russia only as a source of raw materials. The state sector is the guarantee of our economic independence, and this is precisely the reason why these forces are so anxious to destroy it. Formally this is called privatization, but in fact it is nothing other than destruction. [*Solidarnost*, Special Issue, October 1992.]

Yeltsin's Acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, dismissed in December 1992, openly admitted he supported this goal when discussing the economic program he implemented: "Destruction of the old — to the point from which it could not be resurrected — was a more important priority [for us] at first than building the new" (*New York Times*, March 26, 1993).

But this plan for ruin had an obstacle in its path — the Russian working class, which is meant to bear the brunt of these policies.

Concessions to the Working Class

Most of the adult population, some 70 million workers, are organized in the unions included in the General Confederation of Trade Unions, the structure that replaced the old central council. That body, the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, had posed as a union and survived until October 1990, by which time the workers mobilizations had totally discredited it. The workers organized into these unions present a formidable obstacle to the success of the IMF program despite the complicit and corrupt leaderships they often have. No matter what the IMF may wish, the Russian government simply cannot shut down the bulk of the industries, leaving tens of millions of workers unemployed. To do that would mean putting its head in a noose.

Thus, the Russian government has been forced to make concessions to the workers to compensate for the IMF's antisocial policies. Its main concession has been printing more money — to pay the workers. This printing of money has reached astounding proportions. In August 1992, the Russian government's Central Bank printed 230 billion rubles — more than it had during the last 30 years combined. In December 1992 alone, the Russian government issued "a million million rubles," according to the *New York Times* of January 27, 1993.

Such concessions by the government only further fuel inflation, which reached 2,500 percent last year. The IMF demands that these concessions be stopped because inflation devalues the ruble in relation to foreign currency and further postpones ruble convertibility, something the imperialists insist on before investing to any great extent. They want to be able to take home their profits.

However, without these ruble injections, the economy might have collapsed. Still, the imperialist advisers want even higher interest rates to "discourage" borrowing and an end to this printing of money if they are to continue to consider any further "help" to Russia. This is what set the stage for the March conflict between Yeltsin and the Parliament.

The Factory Directors and the Workers

The factory director deputies in the Parliament, along with others in the bureaucratic government apparatus, realize they cannot continue to go along with these particular IMF policies because their own sources of wealth are being jeopardized — if the factories go under and the economy collapses, they lose their "feeding trough."

They can no longer allow Yeltsin to turn over Russian economic policy to IMF dictates; they need more subsidies and cheaper credits. They want certain industries (theirs) to be protected; some fancy themselves potential full-fledged owners; others seek to use their positions to get rich elsewhere. But the

common denominator is they want the Parliament, where they wield some influence, to have the final say on policy, not Yeltsin and the IMF.

This means that there is a certain coincidence of interest between the views of the factory directors and the workers. The IMF policy to destroy Russia's industrial base by first depriving the enterprises of government subsidies and then imposing exorbitant interest rates on loans has created havoc on the local levels. Recent protests and strikes in both the Kuzbas region in Siberia and Vorkuta in the far north by coal miners in the pro-Yeltsin Independent Miners Union have demanded both subsidies and cheap loans. But the government's only response so far has been promises and printing more money.

The conflict of interests between the enterprise directors and the workers has already revealed itself on numerous occasions. This is especially true when the workers organize to replace the director himself — for example, when coal miners in the Vorgashor mine in Vorkuta began a strike in December 1992, demanding among other things the dismissal of the mine's director. The government responded by declaring the strike illegal and arresting a key strike leader. Then management shut off the mine's ventilation system, cutting off fresh air for some 350 miners deep in the mine. They had gone down into the mine and occupied it to demand that their strike leader be freed (see USSWIC Bulletin No. 3).

The conflict of interest between the directors and workers also shows itself in the privatization schemes that the government is offering for enterprises. These plans demonstrate that the bill of goods the Russian government has been trying to sell the workers during the reform era has nothing to offer them.

The issuing by the Russian government of vouchers worth 10,000 each to 150 million Russians late last year signaled the onset of the massive privatization drive. Fifty thousand small enterprises are slated to be privatized this year; 300 medium and large enterprises in 41 regions were to be privatized through voucher auctions in February and March 1993, a significantly higher monthly rate than in December 1992 (11) and January 1993 (25). By the end of 1993 the government hopes to have privatized 5,000 of 10,000 such enterprises.

The government is "requiring" all enterprises with more than 1,000 workers or a fixed capital of over 50 million rubles to present a privatization plan. These enterprises have, it seems, two options.

Option one offers workers 35 percent of the shares of an enterprise at either a reduced rate or free, the managers have access to 5 percent of the shares at book value, and 60 percent of the shares are left for public "sale." Thus, option one — which in theory offers shares that workers might be able to afford —

leaves them with a clear minority interest, no matter how many workers may be involved.

Option two offers the workers and the managers the right to buy up to 51 percent of the shares of an enterprise, but at a rate that is 1.5 times the shares' book value, with the rest available for purchase by "the public." First of all, even if the managers take only 1 percent of the shares — and they will surely try for more — the workers are still left without a majority. However, this plan presents problems of another kind: many workers cannot afford to buy shares at the inflated rate; and even if they can afford to, they are taking a risk with their savings in a situation that is at present very unfavorable.

Private Opinions = Private Property?

Yeltsin has been trying to push through a plan for land privatization which will make investments more attractive to foreign capital and protect the property of the nomenklatura bourgeoisie and their speculator colleagues. He had included a question about this in a past referendum plan that he floated and later dropped. As it is, land can only be leased for long periods but cannot become anyone's private property to be passed on to heirs.

Yeltsin raised the issue of land privatization several times in his speech of March 20.

He warned against "revenge-taking by the former party nomenklatura" in parliament who "buried the hope for people's ownership of land.... Russia cannot stand another October Revolution. That would be a jump into the abyss... Our country in several decades was living in death, exhausting natural resources... They prevented people from working on their land, from private entrepreneurship or expressing private opinions," Yeltsin said.

The land privatization program that the Russian government is offering is not intended to provide "land to those who till it." The plan that Yeltsin is projecting calls for 50 percent of the land to be owned by large private corporations, 20 percent by small "cooperatives," 10 percent by the state, and only 20 percent by individual, private farmers.

Yeltsin's Grab for Special Powers

It was allegedly to keep the "Communist" forces from dragging Russia backward that Yeltsin said he had "signed a decree of special rule until the crisis of power" was concluded, that is, he prolonged his own personal rule. He also called for a referendum April 25 to prolong his mandate and get approval of a new constitution his appointees were drafting. However, the source of this "specter of communism" Yeltsin was trying to raise was in reality this growing section of the nomenklatura in the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet that realizes significant assistance is not coming from impe-

rialism and that alternative methods of survival must be considered.

Organized in various parliamentary groupings, they are united in believing that to continue to push the IMF policy is foolhardy even from the nomenklatura's point of view.

Elected in March 1990, when there was still a Soviet Union and the Communist Party ruled, most of the 1,033 deputies — in fact some 86 percent — were ranking party members at the time, as was Boris Yeltsin himself, despite the new, relatively more democratic conditions.

However, the overwhelming majority of these deputies, like Yeltsin, support the official policy of restoring capitalism to one degree or another and are in the process of using their political positions to amass as much wealth and property as they can. Genuine communism, therefore, is certainly not on their agenda. Nor is a reversion to the pre-Gorbachev system of a centralized command economy under the party nomenklatura's control.

In fact, this very Parliament had in August 1991 and again in December 1991 agreeably handed over all power to Yeltsin and the government he appointed and supported him as he implemented the drastic austerity measures that have made life so hard for the working people.

Then who was Yeltsin talking to on March 20 and what was he talking about?

Yeltsin's Audience of Choice

Yeltsin was not talking to the mass of the population who have been plunged ever deeper into poverty as a result of his program. The matters he raised didn't even touch the main problems of their lives.

Yeltsin promised "sweeping economic reforms;" he had ordered, he said, his prime minister to list priority economic measures within two days, but did not indicate what they were. As we have seen, he raised the issue of land privatization several times. The massive privatization of industry would be extended to the land, he said.

He promised to struggle against inflation, stabilize the ruble, and exert strict control over the money supply. Then he also outlined a "costly program of social protection measures" — with no indication of how this would be paid for — as well as promising credits and tax holidays to those who wish to start businesses.

"Programs would be launched to soak up unemployment" and guarantee employment to those who work in the state enterprises. "The tens of millions who lost savings due to inflation would receive a noninflationary form of compensation in shares in enterprises, land, and other state property," he said. He also spoke of passing a bankruptcy law and a decree to ban the pro-Communist press (*New York Times*, March 21, 1993).

But the majority of the population does not make enough to live on. To be able to quantify

the crisis, the government has even coined a new income category that means subpoverty, that is, the section of the population which is living below subsistence, or only making enough to buy some food and nothing more. There is rising hunger, malnutrition, homelessness, and epidemics of curable diseases. The infant mortality rate and number of deaths on the job are going up. The population is declining. What did Yeltsin's address have to do with the needs of the suffering millions? Nothing, and it was not meant to.

Yeltsin was talking to the speculators, the former black marketeers, and the present-day racketeers — Russia's "new capitalists," as the *New York Times* called them in its editorial on March 25, predicting with an air of triumph that there may be 10 million of them by the end of April. That is the domestic social base Yeltsin is looking to and wants to nurture. But he was talking above all to foreign investors and international imperialist lending institutions, who want to hear assurances from him that he is still their man.

In fact, reducing the inflation, stabilizing the ruble, and privatizing the resources, land, and factories have been central demands of the International Monetary Fund, the G-7 governments, and other imperialist lending institutions if the Russian government is to repay past debts and become eligible for new loans.

Evidently Yeltsin's attempt to assume dictatorial powers inspired confidence among the G-7 "industrial democracies." In no time at all, within hours of Yeltsin's speech, all of the G-7 governments — the U.S., Britain, France, Canada, Italy, Japan, and Germany — had come out in support of what Yeltsin was doing. But this will not be translated into the kind of monetary infusions the nomenklatura is kissing hands for.

The bureaucracy's economic reform program has reached an impasse.

Will the Real Democrats Please Stand Up!

As the crisis worsens, even Yeltsin's democratic pretensions are falling away.

Yeltsin — the great "democrat" — hopes to "win" the April 25 referendum by ignoring a stipulation of the new, glasnost election laws that election results are void if less than half the registered voters take part. Yeltsin wants to be declared the winner if a majority of people who go to the polls vote in his favor — no matter how few they may be.

This is because Yeltsin knows that as a result of his devastating economic program, not only is voter apathy high. Yeltsin's and parliament's popularity are low.

Yeltsin's popularity is, in fact, so low that even *Moscow News* — formerly on the cutting edge of glasnost but now on the cutting edge of the capitalist restoration propaganda

— has resorted to a method of the Stalin era to avoid printing embarrassing figures outright — call it "percentages disguised as facts."

At almost the very end of an article on the results of a recent poll, *MN* reports that "Yeltsin has lost 52 percent of those who voted for him in 1991." If one remembers that Yeltsin received 57 percent of the votes in 1991, one can then calculate that this sentence seems to indicate that about 27 percent of those who were polled approved of Yeltsin's performance — very low indeed.

The poll also reported that in the "provinces" only 1.5 percent of the "city dwellers" agreed with the contention that the 'new millionaires' are honest and industrious people. One in three denounced them as swindlers and black marketeers. Nearly 13 percent of all respondents 'proposed' jailing the *nouveaux riches*. Disapproving attitudes toward the wealthy become clear if we take a look at what the Russian people believe to be the sources of this wealth," *MN* continued. "In their opinion, profiteering (speculation) yields the highest incomes (43 percent of the respondents)." "Business" ranked second (22.4 percent). Then came trade (9.9 percent), "theft and embezzlement" (4.2 percent), and "mediation and brokerage" (3.8 percent). "Mining of primary commodities (raw material resources) and dealing in them" (3.7 percent) ranked just ahead of "fraud, swindles, ventures, rackets, and mafia extortion (3.3 percent)."

The poll was conducted this past winter in twelve cities in four regions of Russia by the Institute of Applied Politics (*MN*, No. 12, March 19, 1993).

As Ruslan Khasbulatov, the speaker of the Parliament, put it to a delegation of visiting U.S. politicians April 8: "The greatest threat [to the market reforms and privatization] originates not from some pro-Communist forces but from the people themselves" (*New York Times*, April 9, 1993).

Who Will Rule?

During the recent battle in the Kremlin, both Yeltsin and the Parliament accused each other of being totalitarian. In this instance, both have a point. Both want massive privatization and the introduction of market mechanisms, even if they have different ideas of how to do it. As of March 1993, despite the "shock therapy" — the lifting of price ceilings, the end to subsidies, and repeated "privatization" programs, causing unimaginable hardships for the mass of workers — 95 percent of the property is still state owned. No matter what their targets may have been, the nomenklatura privatizers and their IMF backers have not even scratched the surface.

As far back as November 1992, the IMF itself began to reassess its fiscal prescriptions in light of the impossibility of their fulfill-

ment. It agreed that the government would need to play a more active role in creating a "new class of managers." It agreed that there may be a need to subsidize leading enterprises that can restructure efficiently. It also agreed that some temporary price controls — for example, on some medicines and certain industrial supplies — may be advisable. These concessions were made not for humanitarian reasons but because the preferred prescriptions were not getting their loans repaid.

Russia is badly in default. In early April the Paris Club — representing the 19 top capitalist governments — agreed to reschedule the repayments. It agreed to give Russia, the only one of the former Soviet republics to be repaying any of the former Soviet Union's \$80 billion debt, ten years to pay \$15 billion in debts due in 1993. Since the Russian government would not have been able to pay any of this anyway — it had only \$2.5 billion to pay the \$8 billion in arrears owed in 1992 — this debt relief helps. But it is no substitute for new capital injections.

At present, the ruling clique in the Kremlin has nowhere to turn. As the Russians might say, "*ni tuda, ni siuda*" ("neither this way nor that") — they are stuck. Most of them are realizing that imperialism will not bail them out. The problem they have is what to do with those 70 million workers who had not been factored into their plans.

So far, the workers have been relatively passive. However, all the concessions the government is offering to mollify the workers are inflationary. This rising inflation only makes the workers' lives more difficult, causing greater anger. Yet without it, there would be massive unemployment and resistance. Meanwhile these concessionary measures further alienate foreign lenders and investors.

It will take new workers organizations and union leaderships that think socially and act politically to begin, in the interest of the vast majority of those who labor, to pull the economy out of the current nose dive. These organizations are in the process of forming in various regions, and over the next year we could see them begin to have an impact.

In the last analysis, the battle going on in the ex-USSR is not between the "reformers" and the "conservatives" in the Kremlin but between the IMF and the workers. The workers have been dealt a few bruises as a result of the IMF policies already imposed; there is no doubt about that. However, the battle is far from over. So far, the workers despite their relative passivity have proven to be a formidable opponent.

We should do everything we can to learn about their struggles and support them in any way we can. □

April 11, 1993

Anti-Choice Terrorists Escalate Violence

by Evelyn Sell

Reporting on the March 10 murder of Dr. David Gunn by an anti-abortion activist in Florida, the *Los Angeles Times* stated, "The battle over abortion has taken a new turn as anti-abortion protesters have launched a harassment campaign against doctors who perform the procedure." In fact, this was not a "new turn" nor the "launching" of a novel campaign by those who have been fighting against women's rights to control their own bodies and destinies. Randall Terry, who headed Operation Rescue (OR), publicly announced during an October 30, 1991, NBC national television program that OR views doctors as "the weakest link" in the abortion process. The harassment of doctors, which was shown on this national program, included scenes of a doctor's vandalized office and home, both spray-painted with "Baby Killer." The TV presentation also included an interview with a doctor who described being picketed by OR while attending church and reported how his children were screamed at by OR activists while at school.

Targeting doctors was an outgrowth of OR's assaults on women's health clinics, a campaign which was launched in 1988. Countered by consistent and well-organized clinic defense actions by pro-choice supporters, OR and other anti-abortion opponents deliberately began to focus on physicians as a key element in their efforts to deny women their legal rights to safe medical services. Randall Terry graphically outlined the tactics to be utilized against doctors: "We're going to shame them, humiliate them, embarrass them, disgrace them, and expose them" until they stop performing abortions. Terry announced that a doctor providing abortion services would be confronted "in his neighborhood, where he golfs, in the entire community where he lives."

National Campaign Against Doctors

Other anti-abortion groups joined in this terrorist campaign, including Operation Goliath in Florida, the South Bay Pro-Life Coalition in California, and Rescue America, which is based in Houston, Texas.

Dr. Warren Hern, a Colorado physician, was compelled to work behind bulletproof glass after five shots were fired through a window, just missing one of the clinic employees. Hern's photo was recently published in an anti-abortion newsletter. Abortion opponents firebombed Dr. Curtis Boyd's Texas clinic four years ago, fired shots into the facility, and once broke in and chained themselves to furniture. In Southern California,

doctors' photos were printed on flyers proclaiming: "WANTED! For killing unborn babies in the South Bay!" In mid-1992, California physicians in Orange County, San Diego, San Jose, and Sacramento were targeted. Calling their harassment campaign "No Place to Hide," the South Bay Pro-Life Coalition and OR began demonstrating outside of doctors' offices in Torrance on May 6, 1992. One of the placards bore the message: "Stop Killing Babies Now."

Across the country, opponents of abortion attempted to instill the idea that doctors are "killers" and "murderers" if they enable women to exercise their legal rights to reproductive decisions. A "pro-life" newsletter urged readers, "Let this nation know the laws of the Supreme Being take precedence over the laws of the Supreme Court." Given this intense campaign to demonize physicians and to justify terrorism by adherence to a "higher law," it is not surprising that Dr. Gunn was shot and killed during a Rescue America demonstration outside of the Women's Medical Services clinic in Pensacola, Florida.

Background to Doctor's Murder

The actions and statements of anti-abortion forces in Florida set the stage for assassination. On Christmas Day, 1984, three Pensacola women's clinics were bombed. The two men found guilty of this violence explained that the bombings were "a Christmas gift to Jesus on his birthday." John Burt, the regional director of Rescue America, criticized the bombings but stated: "What's more important — bricks and mortar or babies' lives? I would say babies' lives."

Efforts to shut down the Aware Woman's Clinic in Melbourne, a small community south of Cape Canaveral, is a vivid example

of the terrorist techniques employed by abortion foes. Patricia Baird Windle, the clinic's founder, explained, "They're stalking my doctors, and their families, and their friends." Four physicians were pressured into resigning from the clinic staff. One doctor, who continued to work in the clinic, described how Operation Goliath members punctured his tires and poured barbecue sauce on his car, smashed the windows of his girlfriend's car, telephoned his 80-year-old mother and said her son was a murderer, and picketed his home. A "wanted" poster for this doctor listed his address, the home addresses and phone numbers of his mother and girlfriend, and offered \$1000 for "more information."

The Melbourne clinic has been under siege since mid-January. Every day for weeks on end, physicians and clinic employees were called "baby killers" by demonstrators. Tracing home addresses through auto license plate numbers, anti-abortion activists picketed the doctors' homes at night. Large "wanted" posters, with a great deal of personal information about the doctors and their families, were distributed in their neighborhoods. Abortion opponents blocked doctors' home driveways in the morning, followed them to the clinic, and even ran them off the road at night.

At a local anti-abortion rally two weeks before Dr. Gunn's assassination, OR's Randall Terry proclaimed, "Intolerance is a beautiful thing. We're going to make their lives a living hell." Operation Rescue used the Melbourne campaign as a training center for several dozen anti-abortion leaders. After twelve weeks' "education," these leaders were instructed to disperse around the U.S. to organize similar activities. Chet Gallagher, one of the leading activists in Melbourne and a

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former police officer, told reporters that he and his wife (also a former cop) sold their Las Vegas home four years ago to travel around the country as "Christian missionaries to the pre-born." Gallagher explained OR's strategy for eliminating abortions: "We think child killers are the same as mass murderers. We don't believe they should be permitted to lead a normal, peaceful life like other Americans."

Bruce Cadle, of Operation Goliath, explained, "If there are no doctors, there's no industry." For doctors who had withstood the terrorist tactics, the murder of Dr. Gunn demonstrated what "no doctors" could mean. After the March 10 assassination, two physicians at the Melbourne clinic quit with the announcement that they feared deadly attacks from "fanatics."

Like the Melbourne physicians and others around the country, Dr. Gunn was featured on "wanted" posters and flyers. These materials targeting Dr. Gunn were widely distributed; for example, they were given out at a 1992 Operation Rescue rally in Alabama. Over the past six years, Dr. Gunn traveled each week to four clinics in areas where other doctors were unwilling to risk attacks by anti-abortion activists: Mobile and Montgomery, Alabama; Columbus, Georgia; and Pensacola, Florida. During the past few years, Dr. Gunn had received numerous death threats, and they had become more vicious shortly before he was murdered.

Reactions from "Anti-Life" Forces

Joseph Foreman, founder of Missionaries to the Pre-Born, said Dr. Gunn "was a mass murderer. He was preparing to kill five to ten babies. I'm genuinely happy these lives are spared."

Piously proclaiming, "I think all life is sacred," John Burt of Rescue America, went on to say, "Dr. Gunn and [his killer] are both victims of abortion." Burt also stated, "We don't condone this [murder], but we have to remember that Dr. Gunn has killed thousands and thousands of babies." Burt announced that the clinic actions would continue, and within days after the killing anti-abortion activists were demonstrating at the Melbourne clinic.

Don Tresh, national director of Rescue America, said, "While Gunn's death is unfortunate, it's also true that quite a number of babies' lives will be saved." When they heard of Dr. Gunn's death, anti-abortion demonstrators outside of the Melbourne clinic shouted gleefully, "Praise God! Praise God! One of the baby killers is dead."

These after-the-fact statements illuminate the context of Michael Griffin's last words to Dr. Gunn as he fired three shots into the physician's back: "Don't kill any more babies!"

Abortion Rights Movement Responds

The National Organization for Women (NOW) sponsored a March 12 demonstration "against anti-abortion violence and terrorism" on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court. This site was chosen because on January 13 the court ruled that an organized campaign to prevent women from obtaining abortions does not violate federal civil rights laws; therefore, Operation Rescue could not be stopped from conducting its clinic actions. NOW president Patricia Ireland explained that this decision

gave the green light to anti-abortion vigilantes and affirmed their terrorist tactics. With the *Bray* decision the Supreme Court turned its back on women. So we now turn to Congress and demand federal protection of women's civil rights by the passage of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act. The murder of Dr. Gunn also underscores the need for the Clinton Administration to recognize the anti-abortionists' nationwide campaign as domestic terrorism and to bring the resources of the FBI to bear in protecting physicians, health care workers, and their families.

Ann Thompson Cook, executive director of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, explained, "This is a turning point for us. We are declaring a broader agenda that is not just about abortion rights, but about reproductive rights." Such an agenda includes: improved prenatal care, greater availability of contraceptives, and psychological and economic assistance for women who have chosen abortion. Cook pointed out that, "if we thought our problems were over when we elected a pro-choice President, we were wrong."

This last sentiment was echoed by Joyce Schorr, Los Angeles director of the National Council of Jewish Women's Campaign for Choice. Reporting that attendance at meetings had dropped off after the November election, Schorr said a false sense of security was felt by many abortion rights supporters, who cheered the end of the twelve years of anti-abortion actions of the Reagan and Bush administrations. Schorr explained, "People said, 'It's over, we've won.'" This sentiment and the drop in activity was also noted by Joyce Cunha, acting director of Mass Choice in Boston. She said it was chillingly reminiscent of the period after the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion. "After *Roe*," Cunha said, "we lost our momentum." NOW President Patricia Ireland pointed out that the election of a more sympathetic president and U.S. Congress "only provides opportunities, not guarantees." She urged abortion rights supporters to have "a guarded kind of optimism — a caveat that says, 'Be on your toes.'"

Noting that abortion rights supporters have engaged in defensive strategies during the last dozen years, Francis Kissling, president

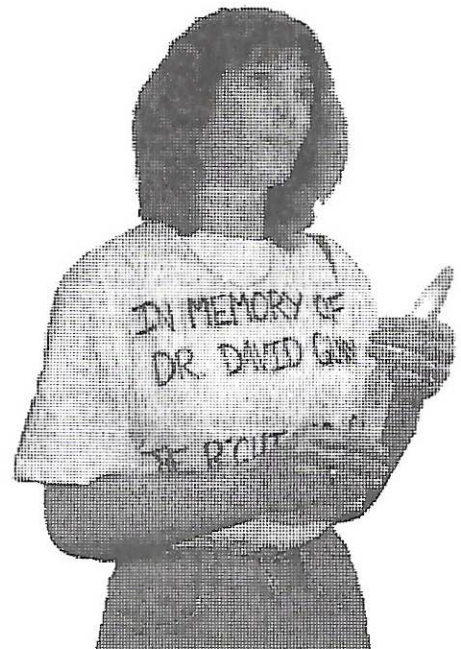
of Catholics for a Free Choice, asked, "Can we pass pro-choice legislation, as opposed to preventing anti-abortion legislation?"

It appears that Dr. Gunn's death has pushed legislators to act on bills which have been stalled for a long time. On March 25 the U.S. House of Representatives' Judiciary Committee approved a bill penalizing persons blocking access to abortion clinics. On the same day, the House approved legislation authorizing federal funding for family-planning programs — but ducked the issue of parental consent by voting to leave this question in the hands of the states. At the present time, twenty-one states mandate some type of parental involvement in abortion decisions. This kind of seesaw by legislators — many of whom won their seats because of the financial backing and strenuous efforts of feminists and pro-choice supporters — highlights the need for abortion rights advocates to step up their activities and demands.

Multi-Faceted Struggle Needed

Our slogan should be, "Not enough!" Promises are not enough. Partial actions are not enough. Feminists and abortion-rights activists cannot be content, for example, with the fact that seventeen U.S. senators sent a letter to the FBI requesting an investigation of the "pattern of harassment" by anti-abortion demonstrators at clinics. The FBI's immediate response was that current policies do not allow the agency to conduct such activity. U.S. Attorney-General Janet Reno promised to study the law in order to determine what the Justice Department could do about Dr. Gunn's murder. In an interview after she was sworn into office, Reno told reporters, "Just as there should be a federal remedy for racial...and gender discrimination, somehow or other there has got to be a federal response

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The El Salvadoran Revolution: Victory or Defeat

by Michael Livingston

Lies, cover-ups, and state sponsored torture and assassination should come as no surprise to those who have followed U.S. politics closely. What is somewhat surprising is that an expose of these acts, with language used to soften the harshness of reality, should appear in the *New York Times* and other major U.S. papers. In articles covering the report of the U.N. sponsored Truth Commission charged with investigating human rights abuses in El Salvador, we find extensively supported findings of: (1) the use of assassination, torture, and disappearances by the Salvadoran military; (2) lies and cover-ups by the Salvadoran military and government of these acts; (3) knowledge of and tacit support for these acts by the U.S. government; and (4) lies and cover-ups of these acts in Washington.

The Truth Commission found that the vast majority of abuses, over 85 percent, were committed by the Salvadoran military. These abuses were systematically lied about and covered up, often with the complicity of the Salvadoran judiciary. Howard French in the March 23, 1993, *New York Times* writes that the Truth Commission report found that "this country's legal system has long functioned, often openly, as an enforcement arm of the army, the deeply conservative governing party, Arena, [sic] and the close-knit oligarchy that supports them."

The Truth Commission report details the military's role in thousands of killings, including the rape and murder of four American churchwomen in 1980, the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero by ARENA founder Roberto d'Aubuisson, the El Mozote massacre of 700 civilians in December, 1981, and the killing of six Jesuit priests in November 1989.

But the lies and cover-ups didn't stop in San Salvador. The March 21 *New York Times* revealed that the U.S. government knew a great deal about all of these crimes, including the military's role, and lied to Congress and the American people to cover up these crimes. These cover-ups amounted to, at the bare minimum, tacit support for state-sponsored torture. Given the U.S. support of the Salvadoran military, and the U.S. lies to cover up their actions and protect that support, we would be justified in concluding that the U.S. was a crucial proponent of state-sponsored terrorism. Indeed, the U.S. played almost as important a role as did the Salvadoran military.

The broad amnesty voted by the Salvadoran congress immediately after the release of the Truth Commission report represents a

political blow to the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the peace process. Furthermore, the amnesty helps protect the military's power, as well as the power of the ruling class. This amnesty, along with the continued reluctance to purge the military and alter the judiciary system which has functioned as an arm of the military, is consistent with Salvadoran and U.S. policy. The real policy pursued by the Salvadoran ruling class and the U.S. imperialists since the peace accords were signed, is to politically defeat the FMLN and preserve the repressive status quo. To understand this we must view the Truth Commission's findings, and the Salvadoran response, in a broader context.

On New Year's Eve 1991 the FMLN and the El Salvadoran government announced that they had reached an accord ending the 12-year-old civil war. Shortly thereafter the UN secretary general hailed the accords as a "negotiated revolution." Two weeks later in Mexico City the two parties signed the formal accords. Arturo Rivera y Damas, Archbishop of San Salvador, remarked at the signing that "the war has ended but peace has not yet arrived."

Was there a negotiated revolution? Has the war ended? Will peace arrive? Were the revolutionaries successful? What next for the Salvadoran people? While we cannot definitively answer these questions we can give a tentative, provisional analysis. As American revolutionaries we have much to learn from the Salvadorans. We also have a fundamental duty to support the Salvadoran revolution. The present analysis is intended to extract some basic lessons from the Salvadoran revolution and to guide our continuing efforts to support the revolution.

Hyperbole aside, this was no negotiated revolution. At best, the peace accords mark a new stage in the struggle for the FMLN and simultaneously a new stage in the U.S.'s attempt to politically defeat the revolution. At worst, the accords and subsequent developments mark an enormous victory for the Salvadoran ruling class and U.S. imperialism. Our support for the Salvadoran masses and their revolution, coupled with the limited political space won by the FMLN, should not blind us to the realities. My argument is unfashionable on the Left, both in the U.S. and in El Salvador. To understand this argument, we must examine in detail the strategy of the U.S., the strategy of the FMLN, the international context, the content of the accords, and the events since the mid-January 1992 signing.



Alma Jaimes, director of the Association of Salvadorans, speaking at a demonstration outside of the Downtown Federal Building in Los Angeles after the release of the UN-sponsored Truth Commission report.

The Strategy of U.S. Intervention

U.S. intervention in El Salvador was guided from the beginning by the doctrine of Low Intensity Conflict (LIC), a slightly updated version of the counterinsurgency doctrine that guided U.S. intervention in Vietnam. Keep in mind that the name itself, "low intensity conflict," is a military euphemism. The doctrine includes the use of economic embargoes, trade policy, economic aid, loans, and investment to control a country or cripple it. The doctrine also includes massive amounts of U.S. military aid and advisers to create essentially a proxy military to carry out U.S. policy. In El Salvador, this "low intensity" conflict resulted in 75,000 deaths and over one million displaced persons, an exceedingly intense kind of "low intensity."

In the case of El Salvador the LIC strategy was most clearly articulated in the 1984 Kissinger Commission Report. LIC doctrine pursued two goals: first, to militarily defeat the FMLN using the Salvador Armed forces trained in counterinsurgency warfare; second, to politically defeat the FMLN through "Nation Building," that is, to reform the Salvadoran government so that the by itself it could solve the problems that gave rise to the revolutionary movement. (The

“solutions,” of course, would maintain the dependent capitalist nature of Salvador society.) Nation Building would entail, in the view of the U.S., elected governments, elimination of human rights abuses, reform of the judicial system and civilian government, and land reform.

Over the course of the decade the U.S. pumped in over \$7 billion in economic and military aid. This aid included the training of Salvadorans, first in Honduras and later at the School of the Americas, U.S. military equipment, and U.S. advisers. The aid was conditional: in exchange for U.S. largesse the imperialists expected concessions from the Salvadoran military and ruling elites. The imperialists wanted the Salvadoran military and ruling class to fight the war “our way.”

“Our way” included demonstration elections to help legitimize (both nationally and internationally) the rule of the Salvadoran ruling class, the use of helicopters and air cavalry tactics against the FMLN, bombing of civilian populations, and limited reforms of the Salvadoran state.

Until 1990 the U.S. used a low-intensity conflict strategy in an attempt to win a clear, decisive political and military victory over the FMLN. That policy failed because of the strength and political acumen of the FMLN. In 1990 the U.S. shifted its strategic goal. Instead of a military and political victory over the FMLN, the U.S. used the low-intensity conflict strategy to achieve political victory over the revolutionaries. The keys to understanding this shift in U.S. policy are found in the documentary records of ruling class policy debates.

In the summer 1989 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, the journal of the elite Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), James LeMoyné, a former correspondent for the *New York Times*, analyzed the conflict from the perspective of the U.S. ruling class. Calling for a review of U.S. policy, he wrote:

A grueling, violent period lies ahead that will defy ideal solutions. After a decade of deep involvement in El Salvador, it seems past time for a review of an American policy that has struggled to achieve goals that may still be attainable, but only if they are fundamentally reoriented. The guerrillas have promised to make the country “ungovernable,” and may succeed in doing so. U.S. officials who once confidently spoke of defeating the rebels now speak of remaining in El Salvador “for a generation.” (p. 106)

Calling the FMLN an impressive organization, LeMoyné described it as “the best-trained, best-organized, and most committed Marxist-Leninist rebel movement ever seen in Latin America” (p. 106). LeMoyné also argued that:

The army risks losing the war. Despite improvements by the army since 1980, the rebels have succeeded in prolonging the conflict. This is a major achievement for the rebels, and one that makes final victory by them possible, if not yet probable (p. 111).

In spite of their strength, LeMoyné claimed that the guerrillas did not have majority support in the country and would not be able to win fair elections.

Of special interest are LeMoyné’s policy recommendations. He felt that a high-level policy review was needed, because of the failure of the current policy. He urged the U.S. to keep the option open of a negotiated end to the war. He also urged continued efforts at “nation building,” including continued economic aid, legal reforms, and the curbing of human rights abuses.

The policy review suggested by LeMoyné was not long in coming. Prepared by the RAND Corporation for the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and entitled *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building*, the report concluded that America failed to reach its goal in El Salvador. Benjamin C. Schwarz, the author of the report, argued that the effort to militarily defeat the FMLN had failed. A clear indication of that failure was the November 1989 offensive by the FMLN. Furthermore, the efforts at “nation building” had failed because of the realization on the part of the Salvadoran ruling class that the U.S. would continue to support the war in the absence of internal Salvadoran reforms that threatened the power of the military and ruling class. Basically, Schwarz argued, the Salvadoran ruling class and military knew that both Democrats and Republicans shared the fundamental goal of preventing the FMLN’s acquisition of state power. Schwarz wrote that “while the ruling Salvadorans gestured appropriately in response to U.S. conditions, whenever the U.S. imposed reforms threatened to alter the fundamental status quo — their very object — they were emasculated.” Schwarz’s bottom line: U.S. policy failed both to defeat the FMLN on the battlefield and to change the social conditions that gave rise to the revolutionary movement.

Given the failure of U.S. policy, U.S. policy makers appeared to be searching for another way of defending imperialist interests in El Salvador. More and more, a negotiated solution, especially one brokered by the UN, appeared desirable. Such a solution worked out by the UN, an organization increasingly dominated by imperialist powers and a right-wing agenda (see for example, James A. Paul’s analysis in the March 18, 1992, *Guardian*) would permit the U.S. to politically defeat the FMLN. But such a political defeat would require the participation of the FMLN itself. This participation was made possible by changes in the FMLN’s strategy in the post-November 1989 period.

FMLN Strategy and the International Context

The FMLN strategy emphasized the primacy of armed struggle from the beginning of the war. This strategy never ignored the political

dimensions of the war and always placed some priority on political work in the mass movements. After 1984, when the U.S. introduced air cavalry tactics and the FMLN was forced to substantially reduce the size of its military units, the FMLN placed even greater emphasis on politicizing the war, that is, increased work with mass organizations in the urban and rural areas. The FMLN also tried to engage the Salvadoran government in negotiations as a way to politically isolate the government, both internally and internationally. (For a more detailed analysis of the FMLN’s “New Thinking” as it has been called, see the chapter by Sara Miles and Bob Ostertag in Sundaram and Gelber’s *A Decade of War: El Salvador Confronts the Future*.) At the same time the FMLN recognized the military stalemate that had developed.

The FMLN became more willing to use negotiations to end the war, in the hopes of gaining some political space, when the support it had received from other countries collapsed. Especially crucial was the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in 1990, which had an apparently devastating effect on the FMLN’s morale, and the collapse of the former Eastern Bloc. Deprived of the small but important support supplied by these countries, the FMLN was faced with the prospect of fighting an unrestrained U.S. and the Salvadoran military for an indefinite time all by itself. Faced with this prospect, the FMLN sought to win political space to carry on the revolution. Thus, changes in the international context of the struggle, as well as the internal military stalemate, led the FMLN to the negotiating table.

Conclusions

Since the signing of the accords, the Salvadoran military has continued to use torture and disappearances against the mass movements. On the fundamental question of land reform, no progress has been made. Demobilization of the military has been delayed and in some cases carried out deceptively, with units being renamed or reassigned, not disbanded. Most recently, the recommendations of the UN Truth Commission charged with investigating human rights abuses have been short-circuited by a general pardon of all involved in crimes during the war. This pardon effectively stops all efforts to rein in the military and place it under any kind of legal or civilian control. The FMLN and its mass organizations have been granted legal status and political space, but they have also demobilized and disarmed most of their forces. In short, the power structure remains essentially unchanged. The Salvadoran ruling class and the U.S. have made substantial progress in politically defeating the FMLN in a relatively short period.

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Nicaragua: What Was, What Is, What Shall Be?

by Paul Le Blanc

In the pages of this magazine the Nicaraguan revolution has been analyzed and debated — and unequivocally supported. At this point we are past due for an update and, on the basis of the information accumulated, a revised (if still somewhat tentative) balance sheet. In these notes it will not be possible to do all that must be done, but some information and a line of thought can be offered.

One of the most prominent bourgeois journalists covering the Nicaraguan revolution was *New York Times* correspondent Stephen Kinzer, whose reports were increasingly hostile to the leaders and radical goals of that revolution. In his book *Blood of Brothers, Life and War in Nicaragua* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1991) Kinzer notes that the early founders of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) such as Carlos Fonseca and Tomás Borge "were instinctively sympathetic to Marxism," although (according to Kinzer) "any Marxist movement seeking to build a popular base would have to obscure its true nature and cover its radical message in native clothing," which they did by relating to the plebeian radical nationalism of the martyr Sandino. FSLN militants would swear "before the image of Augusto César Sandino and Ernesto Che Guevara...to fight for the redemption of the oppressed and exploited of Nicaragua and the world." The problem with the Nicaraguan revolution, he writes, was that the Sandinistas "remained stalled in that infantile stage" (pp. 57, 58, 62, 394).

In the end, however, Kinzer grudgingly acknowledges that the FSLN established one of the most democratic governments in Latin America, motivated by the highest ideals. Here is how he puts it:

By many standards the Sandinista regime was undemocratic, though it never resorted to the kind of savagery common in nearby countries. But by destroying the repressive apparatus of the Somoza family, the Sandinistas at least provided a basis on which a genuine democracy could be built. They made it possible for Nicaraguans to go peacefully to the polls and choose the kind of government they wanted, something unthinkable in Guatemala, El Salvador, or Honduras. Had they done nothing more than that, they would deserve a place of historic honor.

Sandinista leaders could claim other successes as well. They encouraged Nicaraguans to take pride in their nationality and their heritage. They destroyed the rigid class structure that had confined Nicaraguans since time immemorial. And their policies, however misguided, were based on the premise that government's greatest responsibility was to the poor and dispossessed. No Nicaraguan regime to come, even the most avowedly anti-Sandinista, would be able to ignore those advances.

Because their long struggle against the Somoza dictatorship ended with such a spectacular victory, Sandinista *comandantes* came to believe that they had special powers of insight beyond those of other Nicaraguans. Their self-assurance, their certainty that they knew what was best for their country, fed an arrogance that ultimately led to their downfall.... Yet their government was moved always by patriotism, never by lust for money or power. Any remaining doubt of that was erased by their willingness to hold the freest election in Nicaraguan history and to abide by its shocking result. (P. 394.)

The "shocking result" was, of course, the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas — although the "freest election in Nicaraguan history" was compromised by the fact that the U.S. government had made it clear to the Nicaraguan people that a victory for the Sandinistas would guarantee a continuation of the bloody *contra* war and the continued U.S. sabotage of the Nicaraguan economy, which had sent living standards plummeting. But what has been the situation of the Nicaraguan people since the big change? For many expecting the possibility of a better life, the results have also been shocking.

Writing in *Atlantic* magazine (July 1992), David Schrieberg describes prostitutes doing a flourishing business on the streets of Managua. One told him: "There are thousands of us now. It wasn't like this before." Schrieberg adds: "The lives of these women are a measure of the desperation driving an increasingly impoverished population down new roads in search of survival, even as a small wealthy class, backed by the government, paves its own highway, carting much of the pre-revolutionary world along with it." Official unemployment and underemployment stand at 54 percent, "far above peak levels of the Sandinista years."

This corresponds with another statistic: "a private think tank found that 54 percent of those questioned had less money than they had had a year before." Schrieberg reports that many Nicaraguans "are sinking fast. I spoke with dozens, from various classes and educational backgrounds. They see friends and family drowning with them, and no lifeboats in sight." Vital social services have been cut back. For example: "Minimal health care was once guaranteed; now patients are finding themselves shut out of hospitals and clinics. Private facilities are opening their doors while public clinics are closing theirs. Hospitals report worsening shortages of everything, from suture thread to bedding, due to budget cuts." The "mixed economy" of the Sandinistas — plagued in its final years by galloping inflation and growing shortages — has given way to a flourishing market economy, which offers goods that most can't buy. "It's like living in a mirage," one unemployed professional told him. "There is everything, including food. But people can't buy it" (pp. 24, 25, 27).

The FSLN's *Barricada Internacional* (January 1993, p. 21) has added statistical detail in a survey of 1992 realities. Only one in seven working-age Nicaraguans has a job. The richest 10 percent of the population gets almost 38 percent of the wealth, the next 20 percent of the population gets 28 percent of the wealth, and the poorest 70 percent gets 37 percent of the wealth. In a country of 4.1 million people, at least three-fourths of all Nicaraguans do not have drinking water or sanitary facilities. Infant mortality, reduced during the decade of Sandinista rule to 37 of every 1,000 births, has increased by 70 percent.

Among the leaders of the FSLN, sharp debates have unfolded. Humberto Ortega, seemingly disillusioned with the unrealized revolutionary dreams and committed to an alliance with the new government, has been quoted as asserting: "Socialism always wanted to distribute too much. Capitalism and liberal, free-market economies can much better develop the productive forces of a

country... The demand for the dictatorship of the proletariat has outlived itself. Lenin and Marx are dead" (Schrieberg, p. 28).

His brother Daniel, on the other hand, still adheres to "the proposal made by Marx, which Lenin put into practice," for "the total liberation of people from all forms of oppression." This was the meaning of the Sandinista revolution: "we also had a proposal of moving towards socialism, but with other nuances which made us very different from the Eastern European model or the model that Cuba was following. But undoubtedly, we were moving in the same direction in which the October Revolution pointed." He has continued to insist that "the proposal from the point of view of the thorough transformation of society is still contained there. It's not a question of finding a new ethical proposal; I think the ethical proposal continues to be the same. It doesn't vary. And I think that's where the Marxist proposal has importance" (*Barricada Internacional*, May 1992, p. 35).

A majority of Sandinistas seem inclined in the direction indicated by Daniel Ortega, but what this means is not entirely clear. "The FSLN defines itself as a party that struggles for socialism," according to Dora María Tellez, "but if we ask ourselves what socialism's economic model is, there isn't just one answer." Another Sandinista, Fernando Guzmán, stresses: "We aren't clear on what we Sandinistas should do. We have an identity problem because we lack a defined project" (*Barricada Internacional*, August 1992, p. 20).

To define the meaning of the FSLN and the Sandinista revolution, it is necessary to move beyond the counterposed statements and sometimes confused debates of the present. We must review some of the key aspects of its past.

1979 to 1989

In the post-World War II period, developments in the world capitalist economy generated a process of restructuring and "modernization" which, among other things, brought about a proletarianization of the Nicaraguan masses. Not only was there a growth in both the industrial and service sectors of the working class, but peasants were increasingly pushed into supplementing their income through wage labor. There was a dramatic increase in urbanization, with a growing "informal" sector which combined unemployment with occasional wage-work plus petty commerce (selling chewing gum, lottery tickets, etc., on the streets), sometimes traveling back and forth from city to countryside. The repressiveness of the Somoza regime — systematically violating civil liberties, holding down unions, failing to provide or curtail badly-needed social services (health and sanitation, education, electricity, etc.) for the impoverished majority — increasingly alienated and radicalized growing sectors of the population.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front was able, in the late 1970s, to demonstrate a capacity for revolutionary leadership with the systematic mobilization of the Nicaraguan working people. This was carried out through a variety of mass organizations in the towns and the countryside, and through armed struggle which overturned the powerful Somoza dictatorship that had ruled in one form or another over four decades. There had also been a substantial bourgeois opposition to Somoza, which formed a liberal reformist coalition (in which almost all anti-Somoza organizations, including the Nicaraguan Stalinists, participated) from which the FSLN remained independent. The most effective leader, *La Prensa* publisher Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, was murdered by Somoza's henchmen — bringing further discredit to the regime

and pushing more people into the overtly revolutionary struggle for which the FSLN provided effective leadership.

When the dictatorship was finally demolished — through heroic but bloody struggles involving masses of people in urban and rural areas — the Sandinistas formed a revolutionary regime which seemed to include an alliance with the bourgeois liberal-reformist opposition. The widow Violeta Chamorro and millionaire businessman Alfonso Robelo joined with top Sandinista leaders to head the government. It quickly became clear, however, that the Sandinistas — basing themselves on the new revolutionary army and the popular mass organizations — were intent upon maintaining real political control. It was also clear that their ideology, blending the revolutionary nationalism of Sandino with the revolutionary socialist perspectives of Marx and Lenin (plus a substantial dose of Castro and Guevara) was incompatible with the aspirations of even the most liberal bourgeois modernizers. Their program for Nicaragua, while stopping short of socialism, seemed designed to bring about far-reaching changes benefiting and empowering the masses of people. They also saw their effort as part of an international revolutionary process which would soon triumph throughout Central America. As this process advanced, their long-range goal of bringing socialism to Nicaragua would be realized.

Obviously, this was unacceptable to capitalist reformers. Chamorro and Robelo left the government to become leaders, respectively, of the peaceful-legal and the armed struggle wings of the anti-Sandinista opposition, which came to include a broad array of forces: veterans of the old Somoza National Guard; some of the more traditionalist layers of the Catholic Church, plus some parishioners whom they influenced; conservative businessmen and landowners; a narrow but vocal minority in the trade union movement aligned with the AFL-CIO bureaucracy; oppositional politicians indignant at being pushed aside by the new regime; liberal reformers who felt that the Sandinistas "utopian" goals and opposition to U.S. imperialism would place Nicaragua in a no-win situation in the "real world." Some of these oppositionists established close ties with the Central Intelligence Agency and received enormous quantities of U.S. money, while U.S. politicians debated whether such aid should go primarily to the legal opposition or to the murderous *contras* who were seeking the overthrow of the Sandinistas through violent civil war.

Meanwhile, a clear majority of the Nicaraguan people supported the Sandinistas. Although there were some violations of civil liberties — often due to the difficult conditions created by the U.S.-sponsored *contra* war — there was more freedom of expression, greater political openness, more opportunity for popular involvement in the political process, even greater opportunity to maintain critical and oppositional activity than ever before. The first honest elections in decades were organized in 1984 under the Sandinistas, giving 67 percent of the vote to the FSLN. This support was given because the Sandinistas, through their statements and their policies, represented to large sectors of the working people and the poor of Nicaragua the hope for a better life.

There were serious efforts to provide health, education, and other much-needed social services to all sectors of the population, especially to those who had been excluded in the past. There was a commitment to land reform, and also to the creation of public sectors of the economy — both policies having problematical aspects, but representing to many very positive moves in the right direction. Unlike previous regimes, the Sandinista government seemed committed to guaranteeing the necessities of life to all

people, and also to giving attention to their cultural needs. Also unlike previous regimes, it seemed committed to drawing the masses of people into discussions and debates about the future of the country, and to giving them greater control over their communities. The army and the police, previously alien bodies which inspired fear throughout the population, assumed a popular character. Just as important, mass organizations were encouraged: trade unions in the various urban workplaces and among agricultural workers, unions of peasants and small farmers, neighborhood committees, organizations of women and youth, etc., which had the potential (and in some cases realized the potential) for giving what had been oppressed sectors of the population a voice and an opportunity to take action for advancing their own interests.

All of this had theoretical implications. The capitalist state represented by the Somoza dictatorship (and also, in a sense, by the bourgeois opposition) had been smashed through the mobilization and armed struggle of the working masses. A new regime, based on their support and explicitly committed to their interests, had been established. This could therefore be viewed as a form of workers' rule (or proletarian rule, or workers' state, or dictatorship of the proletariat). Some have been inclined to label it "a workers' and farmers' government." Those on the left who are more hostile to the Sandinistas, viewing them as "petty bourgeois" radical nationalists (as opposed to Marxist-oriented revolutionaries), have insisted that the Sandinista regime remained a bourgeois state — although the bourgeoisie of Nicaragua clearly did not see things that way.

At the same time, capitalism was not overturned. A "mixed economy" was established and maintained which included a significant public sector but also a very substantial private sector. There was a belief that the Nicaraguan economy would unavoidably remain tied to, and dependent on, the world capitalist economy — and that, with the refusal of the Brezhnev regime, and even more, of the Gorbachev regime in the USSR to provide massive aid, it would not be feasible to take "the Cuban road" of rapid nationalization of the economy. Given this reality, the functioning of the Nicaraguan economy would continue to be dependent, in large measure, on the willingness of at least sectors of the Nicaraguan capitalists (and also foreign companies) to be involved in maintaining their enterprises. This need to maintain a "mixed economy" stood in obvious contradiction with the proletarian nature of the Nicaraguan state, introducing extremely sharp contradictions in the policies of the Sandinista regime and in the life of the Nicaraguan people.

Another defining characteristic of economic life in Nicaragua was the sustained assault on the Nicaraguan revolution by the U.S. government. This included organizing and funding a massively destructive *contra* war, plus a nonmilitary legal opposition, in order to dislodge the Sandinistas. The U.S. government also orchestrated a fairly effective effort to strangle the country economically through a blockade and the cutting off of trade and assistance from many other countries and institutions that are part of the world capitalist economy. This, combined with the problems inherent in maintaining a "mixed economy," increasingly eroded the quality of life of the masses of the people, as well as undermining the ability of the Sandinistas to maintain, let alone extend, the sweeping social reforms that had characterized the first years of the triumphant revolution.

Also eroded was the link between the government and the masses of working people — not only because of disappointment over deteriorating living conditions but also because the mass

organizations to a large extent no longer remained instruments of popular expression but instead were controlled by the government to mobilize support for the war effort against the *contras* and also to contain militant working-class sentiments that might jeopardize relationships between the capitalists and the regime necessary for maintaining the "mixed economy."

While a process of "proletarianization" (in economic terms but also in terms of political organization and mobilization, and therefore consciousness) had led up to the 1979 revolution, an opposite "de-proletarianizing" process took place in the late 1980s. This process involved some agricultural workers and impoverished peasants receiving land and shifting increasingly to a small-farmer, as opposed to proletarian, mode of life and consciousness. Also the economic deterioration led to many workers losing their jobs and becoming more dependent on petty commercial activity through the "informal" sector.

More than this, there was a demobilization of self-conscious and self-acting mass organizations, which had been vital for the revolutionary enthusiasm and class consciousness of large numbers of working people. Instead there was an effort at top-down mobilizations dependent on more class-amorphous patriotic appeals. The Sandinista regime felt that it would nonetheless keep the revolution on course, safeguarding the radical principles that (when appropriate) would once again be used to rally the people. This was a dangerous mentality. Jaime Wheelock put it this way: "You should beware of revolutions that want to make all the changes themselves and disempower the people from making changes.... While we were in government we had authoritarian tendencies. Sometimes we were very administrative and management-minded, and we took measures that contradicted a democratic process" (quoted in Pat Fry, "Perspectives for progress in Nicaragua," *Committees of Correspondence Correspondent*, February/March 1993, p. 15).

The dilemma created by this overall situation could only have been fully resolved by a geographical extension of the revolution — throughout Central America, for example, but also beyond, including larger countries with greater resources and some developed industry (such as Brazil, South Africa, South Korea) — that would provide relief and assistance, enabling the Nicaraguans to deepen their revolution by moving beyond the constraints of the "mixed economy."

Notes From 1989 — And What Happened Next

In a 1989 study of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua I discussed certain aspects of this dilemma in terms that may be worth repeating here:

...Five years after the FSLN triumph there were — whatever criticisms one wishes to make of them — genuine, multi-party elections. This was followed by a process of developing a constitution which replaced the Council of State [that had given much authority to the radical, popular mass organizations] with a more traditional National Assembly.... [T]he commentary of David Close is very much to the point. "Though the Sandinista state adheres to neither the Marxist-Leninist nor the liberal-pluralist [or bourgeois democratic] model, its machinery and practices bear more resemblance to the latter, while its original aims were closer to the former." Close directs our attention to the logic which has yielded such results: "In structuring the state the FSLN has followed its pragmatic principle of preserving intact as much of the insurrectionary alliance [including the working masses *plus* "patriotic" capitalists] as possible. As a perhaps unintended result, it has come to derive a

considerable part of its legitimacy from electoral and constitutional sources." Close adds that "to the extent that this has happened, the Frente must modify its self-image as the vanguard of the revolution," suggesting that "the development of new governmental machinery since 1984 and the apparent evolution of new relationships with the mass organizations...may presage further dramatic changes in the political system of Sandinista Nicaragua." [Close, *Nicaragua: Politics, Economics and Society* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1988), p. 144.]

Of course in 1989 the future of the Sandinist revolution is not clear. Policies put forward by FSLN leaders — involving major cutbacks in social programs that benefited working people and the poor, the acceptance of high unemployment levels, and the offering of substantial economic concessions to the capitalists — raise interesting questions. On the one hand, one is reminded of the Bolsheviks' New Economic Policy, except that the FSLN didn't have the kind of economic control which the Bolsheviks did. One could envision the disillusionment and erosion of the Sandinistas' social base combined with honest elections in which their opponents formed a coalition to vote this regime of "workers' rule" out of existence. What would happen if the FSLN felt that it faced such a possibility? It is certainly not outside the realm of possibility that the Sandinist leaders (or some of them) would decide on the necessity of shifting fundamentally away from one or another (or all) of the trajectories traced here... [Le Blanc, *Workers and Revolution: A Comparative Study of Bolshevik Russia and Sandinist Nicaragua*, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1989, pp. 526–528]

The FSLN's potential trajectories had to do with democracy and pluralism, and also with the nature of the mixed economy. It was conceivable that a crisis situation would generate an authoritarian turn away from democracy, of course. But assuming that such a turn was resisted, there would be a continued commitment to some variant of political pluralism which would go in one of two directions: a radically democratic working-class variant of such pluralism or a bourgeois-liberal variant of it — with which we are familiar — that is less genuinely democratic. Similarly, there were two paths of economic policy: (1) a commitment to a form of "mixed economy" that would be consistent with maintaining workers' power and a long-range evolution toward socialism (consistent with workers' democracy); or (2) policies of conciliation toward the capitalists at the expense of the working people of Nicaragua (consistent with bourgeois democracy).

My visit to Nicaragua in early 1990, when I interviewed prominent Sandinistas and anti-Sandinistas, confirmed this analysis for me in large measure. Criticisms put forward by veteran FSLN militants, plus what I could see with my own eyes, indicated serious problems that weakened the revolution and the relationship between the Sandinistas and much of what had been their social base. The analysis was further confirmed by the 1990 elections — for which the anti-Sandinistas did indeed put together a broad coalition, ostensibly headed by Violeta Chamorro, who won the presidency against FSLN leader Daniel Ortega, who received only 40 percent of the vote. Over the past several years the FSLN has fragmented, although the fragments remain, for now, within the same organizational framework. One powerful current, most prominently represented by Humberto Ortega, is pulling toward consistent class-collaboration and bourgeois politics. Daniel Ortega and Tomás Borge are part of another powerful current pulling in a direction that — with some serious inconsistencies — is more in harmony with the FSLN's original revolutionary, socialist, and working-class orientation. There are other

FSLN elements whose definition is not contained in these two descriptions.

The coalition headed by Chamorro has also fragmented. Surrounded by liberal-minded, technocratic modernizers, her government is inclined to maintain a relatively positive relationship with the FSLN, preferring, for example, to allow Humberto Ortega to remain head of the (Sandinista) army so as not to require the government to rely on the armed might of the *contra* forces. One-time *contra* chieftains such as Alfredo César, plus many of the old-time politicians such as Vice President (and head of the Independent Liberal Party) Virgilio Godoy, have been furious with this state of affairs and must be counted among Chamorro's fiercest opponents.

The split among the bourgeois political forces, and the partial accommodation of Chamorro's regime with the FSLN, plus the mass strikes of workers in 1991 and 1992 combined with effective small-farmer and peasant pressures against undoing the land reform that benefited more than 250,000 households, has contributed to the preservation of important gains won by the Sandinist revolution. But the deradicalization of major components of the FSLN, the relative demobilization and partial deproletarianization among the Nicaraguan working masses, the present international context of triumphant bourgeois ascendancy, have altered the meaning of those gains.

Theoretical Problems and Future Developments

In 1990, in an article reprinted in *Latin America in the Time of Cholera*, co-authored with Morris Morley (New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 141), James Petras argued that "the struggle for state power in the post-Sandinista era is far from resolved: The bourgeoisie has gained control of government but working-class power is still influential in civil society (through the trade unions and mass organizations) and in the state (through the Sandinista-dominated army, police, and judiciary)." This implied that a type of dual power existed in Nicaragua, but such a situation cannot be stable. By now it could be asserted that "the Chamorro government [has] consolidated the bourgeois democratic revolution in Nicaragua," to use the formulation of Elizabeth Dore and John Weeks (in what strikes me as a largely flawed analysis: "Up From Feudalism," *Report on the Americas*, December 1992, p. 42). While sectors of the working masses still have power in their own organizations, the power which they had in the state apparatus seems residual at best.

In short, there has been a disintegration of proletarian rule. The reconquest of state power is a future task of Nicaragua's working people. Dore and Weeks, in the article just referred to, promise that the future throughout Central America will be one of economic "modernization," at the expense of the quality of life for, and democratic rights of, the majority of the people. "With the passing of the Soviet Union," they write, "the U.S. ruling class finds itself freer to impose capitalism in its most flagrantly exploitative form, with less need for the cosmetics of democratic ideology in Central America or elsewhere. In this context, the oligarchy of the region faces relatively little risk in pursuing its own program of reactionary modernization." To the extent that such a program is pursued by the right wing in Nicaragua, however, it is likely that it will generate mass struggles that could lead toward the working people fighting to make the state theirs.

A serious struggle to defend democratic rights and immediate economic needs, in the context suggested by Dore and Weeks,

would logically have profoundly revolutionary implications. The working class, with the impoverished sectors of the peasantry and urban “informal” sector, would be the base for such a struggle, confronting local bourgeois “modernizers” and U.S. imperialism. Actually winning the struggle for democracy and decent living standards implies a struggle for political power by the working masses.

The question is posed, however, whether the struggle for the working class to take power is a practical proposition in the “new world order,” especially for small countries such as Nicaragua. This is precisely the problem that causes some Sandinistas to consider the accommodationist orientation represented by Humberto Ortega and Victor Tirado. At the present moment, with the general decline of the workers movement throughout the world, as well as the collapse of the USSR, is it possible for militants in most so-called “third world” countries to fight for socialism as a practical proposition — or has Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution now become irrelevant? This is a question that merits more thorough discussion than can be offered here.

The fact is, however, that oppression and the instinctive struggle against oppression necessarily continue. While FSLN party strategists debate what approach might bring them victory in the upcoming 1996 elections, agonizing over what presently constitutes Sandinista identity, Ronaldo Membreno, leader of the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST), argues: “Within the FSLN there is an identity crisis because they are looking at things from afar. Those of us working with the union movement don’t have an identity crisis.” Stating that social movements in Nicaragua have replaced the political party as the traditional vanguard of socio-economic transformations, he notes: “Currently we have the opposite of [what existed] before. The force of change should be a strong popular movement with a clear and organized strategy” (*Barricada Internacional*, August 1992, p. 20).

This outlook has become widespread within the Nicaraguan left. Midge Quandt (“Nicaragua, Unbinding the Ties: Popular Movements and the FSLN,” *Report on the Americas*, February 1993) writes: “Popular movements, once instruments of the party line, have grown increasingly independent and militant, while the Sandinista Front has been forced to redefine its role in the struggle for social change. The front’s 1990 electoral defeat unleashed long-dormant discontent with the vanguardist politics of the 1980s. Conditions which had bred a hierarchical mode of organizing — the capture of state power, and the Contra war — were replaced by ones which favored the growth of autonomous movements. Without the apparatus of the state, the FSLN could no longer control or coopt the movements, and the government’s draconian austerity policies provided a clear target for popular mobilizations” (p. 11).

Trade unionists have conducted militant strikes and factory take-overs (and, in the case of agricultural workers, land take-overs), sometimes in defiance of the “wisdom” of FSLN leaders. Neighborhood organizations have likewise insisted on autonomy, with one of the movement’s leaders explaining: “Our values are revolutionary, and the majority of the leadership is Sandinista, but in an institutional sense the movement and the party are just friends” (p. 12).

The FSLN-led Nicaraguan Women’s Association (AMNLAE) has also taken on new vitality, but some Nicaraguan feminists have concluded that it is necessary to organize independently. As one put it, “We don’t need a political daddy looking after us. We want

to be on our own.” This is hardly surprising, given the tradition of *machismo* and paternalism that has infected much of the FSLN leadership from the start. In the name of Marxism, some FSLN militants have opposed independent feminist groups for being impractical in relation to the needs of working class and poor women. Quandt disagrees:

Like other leftist feminists in Latin America, Nicaragua’s independent feminists take women’s class oppression seriously. This was evident at the January conference, where workshop themes included unemployment and health as well as sexuality. Independent feminists, however, disagree with AMNLAE and the unions, who “think only women of the popular classes are sufficiently disadvantaged to merit attention,” according to journalist [and veteran Sandinista] Sofia Montenegro. “They don’t understand patriarchal oppression and its effect on women of all classes” (p. 13).

(A valuable account is offered by Margaret Randall in her important book *Gathering Rage, the Failure of 20th Century Revolutions to Develop a Feminist Agenda* [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1992], pp. 27–33, 43–86.)

One of the problems that many activists are reacting against is the legacy of “verticalism,” undemocratic, top-down control and manipulation of mass organizations by the FSLN, a dynamic which has had debilitating effects within the FSLN itself. Quandt notes that “the FSLN has yet to create a flexible leadership style, one more sensitive to the needs of the popular organizations and more responsive to the increasingly desperate situation of Nicaragua’s poor” (p. 14).

On the other hand, Quandt observes, “if verticalism is the legacy of the 1980s, fragmentation may be the danger of the 1990s.” A failure to achieve a coordinated strategy to defend the interests of the workers and the oppressed, in all their diversity, could yield an inability to mount an effective opposition and bring a series of defeats. Quandt reports: “Many Sandinistas agree that the Front should accept the movements’ autonomy, while linking them to the FSLN and to each other in a more cohesive way.... Luis Carrión ... contends that the party should encourage discussion among the different movements so that they can create popular alliances. The FSLN, he said, ‘could be a broker, helping the groups to find common ground.’ And according to journalist William Grigsby, ‘Vanguardism isn’t bad if it promotes dialogue and the search for common solutions’” (p. 14).

It is not a foregone conclusion that the FSLN of today will be able to play this role. Nor is it guaranteed that the struggles of the various sectors of the working masses and the oppressed will be harmonized in a coherent revolutionary strategy by elements of the FSLN and others who could play a positive (democratic, nonmanipulative, revolutionary) vanguard role. Terrorist activities by elements of the ultraleft “Punitive Commando Unit of the Left” as well as by disgruntled *ex-contras* could contribute to the social chaos if popular struggles and revolutionary militants prove unable to find a way forward from the present impasse.

Just as there was much for revolutionaries throughout the world to learn from the Nicaraguan experience of the 1970s and ’80s, so do the problems being grappled with by the Nicaraguan left in the 1990s correspond in some ways to problems which we ourselves confront in the United States and elsewhere. The crisis of the revolutionary movement is international, as is the process of clarification and struggle through which the crisis must finally be overcome. □

Marxism in Latin America

Marxism in Latin America from 1909 to the Present: An Anthology, edited with an introduction by Michael Löwy, translated from Spanish, Portuguese, and French by Michael Pearlman, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992, 296 pages, \$49.95.

Reviewed by Michael Frank

This is the first anthology of Marxist writings from Latin America to appear since the very inadequate small volume by Luis Aguilar published in 1968, *Marxism in Latin America*. Michael Löwy has written a long, extremely valuable introductory essay and has grouped the texts into four sections corresponding to four historical periods: The Introduction of Marxism in Latin America (end of the 19th century to 1914), The Revolutionary Period (1921 to 1935), Stalinist Hegemony (1936 to 1959), and The New Revolutionary Period (1959 to the present).

The focus of the book is the nature of the Latin American revolution. Defining the character of the revolution is, in Löwy's words, "both the result of a particular analysis of Latin American social formations and the starting point for the formulation of political strategy and tactics; in other words, it is the essential moment of scientific thought and the decisive mediation between theory and practice."

According to Löwy, there have been two opposed conceptions of the Latin American revolution. From one perspective the revolution is bourgeois democratic. Its tasks are the achievement of freedom from imperialist domination, the establishment of a democratic form of government, land reform, industrialization and modernization of the economy, and self-determination for oppressed nationalities. The autonomous, independent capitalist development of Latin American countries is blocked by a combination of imperialist domination and feudal-type relations in the countryside. From this flows a class alliance of the proletariat, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, and progressive sectors of the big bourgeoisie against the imperialist bourgeoisie and the landowners. The process is a peaceful one and the socialist revolution is relegated to a later point after a mature capitalist economy has developed. This stagist conception of the revolutionary process, first developed by the Mensheviks in Russia before the 1917 revolution and later revived by Stalin, projects the evolution of West European societies in the 18th and 19th centuries, in the early, youthful phase of the development of world capitalism, onto societies subordinated by and enmeshed with imperialism in the phase of world capitalist decline.

The second conception is that of permanent revolution. In this conception, it is only

by means of socialist revolution that the bourgeois-democratic tasks can be accomplished. The characterization of the Latin American revolution as socialist is based on a different understanding of these societies. The persistence of precapitalist forms is not seen simply as a brake on capitalist development; more importantly, the combining and blending of these forms with capitalist relations is understood as the specific way that capitalist development occurred in Latin America. The Latin American bourgeoisie arrived too late in the arena of capitalist competition, at a time when the world market had already been carved up by imperialism, to go through the same evolution and play the same progressive role as its 18th and 19th century West European counterparts. The solution of the national, bourgeois-democratic tasks therefore devolves to the proletariat, which in alliance with the peasantry, wages a struggle against both the domestic and foreign bourgeoisie, against capitalism as a whole. The socialist revolution begins in a particular country, but has a fundamentally international character, and can only be stabilized and consolidated when the productive forces of the main imperialist centers are drawn into its orbit.

The permanent revolution perspective is apparent in the documents of the Leninist Comintern (1921–1923) on Latin America which have been included in this volume. The revolution is characterized as simultaneously agrarian, anti-imperialist and anticapitalist. The local bourgeoisie is complicit with and dependent on imperialism, and no separate historical stage of independent, national, democratic capitalist development is possible. The proletariat and the peasantry are the progressive forces and the revolution is seen as extending throughout the continent and the hemisphere.

This perspective was also shared by the Peruvian Marxist José Carlos Mariátegui (1894–1930), some of whose writings are here translated into English for the first time. Mariátegui did not believe that the historical sequence of feudalism, backward capitalism, advanced capitalism, and socialism, which is valid on a world scale and for humanity as a whole, must be passed through by each and every society.

Mariátegui had a particular interest in the land question and the situation of indigenous peoples and thought that the collective forms and practices of the Incan peasantry which had survived the Spanish Conquest could, if combined with advanced agricultural methods, be incorporated into a socialist society. His reasoning was similar to that of Marx in his draft letters to Vera Zasulich on the Russian rural commune. Zasulich had inquired about the fate of the commune and asked

whether it was historically necessary for every country in the world to pass through all phases of capitalist development. Marx responded that the demise of the commune and its break-up into private property was not inevitable and that under favorable historical circumstances archaic collective appropriation could be given a modern material foundation and be the starting point for large-scale cooperative farming in a socialist society.

Mariátegui had a flexible, nonschematic approach to the land question as shown by the following excerpt from a 1929 document:

The "community" can become a cooperative with minimal effort. Awarding the land of the latifundios to the "communities" is the necessary solution to the agrarian question in the sierra. On the coast, where large landholders are also all-powerful but communal property no longer exists, the solution inevitably tends toward the privatization of the land. The yanacona, a type of harshly exploited sharecropper, should be supported in his struggle against the landowner. The natural demand of these yanaconas is for the land that they work. On the haciendas that are directly exploited by their owners with the labor of peones, who are recruited in part from the sierra and therefore lack a local connection to the land, the terms of the struggle are different. The demands for which they must struggle are the freedom to organize, suppression of the enganche [forced recruitment], wage increases, the eight-hour day, and the enforcement of labor laws. Only when the peon has won these demands will he be on the road to his definitive emancipation.

Löwy, and the translator Michael Pearlman, have performed a valuable service in making some of Mariátegui's writings accessible to North American Marxists.

The period of Stalinist hegemony resulted in an impoverishment of Marxist thought. The conception of revolution by stages, of a separate national-democratic, anti-imperialist, antifeudal revolution accomplished in a peaceful manner by a block of four classes, underlie the politics of all the Latin American Communist parties, whatever the tactical turns and adjustments. This policy was also applied in Asia, but there the Chinese and Vietnamese parties followed their own line in practice and led revolutions. The Latin American parties, on the other hand, exhibited no such independence, and this had disastrous results both for themselves and the workers' and peasants' movements.

The Popular Front strategy — support by Communist parties to bourgeois parties and governments in the name of fighting fascism — with its underlying stagist conception was applied in Argentina, where the populist-nationalist movement of Juan Perón was incorrectly characterized as fascist. The majority of the working class supported Perón and had participated in a gigantic general strike when he was ousted from his position as Minister of Labor. The Communist Party joined in a broad, anti-Perón coalition with bourgeois forces, including industrialists and financiers. This split off and isolated the party from

the bulk of the working class and negatively affected the course of Argentine politics.

In Cuba the Communist Party tried to create a popular front in 1939. Unable to ally with social democratic or liberal bourgeois forces, it ended up supporting the dictator Batista simply because he was allied with the United States against Germany on the international plane. In 1953 the party condemned the attack on the Moncada barracks by Fidel Castro and his group as adventurist. This did not prevent Batista from unleashing a severe anti-Communist repression.

In Guatemala the PGT (Communist Party) was one of the main political forces during the presidency of the reformer Jacobo Arbenz (1951–1954). It had a dominant position in the workers' and peasants' unions and looked toward an alliance with progressive sections of the bourgeoisie and the armed forces to carry out a national-democratic, anti-imperialist revolution. When Arbenz appropriated some United Fruit Company property a U.S. trained mercenary army invaded the country. The armed forces responded feebly and the general staff deserted and joined the invaders. The workers, peasants and PGT were unarmed and unable to resist, and a bloody repression followed the overthrow of Arbenz.

In Chile the Communist Party was the dominant force in Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government, which attempted a peaceful transition to socialism. The CP, which for years had operated with a stagist strategic orientation, pushed for accommodation with the "progressive" bourgeoisie by limiting nationalizations and collaboration with the armed forces. In September 1973 the Popular Unity government was overthrown by a military coup, Allende was murdered, and a bloody repression unleashed.

In addition to documents from various Communist parties justifying the two-stage conception of the Latin American revolution, the book contains documents from the Trotskyist movements in Chile, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Argentina which were critical of this perspective and produced incisive analyses of the regimes of Perón and Arbenz.

The stagist, bourgeois-democratic revolution schema did not correspond to Latin American reality, and the actual needs and

aspirations of the masses did not find an adequate, organized expression. It was inevitable that new revolutionary currents would emerge out of the vacuum created by Stalinism. Two of these currents were Castroism and what Löwy calls "liberation Christianity."

After the overthrow of Batista and the smashing of the military apparatus by the guerrilla forces in 1959, the new Castro regime carried out a series of democratic-nationalist measures, including land reforms and expropriation of U.S. oil refineries. This triggered a clash with both foreign and domestic capitalists. Cuban-owned factories were taken over to counter economic sabotage by their owners. What occurred in Cuba was a blow-by-blow process of national-democratic measures and opposition to these measures by the old Cuban ruling class and the imperialists. A refusal to back down by the regime meant taking further measures in defense of the revolution's gains until all capital, foreign and domestic, had been expropriated and a socialist revolution accomplished.

The Cuban experience made the dynamics of permanent revolution transparent. The Cuban bourgeoisie actively opposed national-democratic tasks. The Castro leadership, on the other hand, was committed to carrying out these tasks. It began as a radical petty-bourgeois current but, not being shackled by stagist schemas, was able to learn and transform itself in the course of the struggle and adopt a revolutionary socialist approach.

This anthology includes useful writings by the Cuban Communist party, Fidel Castro, and Che Guevara.

The shock waves of the Cuban revolution reverberated throughout Latin America. Guerrilla movements, which unsuccessfully attempted to duplicate the Cuban achievement, developed in a whole series of countries; Venezuela, Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Columbia, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil. Revolutionary movements were more successful in Nicaragua and El Salvador, where a merging and fusing of Marxism with national traditions of social protest took place.

The book's subsection on Castroism and Guevarism includes an interesting document from the Tupamaro urban guerilla movement

in Uruguay which shows how the success of the Cuban revolution was interpreted, what lessons were drawn, and the limitations that result from giving absolute priority to the armed struggle component of the revolutionary process.

The liberation Christianity current, most prominent in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Brazil, and Guatemala, is represented here by the writings of two priests; Camilo Torres and Frei Betto.

Also included are documents from the Mexican Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), the most important Trotskyist party in Latin America, and the Brazilian Workers Party (PT), some 400,000 strong, which is trying to fuse Marxism and the workers movement.

Löwy's volume has two weaknesses, in my opinion. There is no mention whatsoever of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in Peru, and Löwy makes the astonishing claim that today "Maoism hardly exists as a current in Latin America." Sendero Luminoso developed out of the Maoist movement, identifies itself as Maoist, and is widely recognized as such. The desire not to include a cult-like organization that relies on terrorist methods in an anthology on Marxism is understandable. But this is a significant phenomenon and a part of the Latin American reality that needs to be understood and accounted for (see, for example, the talk by David Trujillo, "The Revolutionary Marxist movement in Peru," published in *BIDOM*, December 1992).

The second weakness is in regard to the theory and practice of permanent revolution. This is a central theme of the book, but a major component of permanent revolution—the impossibility of consolidating socialist advances in a single country and the necessity for international extension of the revolution—is now put in question with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Löwy does not address this issue.

Despite these shortcomings, the 64 documents gathered together for this anthology and the introduction by Löwy fill an enormous gap in our knowledge, and are an indispensable reference for North American Marxists seeking to educate themselves on Latin America. □

Autobiography of a Guatemalan Revolutionary

I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala, edited by Elisabeth Burgos-Debray (London: Verso, 1983; eleventh impression published 1992)

Reviewed by Carol McAllister

...those who sow maize for profit leave the earth empty of bones, because it is the bones of the forefathers that give the maize, and then the earth demands bones, and the softest ones, those of children, pile up on top of her beneath her black crust, to feed her.

This quotation, from *Men of Maize* by Miguel Angel Asturias, is the way Rigoberta Menchú begins the chapter in her autobiography that describes the death of her younger brother on a cotton plantation. At this time Rigoberta was eight years old and already working as a field laborer during her family's forced annual migration from their highland community to the large plantations owned by Guatemala's elite or by agribusinesses from the U.S. This was the second death of a child in this family. Rigoberta's eldest brother died of chemical poisoning when pesticide was

sprayed on the coffee plants as he was working in the fields of another plantation.

Poverty, malnutrition, and death are common occurrences on the plantations of Guatemala as described in Rigoberta's account of her life and the life of her people. However, even this was preferable to her work as a maid in the home of rich Ladinos in Guatemala City. (Ladinos are people of mixed Spanish and Indian descent, who speak Spanish and follow Hispanic culture.) For this young woman from a highland Indian community, domestic service was especially humiliating

because she was forced to be in intimate contact with her oppressors, including expectations that she would have sex with the sons of the family, at the same time as she lacked the sense of solidarity with other workers which was possible on the plantations.

These are just some of the experiences that led Rigoberta Menchú and many other Guatemalans to join the struggle to free their society from U.S. domination, political and military terror, and extremes of economic injustice and social oppression. Such experiences, especially among the indigenous communities of Guatemala, and the resultant participation of many Guatemalan Indians in the revolution, form the crux of this important and fascinating book.

What is particularly significant about this account of a Guatemalan revolutionary is the way it interweaves descriptions of indigenous Mayan life and culture, on the one hand, with discussions of the harshness of colonialism and capitalist exploitation and people's engagement in revolutionary struggle, on the other. But these two aspects of the book and of Rigoberta Menchú's own life do not just exist side by side. Rather, they are in organic connection with each other. Thus the continuing vitality of Mayan culture is one of the things for which Rigoberta and others in the Indian community are fighting — not to preserve their customs as museum pieces but rather to ensure their own right to ongoing cultural self-determination. In addition, the traditional practices and beliefs of the Mayan communities stand in stark contrast to the values and behaviors of the ruling class, whether local or foreign. They thus serve both as a model for an alternative form of society — one that is decidedly more humanistic, egalitarian, and communal — and also as powerful vehicles for organizing resistance and developing political consciousness. For example, Rigoberta describes how traditional marriage ceremonies symbolically reinforce such values and also require the couple to "make a new pledge to honor the Indian race." She goes on to say,

They refer back to the time of Columbus and say: "Our forefathers were dishonored by the white man — sinners and murderers"; and: "It is not the fault of our ancestors. They died from hunger because they weren't paid. We want to destroy the wicked lessons we were taught by [white men]. If they hadn't come, we would all be united, equal, and our children would not suffer. We would not have boundaries to our land." This is, in part recalling history and, in part, a call to awareness.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this book is its presentation of some of the dilemmas and contradictions with which Rigoberta Menchú struggles and the way her own consciousness grows and changes through her experiences. One major dilemma is her need to violate many of the indigenous traditions she holds sacred in order to engage in the struggle that is necessary to maintain those traditions. For example, she temporarily

gives up her own language and begins to speak Spanish because this allows her both to organize people across language groups and to fight better against the Guatemalan elite. For a similar reason, she also attends school outside of the Indian communities. Rigoberta's decision not to bear children and become a mother also distances her from the traditions of her own community. Yet she sees this as necessary to carry out her chosen role as a revolutionary organizer and fighter. And while she herself chooses to work in the mass movements rather than join the guerrilla forces, she is not willing to condemn those who have taken up armed struggle, even though violence and killing is in contradiction to some of the most basic principles of Mayan culture.

Throughout the book, Rigoberta Menchú also struggles with her religious identity. It is initially through participation in radical Catholic Action groups that she comes to consciously embrace a revolutionary perspective and develop a commitment to social change. However, she later questions the imperialist origins and dimensions of Catholicism in the context of Guatemalan society and calls for a revival of indigenous religious traditions. This ambivalence is never totally resolved. Nor are her questions around women's roles and status. Mayan society promotes relatively egalitarian relations between women and men, who both participate actively in domestic and public life, acting as working partners within the household and the community. At the same time, men do enjoy certain prerogatives and a higher prestige. These complexities — both in social realities and in Rigoberta's own thinking — are revealed through her comments on the birth of children:

When a male child is born, there are special celebrations, not because he's male but because of all the hard work and responsibility he'll have as a man. It's not that *machismo* doesn't exist among our people, but it doesn't present a problem for the community because it's so much part of our way of life...Boys are given more; they get more food because their work is harder and they have more responsibility. At the same time, he is head of the household, not in the bad sense of the word, but because he is responsible for so many things. This doesn't mean girls aren't valued. Their work is hard, too, and there are other things that are due to them as mothers. Girls are valued because they are part of the earth, which gives us maize, beans, plants, and everything we live on. The earth is like a mother which multiplies life. So the girl child will multiply the life of our generation and of our ancestors, whom we must respect. The girl and the boy are both integrated into the community in equally important ways; the two are interrelated and compatible. Nevertheless, the community is always happier when a male child is born, and the men feel much prouder.

When discussing women's role in revolutionary politics, Rigoberta argues for their complete and equal integration in the strug-

gle. She readily acknowledges the problem of "*compañeros* who had many ideas about making a revolution, but who had trouble accepting that a woman could participate in the struggle not only in superficial things but in fundamental things." While refusing to identify herself as a feminist, in words and actions she clearly challenges such male supremacist attitudes. At the same time, she opposes the formation of separate women's organizations or movements:

We women *compañeras* came to the conclusion (because for a time we thought of creating an organization for women) that it was paternalistic to say there should be an organization for women when in practice women work and are exploited as well. Women work picking coffee and cotton, and on top of that, many women have taken up arms and even elderly women are fighting day and night; so it isn't possible to say that now we're setting up an organization so that women can rebel, work, or study women's problems. It won't always be like this, of course. That is just the situation we're facing at the moment. Perhaps in the future, when there's a need for it, there will be a women's organization in Guatemala.

The difference in roles and lifestyles between Indian and Ladino women is one of the sources of Rigoberta's initial and total alienation from all things Ladino. At the beginning of her autobiography she identifies all non-Indians as her enemies and as oppressors. As she matures, both personally and politically, Rigoberta continues to maintain and even sharpen her understanding of ethnic oppression in Guatemalan society and of the particular exploitation of the indigenous Mayan people. At the same time, through a series of real-life experiences, she also comes to appreciate both the poverty and oppression of the majority of Ladinos, as well as the potential for alliances with some

As part of this evolution in political consciousness, Rigoberta develops a particular empathy and capacity for solidarity with poor Ladino women. Thus, by the end of the book, her analysis involves a greater understanding of how class, race or ethnicity, and gender interact in creating the forms of oppression people experience, and also in increasing their potential for struggle.

I was introduced to this book shortly after it was first published almost ten years ago. Since then I have used it as required reading in a variety of college courses. Many books bought by university students, after being superficially read to pass exams, end up sitting on dusty bookshelves or being sold back to the bookstore. *I, Rigoberta Menchú* apparently does not suffer this fate. Numerous students have told me of passing the book on to their friends or saving it to use when they themselves become teachers. For students, teachers, activists, and revolutionaries — as well as for people just curious about a daring and brave woman who won the Nobel Peace Prize — this is a book well worth owning, reading, and sharing with others. □

Guatemala: The First Return

by Janet Melvin

Editor's Note: In 1954 the Central Intelligence Agency of the U.S. organized a coup to overthrow the democratically elected left-wing nationalist government of Jacobo Arbenz. In 1986 former CIA operative Philip C. Roettinger admitted: "The coup I helped engineer in 1954 inaugurated an unprecedented era of intransigent military rule in Central America. Generals and colonels acted with impunity to wipe out dissent and amass wealth for themselves and their cronies" (cited in James Cockcroft, *Neighbors in Turmoil: Latin America*, p. 103). In Guatemala 2 percent of the population owns 72 percent of the land; 40 percent of the population is unemployed, and another 30 percent is underemployed. In this predominantly rural country, half the children of rural families die of hunger-related diseases. From the 1960s through the 1980s, a guerrilla war was conducted by opponents of the government. This was met with savage repression by the authorities, resulting in many civilian deaths and the flight of more than 1 million people.

Guatemala has had one of the worst human rights records in Latin America, in part because of the army's genocidal policies in the 1970s and '80s toward the indigenous population, the Mayans of the country's highland regions. The Mayan people have a vibrant culture, which existed more than a thousand years before the arrival of Columbus in the Americas. In the late 1980s, as Guatemala returned to civilian rule under Christian Democratic President Vinicio Cerezo (with the army remaining in control), human rights groups, trade unions, peasant organizations, and others began to struggle for changes beneficial to the Guatemalan people. Under current civilian President Jorge Elias Serrano, the military retains its power, but the appearance of "democracy" continues to be something the generals and colonels wish to maintain. In this context, one observer notes, "Maya have also — very recently — begun to take a much more aggressive political stance toward the national government." (Jim Handy, "Guatemala: A Tenacious Despotism," *Report of the Americas*, December 1992)

One dramatic indicator is the 1992 return from exile of internationally known Mayan revolutionary Rigoberta Menchú. Even more dramatic, however, has been the open and organized return of thousands of refugees to Guatemala, and to the areas from which they had fled — a return which has taken on the character of a militant political act. We are fortunate that Janet Melvin, who has more than a decade of experience in Central America, is able to offer a firsthand report of this development. She has also provided the photographs utilized in this issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. Updated information has been provided by Laurie T. Hines.

From Guatemala City, a full school bus filled to capacity bumped down precarious roads that edge the mountains on the way to Comitán in Chiapas, Mexico. Wisps of cotton clouds hovered among layers of blue-gray mountain ridges and billowed around the peak of a volcano which touched a cloudless sky. Pine trees rooted in rock stand tall. Whitewashed walls and church steeples shine in the rising sun among tropical flowers the height of trees. Corn and coffee dry on sunny rooftops. Steep hillside farming, a patchwork of red clay earth, golden wheat, and dry stalks of harvested corn to be cleared

for the next planting. Flowers potted in tin cans decorate thatched roof adobe huts.

Women weave and wear exquisite clothing, which changes in color, pattern, and design from one village to another. Small people climb rocky hills with bundles of logs on their backs, strapped and tied across their chests and foreheads, or stacks of hay that double their height. Women balance heavy baskets on their heads. Tiny children carry younger siblings like piggyback cocoons wrapped in colorful woven shawls. Children here begin to work when they learn to walk,

growing like weeds against the harsh will of nature.

In apparently pastoral villages, the struggle to survive persists. Wind and rain invade homes made of boards tied loosely together. People live in poverty, without water or electricity, taking hardship in stride, subsisting on less than it takes to sustain life. Fertile earth is one natural blessing in this land of violence and repression.

When we arrived at the Guadalupe-Miramar Camp in Chiapas, Mexico, everyone extended a hand to greet us. Following children with mud-caked feet who ran down slippery paths with confidence, we stepped carefully on tenuous rocks down a steep slope to a dark, wooden-slab house with a tin roof, where we had lunch.

Respecting their customs, we bathed in the stream wearing bras and slips. That night, children peeked through loosely tied sticks that formed the walls of the room where we slept — an empty health clinic with a dirt floor and no nurse or doctor. Syringes are water pistols for friendly, curious children who have no other toys. The children and the men speak Spanish, but not most of the women. Almost all the women have several children and are still nursing.

Next to our room, a loud corn grinder starts making masa for tortillas at 4 a.m., so we rose with the sun. Nearby, a huge pink sow watched over newborn piglets in the straw bed of her sty. The mother dodged kicks and stones thrown at her by children and adults while she searched for scraps of food.

The next day we went to Zaculeu to meet Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú, who arrived by helicopter. We trekked through the rain forest in ankle and wrist-deep mud, slipping and sliding up and down



Guatemalan refugees greeting Rigoberta Menchú in Zaculeu, Mexico

steep paths to a village at the foot of a mountain, where nineteen refugee families live. The center square was decorated with balloons, green branches of tropical plants, and colorful cloths woven by the women of each community.

Rigoberta Menchú brought a message of solidarity and encouragement to hundreds of people who walked long distances from several villages to hear her speak. One by one, they embraced her warmly; some tearfully. The spirit of what the Guatemalan refugees call "the Return" was fortified by her visit.

Returning Home

More than ten years ago, thousands of Guatemalans were forced to leave the land where some families had lived for generations. Their villages were burned and their leaders killed by the Guatemalan army. Almost all lost family members. Leaving behind all but the few possessions they could carry, they ran to the mountains to save their lives, hoping that the muddy trails they walked would lead to safety.

Stories are told of mothers who smothered their children to keep their cries from exposing the community to the threat of annihilation. Some hid for months, even years in the jungle, waiting for a chance to return to their homeland. Many died of disease and malnutrition. According to the Guatemala Support Project, over a million people were displaced. Between 150,000 and 200,000 fled to Mexico and other countries. Of these, 45,000 still live in Mexican camps trying to rebuild their lives.

Conditions vary considerably in the 128 Guatemalan camps in Mexico. The land that most of the refugees work, on which they've built their homes, does not belong to them. In Chiapas, they have neither electricity nor running water. Most rent their land from Mexicans who claim one-third to one-half of everything the land produces.

In 1984, many refugees who had settled in the south of Mexico moved to larger camps in Campeche and Quintana Roo, where better living conditions included wells and electricity. These communities are more like small towns than the camps in Chiapas. In Campeche, refugees own small plots of land for subsistence farming, and an orange grove, which is tended by the women in that community.

For years, people anxiously awaited the chance to return to Guatemala, but many logistical problems had to be addressed to make this possible. Nine delays were caused by factors beyond their control. Believing that their departure was imminent, some Mexican landowners had other plans for the land. The Guatemalans who were not welcome to stay had nowhere to go. Some were willing to face any risks and consequences instead of allowing the Return to be postponed indefinitely.

Negotiations between the governments of Guatemala and Mexico began in March 1992 and continued until November 8, when accords were signed guaranteeing conditions

the refugees had been demanding since 1979 — six points crucial to their safe return:

1. The refugees will return of their own free will, together and in an organized manner, and their dignity will be respected.
2. Their freedom of association and organization will be respected.
3. Both governments will facilitate the presence of representatives of national and international organizations, and others, who will accompany the refugees on their return.
4. Freedom of movement within the country and crossing the border will be assured.
5. Their personal and community safety will be guaranteed.
6. The refugees will have land to live on and to farm.

They also agreed on a way to verify compliance, assuring respect for fundamental rights and a safe return.

The Guatemalan government objected to several points in the plan presented by the Permanent Commission of Representatives of the Refugees in Mexico (CCPP), including the route the caravan would take, the number of people on more than a hundred school buses, and the question of access to the land after their return.

The refugees decided to take the Pan American Highway to Guatemala City, and then travel north to Polygon 14, where they would settle. To avoid allowing thousands of refugees to pass through the capital, the Guatemalan government proposed a more direct route, arguing that it would be safer, cheaper, and easier to return through the jungle, over the same terrain they traveled when they fled Guatemala. That route would take them along the sparsely populated border, through stretches of rain forest and over rough roads made worse by heavy rains. Some holes in

the road were reportedly larger than the jeeps that got stuck in the mud on a trial run.

The refugees refused to return in hiding, the way they were forced to leave their country. They wanted to be visible, to meet in the capital with groups concerned with justice and social change, students, unions, the progressive religious movement, and indigenous groups.

Advocates included the midwives and other health care providers and education promoters of MAMA MAQUIN (an indigenous Guatemalan women's organization), youth and human rights groups, Witness for Peace, Peace Brigades International, Christian Action of Guatemala (ACG), the Committee of Peasant Unity (CUC), and the Guatemalan Widows' Association (CON-AVIGUA). Participating in the negotiations were: the Permanent Commission of Representatives of Guatemalan Refugees in Mexico (CCPP), the Special Commission for Assistance to Refugees, Repatriated, and Displaced People (CEAR), the Mexican Commission for Support of the Refugees (COMAR), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Others played an important role: the Mediating Commission (Instancia Mediadora), the International Consultation and Support Group for the Return (GRICAR), representing Mexico, Canada, France, and Sweden, as well as church and nongovernmental organizations (NGO's). To accompany the refugees, people came from Mexico, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Holland, England, Australia, Canada, and the United States.

International attention puts pressure on the Guatemalan government to comply with its commitments under the accords it signed. Guatemalan President Jorge Serrano Elias promised a safe homecoming, credits for the purchase of land, the return of property to those who hold titles, and a three-year ex-



A demonstration of the indigenous women's organization Mama Maquin

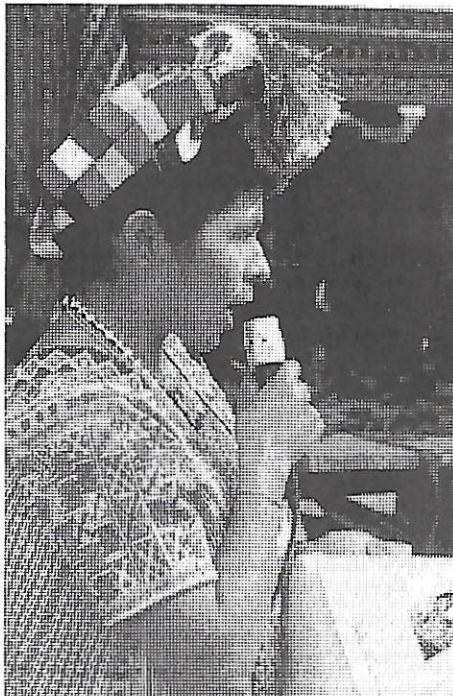
emption from military service and from recruitment for Civil Defense Patrols (PAC's), which are also under army control. There was much debate about access to the land, its quality and availability, the terms and cost of government credits, and about military conflicts near the resettlement area.

On November 21, 1992, the Guatemalan army destroyed three nearby villages, burning houses, schools, and churches, killing domestic animals, and thieving. Many people fled; some died. The army stated that this operation was to root out elements of the guerrilla forces which they claim have strongholds in the region. The Guatemalan Minister of Defense threatened to arrest refugee leaders if they tried to cross the border, alleging that some of those returning are subversives and guerrillas.

Rigoberta Menchú, Nobel Peace Prize winner, visited camps in three Mexican states, celebrated the new year with the refugees in Zaculeu, and promised to take part in the first Return. Her message to them was one of encouragement:

I am very proud of you, my Guatemalan sisters and brothers, for the fortitude and dignity with which you have struggled through these years to establish the conditions necessary for your return home. I share the Nobel Peace Prize with you because it is not a personal award. It represents worldwide recognition of the sacrifices of Guatemalans trying to achieve justice, democracy, and peace. This prize belongs to you whose courage and dignity in resisting those who destroyed your villages has set an example for the whole world.

Due to many logistical problems, the return was postponed for a month, until January 13. As the date for crossing the border ap-



Rosinda Tuyuc, speaking for Mama Maquín

proached, obstacles in the negotiations threatened another postponement. This constituted a violation of the first condition of the accords. Months and years of delays and indecision meant painful uncertainty for people who had to sell or eat what they couldn't carry, pack their few possessions, move them to a rented warehouse, and say farewell to those who stayed behind. Many had no food while official debates continued.

Two major Guatemalan newspapers had contradictory headlines. One announced, "The Return Is Suspended." The other declared, "The Return Is On," and gave details. The press conference the next day in Guatemala City was just as confusing. People from labor and religious organizations and human rights groups, journalists, film makers, and international observers compared notes on what we thought we heard — an assortment of misinformation. News changed constantly, while refugees waited anxiously. On January 12, just hours before the scheduled departure, the Guatemalan government finally agreed to the route, but buses were not available to pick up the refugees and their belongings.

More than one hundred buses which were supposed to be provided by the Mexican Commission for Support of the Refugees (COMAR) were not available. Other necessary provisions were also lacking: food, water, and an ambulance.

Thousands decided to set out on foot to Comitán, where refugees from three Mexican states were to meet before crossing the Guatemalan border. They were prepared to walk to the border under the blazing sun in a long procession of protest, determined to decide their own fate. More than half of those traveling were nursing infants wrapped in shawls and children under ten, born in exile in Mexico. Women pass on Guatemalan culture through storytelling, weaving, and singing. Atilana, who hosted and befriended us, has five children under seven. Her daughter, due on departure day, was born on the way home in Comitán, Mexico.

President Serrano hoped that allowing the refugees to return would improve the image of the Guatemalan government, which has been accused of grave human rights violations. Diplomats feared a disaster because of road conditions and the army's brutal control over civilians.

The government accuses refugees of being sympathetic to guerrilla forces in the resettlement region. Many fear increased violence and repression after the Return. In their new community in Guatemala, they will sleep in four huge sheds made of sticks and plastic tarp until they build their homes in the jungle.

Comitán Arrival

When the buses finally arrived in Comitán, they were welcomed by crowds of people at a fairground which would be their home until they could leave. Lively music created a feeling of optimism and resilience. Rigoberta Menchú arrived at the fairground to add her

message of hope and support to all who were returning.

Although exhausted from the arduous trip, the women began to wash clothes, glad for access to running water. Two days after her baby was due, Atilana was on her knees washing a pile of clothing. Her husband Abel, a respected community leader who worked hard for months before their departure, told me proudly, "Look at Atilana! Just hours before delivering, she's still able to wash all the clothes!"

A week later, the caravan finally left Mexico, snaking its way through the Cucuhumatan Mountains to the Guatemalan government reception center in Huehuetenango, where several problems occurred. Some returnees (no longer refugees) refused the military tents provided. They accused the government of trying to demoralize them by expecting them to sleep in tents belonging to the army that killed their families. They felt like prisoners when not allowed to meet with relatives who came to see them. The government finally allowed them to leave the reception center. Embarrassed and frustrated by these and other problems, the Guatemalan government pulled out of the Return, calling it a politically motivated show. The Church took over and things improved.

In Guatemala City, tens of thousands of well-wishers awaited the Return, including Rigoberta Menchú, who met them there again. Firecrackers exploded and people cried for joy during four days of celebrations, demonstrations, and church services.

Update

Finally, the caravan headed north to Coban, where the refugees separated into groups of 200-300 and boarded huge transport trucks which haul rocks and soil. To navigate the 100-mile road from Coban to Polygon 14, the first group had to pile rocks over mud. They arrived seventeen days later. Though it rains 10 months a year in the Ixcán (their home region), it did not rain that day. They named



Rigoberta Menchú

their settlement "Victoria 20 de Enero," the Victory of January 20th.

For those who returned, this is a time of great hope and great danger. Another military offensive was recently reported in the Ixcán, and a bomb exploded five kilometers from the new settlement, injuring one returnee. In the capital, the offices of two political parties were bombed. The United Nations has recorded testimony confirming Guatemala's dismal human rights record, putting trade and aid in jeopardy.

According to information received from the Communities of People in Resistance (CPR's) in the Ixcán, in Quiché, the Guatemalan army initiated large-scale military operations in that region on February 13. This offensive coincides with a Solidarity Walk-in to CPR villages. The CPR's (Communities of People in Resistance) in the Ixcán are part of the popular movement in Guatemala and have refused to leave Guatemala despite frequent army offensives. In the Solidarity

Walk-in, more than 400 solidarity activists, religious leaders, and journalists came from the United States, Europe, Canada, and Mexico (source: the NISGUA [Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala] Rapid Response Alert).

Though army attacks and persecution of guerrillas make it difficult to estimate, the CPR's probably number between 24,000 and 30,000. The Guatemalan army considers them subversives. These people, mostly indigenous, live in the jungles of the Ixcán, the Sierra, and the Peten regions. The CPR's are constantly displaced from their settlements by violence and persecution.

In a communiqué dated March 11, 1993, the Permanent Commission of Representatives of the Refugees (CCPP) condemned the violent acts of the Guatemalan army, which threaten the CPR's and put at risk the lives and security of those who have settled into the community of "Victory of January 20"

(source: CUANES, the Christian Urgent Action Network for Emergency Support).

This and other recent army offensives may be linked to negotiations between the Guatemalan Revolutionary Unity (URNG) and the government of Guatemala, which recently resumed in Mexico City after a six-month impasse. The government is pressing for a cease-fire, but has not agreed to the URNG's terms.

At the same time, U.S. troops have begun joint exercises with the Guatemalan army. Under this program, 5,000 U.S. troops are being sent to Guatemala and Belize in groups of 200 every two weeks from January to June 1993 (sources: NCOORD and CERIGUA). This cooperation between the U.S. military and the Guatemalan army, which has one of the worst human rights records in the hemisphere, contradicts the Clinton administration's stated commitment to promote respect for human rights. □

March 31, 1993

The El Salvadoran Revolution: Victory or Defeat

Continued from page 8

All our hoping will not turn the Salvadoran revolution's defeat into a victory. At the same time we must recognize that the defeat was limited; the Salvadoran revolution and its leadership, the FMLN, are not finished off. Indeed, the revolution did win some limited political space. Still, we must view reality for what it is. As Dole and Weeks wrote recently in the December 1992 *NACLA's Report on the Americas*:

In this moment of weakness, limiting the scope of defeat should be viewed as success for the left, but certainly not victory. The electoral defeat of the Sandinista government and the abandonment of armed struggle by the FMLN have been tremendous victories for the ruling classes in the United States and in Central America.

Perhaps an equally important victory for these reactionary groups would be the abandonment by the Left of its ideological commitment to socialism, which in Central America must, in all likelihood, be achieved through armed struggle. The power of counterrevolution in Nicaragua, the stalemate in El Salvador, and the tenacity of despotism in Guatemala and Honduras cannot be denied. To these reactionary victories should not be added a capitulation in the ideological battle. (p. 44)

We can draw a number of lessons from the experience of the Salvadoran people. These lessons are provisional and should be treated as hypotheses requiring additional confirmation:

1. The key factor in preventing the victory of the FMLN was the international context. Specifically, the ability of the U.S. to massively intervene on the side of the Salvadoran ruling class and the collapse of the former

Soviet bloc were two major factors. Also relevant as part of this context was the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the blows to the Guatemalan revolutionary movement.

2. A secondary factor in preventing the victory of the FMLN was the difficulty in developing the urban mass movements. Relative to the armed struggle in the countryside, the struggles of the urban mass movements were less developed. This lack of development resulted from the terrorism of the state, and from the emphasis given armed struggle by the FMLN during certain periods of the war.

3. The war resulted in a stalemate, with the Salvadoran revolutionaries less willing and able to continue the war with its attendant destruction and suffering. The FMLN negotiated an end to the war in an effort to win political space and democratic reforms that will permit the revolutionaries to continue the political struggle for land reform, an end to state terrorism, and democratic rights.

4. The Salvadoran government negotiated an end to the war to end the stalemate. To be successful, these negotiations had to have the support of the U.S. to overcome substantial opposition from within the Salvadoran military and sectors of the Salvadoran ruling class.

5. Recognizing the costliness and difficulty of militarily defeating the FMLN, the U.S. seeks to politically defeat the revolutionary forces through the peace process. The peace process permits the U.S. to follow its "nation building" strategy, co-opting sections of the opposition, gaining legitimacy for the Salvadoran ruling class, and disarming the FMLN. Through a process of continued terrorism against the mass movements, limited and mostly cosmetic changes in the Salvadoran

state, and the voluntary disarming of the FMLN, the U.S. hopes to accomplish politically what it could not do militarily: destroy the Salvadoran revolution.

6. The end of the war represents a tactical defeat, but not a strategic defeat, for the FMLN. By continued political organizing in the mass movements, both urban and rural, the FMLN can continue to pursue its revolutionary objectives. The rhetoric of the FMLN makes it unclear as to the present goals of the FMLN. It appears, but may not be the case, that some sectors of the FMLN may abandon revolution as a goal. Nevertheless, "it ain't over till it's over." The revolutionary struggle of the Salvadoran masses will continue.

In all of this we must acknowledge the connections between the revolutionary struggles in the capitalist periphery and the capitalist core countries. At present, the single most important factor determining the fate of Central American revolutionary movements is the class struggle in the U.S. We in the U.S. can effectively help the Salvadoran revolutionaries, and revolutionaries in Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, by building powerful independent mass movements in our own country. This includes, of course, building a stronger anti-intervention movement. But it also includes building a powerful progressive labor movement, independent labor political action, and effective social movements. Just as we have drawn strength from the struggles of Central American revolutionaries, they can draw strength from us. Then together we can break the chains of our mutually oppressive imperialist world order. □

March 22, 1993

Martin Luther King Remembered

by Ramsey Clark

The following is the edited text of a talk given by Ramsey Clark at a meeting in New York City on Martin Luther King Day, January 1993, sponsored by Campaign for a New Tomorrow.

As I've been doing for some years now on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, I've put out a copy of his April 4, 1967, speech at Riverside Church. For me, out of all of his words and acts this speech most perfectly tells us the problems with our society. He was asked for his response to Hubert Humphrey's urging that he stop criticizing the United States for defending freedom in Vietnam and start criticizing Viet Cong terrorists. This is the precise proposition that is being put to us today: why do we criticize the United States for slaughtering a quarter of a million darker-skinned people in Iraq rather than criticizing Saddam Hussein? Saddam Hussein has been so thoroughly demonized that few Americans, constantly subjected as they are to media emotionalization and hatred, can even think when they hear the name. In that speech Dr. King, in defiance of most of the civil rights leadership in the United States, made his clearest and strongest statement against the war in Vietnam.

He said he wanted to speak for the suffering poor of Vietnam, and he wanted to speak to the American people. It was imperative that they recognize that "the greatest purveyor of violence on earth is my own government."

Who mourns now for the two million dead Vietnamese that the United States was directly responsible for? The emotion in the United States is much higher over the question of MIA's [U.S. military personnel missing in action], which was never a real issue, always a fabrication created to cause hatred. The lie is an essential element, in fact it is the prerequisite for the use of violence, because human nature can't stand it otherwise. That's why you have to always demonize an enemy, because soldiers — they just don't feel like killing otherwise.

It was sadly right that Martin Luther King said "my own government." Because we live here and we have some capacity to affect the conduct of our government from this side of the barrels of its guns. The people elsewhere can only hunker down. It's an awful and awesome responsibility, but it is ours and that's why it is so important that you are here today and why it is so important that when you leave here you reach out to many others. This will be a decisive moment. We've just watched stunningly incredible random violence with sophisticated technology that killed people in Iraq, for which we the people spent billions and billions of dollars. These actions took place in large part because of the

vanity of George Bush, but also to tell the world that the United States has a single purpose and that is the continuing domination of the planet by its superior capacity for violence. Have you heard any suggestion that we might shed a tear for the people that were killed by our planes and bombs and rockets?

This morning we hear from Somalia that of the six Somalians reported killed in a shoot-out yesterday — numbers are very rarely mentioned — four were civilians. Well, let me tell you, they're all civilians; they're all human beings. It's their country. They live there, and their lives are as precious as yours and mine. They're not this phrase that we call gunmen. They're what the law calls *caput lupinum*, the head of a wolf, to be killed on sight. When the issue of Somalia came up, I begged the country not to let it happen. We stand for something more than might and violence. Send food, for God's sake, carry it in on your backs if you have to, but get it there. But don't send guns. I couldn't stand the specter of the first Somalian dying from American gunfire.

Dr. King defied the civil rights leadership, which basically believed that the quest for equality in the United States was so critically important that it couldn't bear the burden of simultaneously seeking to curtail United States militarism. They believed that we could achieve civil rights in this country by supporting militarism overseas. Only a smattering of what we called SNCC kids [activists of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] even dared to side with Dr. King on his denunciation of the United States military forces in Vietnam. The NAACP and the Urban League and all the leadership that had struggled so long denounced him. But he was right, and it is the essence of his greatness. There were thousands of other powerful preachers from the African American community. Great preachers always come from pain, and who has the pain in this society? You could hear their sermons resonating in every African American community throughout the land, many even more powerful than Dr. King's. There were civil rights leaders who did as much. But finally here was a scholar, a PhD, if you will. A man who had studied most of his adult life on the means of achieving social change by nonviolent action. He saw that our policies overseas and our policies at home were really the same.

Too often we're led to believe that there's a double standard: we stand for freedom and democracy and social justice at home but

militarism abroad. That is a tragic trap to fall into. If you look around, you'll see that there's nothing of the kind. We don't have a democracy here, we have a plutocracy. Money absolutely dominates politics in this society, and every sentient person here knows it.

We don't have freedom. There are more than a million people in prison in the United States right now. It's the largest prisoner in the world per capita and in absolute terms. These prisoners are overwhelmingly minorities, and they're nearly all from the poor. We're the lord high executioner both at home and abroad. We have 2,500 people on death row and we celebrate each execution. The majority are minorities and they're *all* from the poor. We have never executed a rich person in the history of this country. From the very beginning of our long history, from colonial times to the Constitution to World War II, the first year in which the United States government or its predecessor governments did not execute someone was 1968. The year of the greatest race riots in our history, the year of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, and many others. For ten years we didn't have an execution. But while we execute at home, we'll execute abroad. While we have homeless at home, we'll have millions homeless abroad, who we want indebted to us so that they won't be a burden on our conscience or our economy. That has been our practice.

It was two years ago today [in the Persian Gulf war] that we unleashed a new level of "excellence" in the use of technology against life. In a period of 42 days, 110,000 aerial sorties — one every thirty seconds, night and day — rained 88,500 tons of explosives on the people of Iraq. 250,000 Iraqis died, and they are dying in greater numbers every day. Between three and five thousand a month are dying right now as a direct result of our assault on that country. When General Powell, who has darker skin, too, was asked how many Iraqis we killed he answered, "Frankly that's a question I'm not very interested in." It was an assault that was planned well in advance of August 2, 1990, and we know it. Its purpose was to cripple Iraq for the foreseeable future — for a generation or more — to destroy its military and to establish permanent U.S. military domination of the oil resources in the Persian Gulf. That purpose had been foreseeable for twenty-five years. We let it happen.

Continued on page 34

Cointelpro and the Destruction of Black Leaders and Organizations

by Dhoruba Bin Wahad

Following is an edited version of a talk given by political prisoner Dhoruba Bin Wahad in Harlem on December 4, 1992, at an African International Forum entitled "Cointelpro, Covert Action, and the Destruction of Black Leaders and Organizations." The talk was transcribed by Lee DeNoyer.

The concept of a counterintelligence program is a strategy or a series of operations carried out, supposedly, against a foreign government, designed to counter their intelligence work within the United States or within a particular society. It's a war strategy. But here it has mainly been employed against people of color. It was first employed against the CP USA [Communist Party USA]. Many of us who look back historically realize that it was also employed against the Garvey movement. In fact, that was the first time it was employed against an organized, modern national liberation movement. We also know, however, that the techniques of the counterintelligence program began on the plantation.

The most basic strategy of any counterintelligence program is to confuse the enemy and have them believing what you want them to believe. But also it has another aspect to it, the aspect that we know as terrorism — intimidation and violence, making examples of leaders, making examples of people who re-

sist. The United States government perfected these techniques in Southeast Asia against the people's movement in Vietnam. Many of the police professionals who would later lead the war of suppression against the FALN and the Black Liberation Army went on year-long sabbaticals to Vietnam to be trained in the Phoenix program. For those of you who may not be aware of it, the Phoenix program was a program carried out by the CIA, and its objective was to root out the infrastructure and the cadres and troops of the National Liberation Front, the so-called Viet Cong. They killed over 50,000 people in this effort, many of whom were tortured and most of whom were murdered in their sleep, much like Fred Hampton [the Chicago Black Panther leader].

The techniques of "low intensity warfare," of counterinsurgency, of terrorism, these techniques were perfected over a period of time and were used in very effective ways against the Black liberation movement. Espe-

cially during periods of upsurge in our consciousness and our activities. Earlier in the century, when Marcus Garvey began to build the United Negro Improvement Association [UNIA], and built it into a national organization of over a million Black men and women, and became a significant threat in the eyes of the racist status quo in this society, the then fledgling FBI took on the task of destroying Marcus Garvey. They did destroy him in the sense that they managed to imprison him on false income tax evasion charges, deport him from the country, and use infiltrators and undercover agents to sow dissension within his organization.

The fragmentation of the UNIA led directly to the establishment of a number of organizations that we now know about. The primary one, of course, was the Nation of Islam, but other movements came out of the fragmented Garvey movement as well. It is important to understand that out of the fragmentation of that movement in the 1920s and

Cointelpro and the Case of Dhoruba bin Wahad

Surveillance and destructive action against radicals by the FBI and other U.S. government organizations goes back a long way, but the acronym COINTELPRO (for "counterintelligence program") specifically refers to the government's program to harass and in some cases destroy radicals in the 1960s and '70s. Former Black Panther Dhoruba bin Wahad was a target of COINTELPRO. He was convicted in 1973 in connection with a shooting incident involving the New York police.

Thanks to FBI documents obtained under the Freedom of Information act, Dhoruba and his supporters were able to show that the authorities had suppressed evidence in the frame-up trial against him, and he was released after 19 years imprisonment. But the prosecution has consistently sought to overturn court rulings in Dhoruba's favor by appealing to higher courts to approve the 1973 trial and reinstate Dhoruba's conviction. Much public support has helped Dhoruba in his fight to remain free. Hundreds of supporters have come to court hearings, a film has been made about his case, and he

has spoken widely, including on national television. Partly because of the extensive support his case has won, there was another ruling in his favor by a New York Court in January of this year.

The judge, Bruce Allen, affirmed that the Manhattan District Attorney's Office had suppressed evidence in the case. It had failed to turn over to Dhoruba's attorneys statements made to the FBI on August 11, 1971, by the prosecution's key witness, Pauline Joseph. The judge recognized that there were substantial differences between Ms. Joseph's trial testimony in 1973 and what she said to the FBI in 1971. He ruled that "there is a reasonable possibility of a different verdict if the defendant had been afforded the opportunity to cross-examine her with these statements."

The prosecution was left with three choices: to appeal judge Allen's ruling, to hold a new trial, or to drop the charges. They chose to appeal the ruling, but no decision had come from the appellate court as of early April 1993. Dhoruba's defense attorney, Robert Boyle, was quoted as saying: "Ob-

viously, in the interests of justice, we think they should dismiss the case.... But if they pursue a retrial, we would win. Every bit of evidence is now in question" (*Village Voice*, January 19, 1993).

Dhoruba was quoted as saying that now the authorities would have to face "the political ramifications of their frame-up." He also has a civil suit pending against the New York State Department of Corrections for the way they treated him in prison. "They harassed and isolated me when it became clear I had a good chance to get the conviction overturned."

For more information about Dhoruba's case, see BIDOM, April 1992, p. 10, and the interview with Dhoruba bin Wahad in *International Viewpoint* in 1992.

To help in the continuing fight to keep Dhoruba free, contact: Campaign to Free Black Political Prisoners and POW's in the U.S., Kingsbridge Station P.O. Box 339, Bronx, New York 10463-0339. Telephone: (718) 624-0800.

— George Saunders

early '30s, the types of individuals that came forward to fill the vacuum that was left as a consequence of the most principled and militant nationalist leadership being eliminated, those who came forward were everything from charlatans to con artists, from buffoons to idiots. They came forward with various messages of liberation that, in and of themselves, may sound absurd to us today, but because of the desperation of oppressed people, because of the psychological preparation that slavery had made among Black people and people of color in this society, many fell victim to that. We know about Sweet Daddy Grace, we know about Father Divine, we know about the pie-in-the-sky, pork chop preachers who organized in the wake of the dissolution of that strong nationalist mass movement.

The same thing happened in the 1970s once the militant, revolutionary wing of the Black movement was destroyed. We need to understand our movement very clearly. We need to analyze it very clearly. At the height of the Black liberation movement in 1969, the basis of its unity had already eroded. There were no longer mass mobilizations of Black people carried out by coalitions of forces that may have differed ideologically. What had happened? What had happened is that the Counterintelligence Program, in order to be effective, had to capitalize on the weaknesses of the Black community in general, and on the weaknesses of the Black movement in particular.

Repression and "Leadership Selection"

The Counterintelligence Program was very effective, but it would not have been as effective as it was had it not been for our weaknesses. Many of us talk about the Counterintelligence Program and the demise of the Black movement and we do not analyze our role in how things failed. Many of us do not realize, for instance, that the Counterintelligence Program did not just target organizations that were revolutionary. Many of us think that it's a badge of distinction when the government puts surveillance on us and goes after us. We feel that if the enemy is watching us, we must be doing something right. We feel that if the government is concerned about what we're saying, we must be saying something right. That's not the case.

The Counterintelligence Program went after buffoons and geniuses alike. It went after people whose ideology was clearly reactionary, whose ideology was clearly designed to co-opt a legitimate revolutionary consciousness on the part of Black folks, and it went after revolutionaries as well. It went after Dr. Martin Luther King, who everyone in this room knows was no revolutionary by any stretch of the imagination, who represented a particular class within the Black community, and represented them very effec-

tively. That's not to say that Dr. Martin Luther King did not have the interests of Black people at heart, or that he was not a sincere individual or a sincere combatant in the struggle for civil rights, but it is to say that Dr. Martin Luther King represented a tendency in the Black movement that was conciliatory. A tendency that was, at best, challenging the system in order to become part of it. But the Counterintelligence Program made Dr. Martin Luther King a number one target. At the same time it made Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, and SNCC [the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] number one targets. At the same time it began to focus over 85 percent of its operations in the Black community on the Black Panther Party.

What we are saying here is that organizations from the Nation of Islam to the SCLC [the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, headed by Martin Luther King, Jr.] and organizations from cultural nationalist groups on the right to cultural nationalist groups on the left were all targets of the United States counterinsurgency and counterintelligence program. This being the case, we cannot but conclude that the basis for COINTELPRO, the reason that it existed and the reason that it went after Black activists, Black preachers, etc., was to weaken and destroy any kind of independent organizations of Black people that were not under the direct control of the racist forces in this country.

It's very important to understand this, because today, we are confronted with the consequences of what happened. Today, many of the individuals who collaborated with the system, who benefited from the murders of Black Panthers, who benefited from the destruction of organizations that militantly espoused self-determination for Black people, are in positions of power and influence. These individuals have gotten to these positions because they identify on a very fundamental level with the system that oppresses us. This is important to us because the greatest task before us as a community, before we can even talk about challenging the power structure, is to "challenge, neutralize, and destroy," to use their terms, the Black middle class that identifies with the system. We have to completely strip them of their power. Their power, like the power of the preacher on the plantation, is derived from their direct relationship to the racists who control this society. This is why preachers in this city can endorse someone like [New York U.S. Senator Alphonse] D'Amato, a known and vociferous enemy of people of color, a racist, a former New York City Police Department pig and stoolpigeon, an individual who has ties to organized crime, who has his finger in every corrupt pot in this city. This is why Black so-called clergymen can endorse D'Amato. They can endorse him because they can pick up the phone and get a favor from him when we go to them crying about

some injustice in our community and D'Amato responds to them.

Power and leadership in our community has always been a question of the relationship of the power base to the dominant power structure. This means that leadership behind closed doors is a way of life. This means that undercover deals are a way of life. This means that unprincipled opportunism is a quality that Black leaders must have in order to survive in this racist society. The fact that we have the leaders that we have, the fact that we have the Jesse Jacksons and the Wyatt T. Walkers and the David Dinkinses, the fact that we have these individuals leading us today is a testimony to the effectiveness of the Counterintelligence Program. That's my major point.

Our failure to understand the limitations of cultural nationalism led to the situation in the '60s in which cultural nationalists such as Ron Karenga could carry out the brutal assassination of Black Panthers at the behest of the Los Angeles Police Department and be invited today to the college campuses to pontificate. Would you invite Jonas Savimbi [the head of UNITA, the pro-South African government, CIA-supported Angolan counter-revolutionary organization] here to talk about his position in Angola? Would you sit here and listen to Buthelezi discuss why Inkatha is doing what it is doing? These are butchers of Black people. We do not understand why people who have participated in the murder of Black revolutionaries today are lauded as scholars and leaders in our community. Ron Karenga is but one of them. He is the most classic example of the Savimbis and the Buthelezis among us. I want you to understand that he was effective because he was a narrow cultural nationalist.

Cultural Nationalism vs. Revolutionary Nationalism

Revolutionary nationalism represented the type of nationalism that understood that there was a common solidarity between all people under the same economic and social political system. This oppression has its historical roots in the development of European hegemony and power in the world. A revolutionary



Black Panther leaders Elaine Brown and Huey P. Newton

nationalist, therefore, understands that internationalism is based upon an ideology and understanding of who the enemy is, and what the limitations are of the enemy's program and ideology. Cultural nationalists, on the other hand, said that to be Black is sufficient, that our African-ness was so unique in and of itself that we need not aspire to struggle in any arena other than the arena of African culture; that we first of all had to become aware of how beautiful we were, and we first of all had to become aware of our ancient African traditions and ways.

Of course, I am not one to disparage our traditions and our ways and our ancestors. Our ancestors have gotten us here; our ancestors' spirits have provided for us in a society that was bent on our destruction. However, preceding every revolutionary struggle, cultural awareness arises and becomes a mass awareness. Preceding the upsurges of the 1960s Black people began to rediscover who they were. They began to take the conk out of their hair, started wearing their hair naturally. Black women started taking the make-up off their face and became proud of their big African lips. Black men stopped curling and frying and dyeing their hair; they started wearing Afros and dashikis. We started renaming ourselves in the tradition of our ancestors. We embraced religions that reflected who we were. This cultural awareness preceded revolutionary consciousness.

The enemy is a student of history. They know our history better than we do. They analyzed the history and religions and trends in society around the world and they came to certain conclusions. One of the conclusions they came to is that cultural nationalism in and of itself is reactionary. It will never lead to the empowerment of people until it is politicized. Once it is politicized, it can possibly become revolutionary. So the key was to stop the politicization of our cultural awareness. Therefore, individuals who preached narrow cultural nationalism had to be supported covertly, and they had to be promoted.

When the Black Panther Party came upon the scene in the 1960s, it was the first Black organization in contemporary times that, number one, was a cadre organization and, number two, had a revolutionary ideology that embraced the idea and notion that there were Black enemies of Black people based on their class consciousness. This was difficult for the cultural nationalists to deal with in the 1960s. I know. They were into having Black women walking three steps behind them. They were into speaking Swahili and refusing to talk to any white folks under any circumstances. They said that because the Black Panther Party had this position and this analysis, white folks were controlling it. They said that we were fraternizing with white people and there were white people in the Black Panther Party.

When you look at the counterintelligence documents, you see the FBI played on this.

They sent false information and letters to the Black student unions around the country in order to keep the Panthers off the campus. And the way they would couch their letters was in the phrases and terminology of the cultural nationalists. The letters said that the Panthers were hanging out with white folks — with honkies — you know the terminology they used. They would bring in the local janitor of the FBI building and say, "Look, Brother Coon, why don't you write a letter for us? You know, use that ol' coon talk that you talk." Yeah, they did that. When they used to place their phone calls they used to get the janitors and the people who used to clean the offices in the FBI building to place the phone calls because they couldn't imitate the speech patterns of Black people, and they had no Black agents. This is all in the documents. This is all in the Church Committee investigation.

So we need to understand that cultural nationalism, historically, has been a brake on our revolutionary consciousness when the mass movement has no leadership. They understood this so well that they went after the most radical wing of the Black movement. They went after them with guns, indictments, and criminalization, and they boosted the reformist wing of the movement by giving them little carrots and tokens and antipoverty programs. They pushed forward the cultural nationalists to say that the most radical nationalists were people who subscribed to some white, leftist ideology.

Revolution and Culture

We have to be very clear that the Counterintelligence Program was not only a war strategy. It was a strategy designed to manipulate the political landscape of the Black community, manipulate it in a way that we would find ourselves 23 years later in the exact same position we were then. It's like *déjà vu*. If you ever look at some of the old speeches of Malcolm and look at some of the videos we're watching now, it's like we're talking about the same thing! George Foreman was on yesterday talking about decent housing and police brutality and how we're not going to stop until the police stop. All you had to do was to change the date from 1963 to 1992 and he would have been talking about the exact same thing we're talking about now.

So how is it that we've managed for 25 years to talk about the same thing? I'll tell you how it happens. Those individuals who embraced revolutionary ideas and principles first of all realized that without a radical transformation of society there will be no possibility of a new type of human being, a nonexploited human being. A human being that can give the best of himself or herself to society and thereby enrich themselves and enrich society in the process. Revolution means, for us, the destruction of oppressive and exploitive systems. This, of course, implies that if there is to be a revolution there

have to be revolutionaries and a revolutionary movement, and this movement has to have a culture. It has to have a way to inspire and to communicate to its people. The culture that this society loves to appropriate, but seldom gives its due to, is the culture of Africans in diaspora. We all know that we are the lifeblood of an otherwise bloodless culture. We know that it is our speech, our style, our very existence that peoples of the world emulate when they emulate so-called American culture. It's our music that has become renowned worldwide. It is our poetry, our speech, our clothes; it is our very being.

Therefore, the arena that the Counterintelligence Program focused on the most was the arena of the mass culture. The mass culture is an area that is controlled by what? The mass media. There could be no mass culture in this multiracial society were it not for the electronic media. The mass culture is promoted and promulgated by the mass media. It was in the arena of the mass media that the revolutionary nationalists had to first be discredited. It was in the arena of the mass media or in the arena of the mass culture that our movement had to first be derailed.

This is very important to understand now, because what we are suffering from now is a repeat of history. We now have Spike Lee defining the mass culture for us, defining what a revolutionary is. We have every possible shade of buffoon commenting on Malcolm X and what he stood for. Everyone is led to believe that because we all have opinions, everyone's opinion is equal. We all may have opinions, but all opinions are not equal. There is such a thing as objective truth. There is such a thing as social practice. The opinion of someone that has [experience in the movement, that is,] social practice, should carry more weight than the opinion of someone who doesn't. That's just common sense.

I heard a brother tell a sister the other day, "Why are you jumping on Spike Lee? You're just mad because he's making a lot of money. I thought the film was good. You go on down to these forums with Elombe Brath. All he does is have forums." Now listen to that! Here's a man who obviously has no understanding about social practice. Because if he did, he could not have said that. There's a qualitative difference between an Elombe Brath and a Spike Lee. If there's a qualitative difference between the two, what is the qualitative difference? And if the issue is about whether Malcolm was a revolutionary or whatever he was, whose word would you take, based on their social practice, Elombe Brath's or Spike Lee's? So this tells you how scrambled up this dialogue is becoming.

The only way to begin to control the arena of debate is to begin to slap the boogers out of these Negroes' noses. The only way to begin to control the arena of debate is to begin to get hard with them and to take it to the streets, based upon a principled opposition to exploitive social relations. I'm saying this

because unless we change the emphasis of this strategy, unless we take it to the streets where it belongs, we are going to be subjected to a mind bleep ... you know it starts with F. Our minds are going to be sucked in to a strategy that we cannot but succumb to.

Sadly, we are succumbing to it. We have Black politicians in our city bending over backwards to appease forces that are hostile, racist, and anti-Black. They are bending over backwards because these politicians believe that as elected officials they have an obligation to be conciliatory, to represent everybody. It is clear that if you represent everybody, you represent nobody. Because everybody may not necessarily have the same interests. So you "carve out the moral high ground." I suppose that's what David Dinkins is trying to do, carve out the moral high ground. He's trying to be above the fray. He's trying to be as conciliatory toward forces that hate us as Ed Koch was vicious toward us, having hated us at the same time. Ed Koch didn't make any bones about what he thought about Black folks. He said what he thought. Whenever somebody Black was killed he said, "He must've been robbing somebody." [...]

We have to take it to the streets. When we look at the films of the '60s, when we look at the struggle unfold in the '60s, there was always that fundamental beat in the street. It was always going on in the streets. Without that happening today, we are going to be subjected to definition by media. You can't win. Because they manufacture not only consent, they manufacture ideas. They are the masters at putting a spin on something. Madison Avenue pays individuals six-digit figures to figure out how to subliminally seduce people.

We are not up against a simple system that can be defeated only through debate of ideas. We have to begin to exert some serious force in this issue. Now I'm not an advocate of violence. I'm not an advocate of the mindless use of force. But I do think the judicious application of physical force can bring about a negotiated settlement of issues that are otherwise unresolvable. I think that once we have established that our children will no longer listen to us, then I think we will begin to listen to our children.

When we look at these forums on television we see individuals coming forward explaining reality. Some explain it very well. I imagine everyone's analysis has some legitimacy to it. I would hate to think that the people who are misusing and abusing the Black community are really stupid, rather than shrewd. Because that's telling on us if they're really stupid. After all, a broken clock is right twice every 24 hours. There is some legitimacy to some of the things that these individuals who exploit our situation are saying. That should not stop us from censoring them. We have to stop this hemorrhaging of

bullshit that is going on in the Black community. Excuse my language.

False Alliances vs. Progressive Alliances

We have to make it clear that people who put forth certain views in the community are not necessarily part of the progressive community or of our movement. They may be good Jewish leaders, like David Dinkins. I wouldn't doubt that he's an excellent Jewish leader. He's probably a very competent Italian leader, but as a Black leader he sucks. So, when he comes forward to speak in the Black community, we have to stage events that will hold him accountable, and if he refuses to be accountable, then run him out of here. Let him come with a notice. Let him say, "Look, I'm coming over to the auditorium tomorrow and please, I want us to all get together and talk about issues." There are important issues, such as Black political power in this city, and defending the integrity of the Black community. These are the issues we should be discussing. Don't let Dinkins just walk in, characterize the meeting, and play to the mass media; you know, like Al Sharpton does. He's very good at that. These individuals that I'm talking about would not enjoy the prestige they do today without the success of the Counterintelligence Program that targeted the Black community. Do you think that an Al Sharpton could have walked around in the 1960s doing what he's doing today?

Those of you who realize this has gotten out of hand must go to these events, challenge these people. Unless these people are recognized for what they are we will go nowhere. The debate has gotten to the point where we have to use any means necessary to make our point. We cannot let governors who plan to execute our political prisoners, like the governor of Pennsylvania, come to New York City and get away with it. We can't let foreign dignitaries who work with forces in this society who are racist, like Jonas Savimbi, come over here and get away with it. We cannot let fraternal movements, movements that we support with our blood and our sweat and our pain and our tears, ignore us and then turn around and say, "We're your friends," as the African National Congress did when our movement asked Mandela to mention the cases of Black political prisoners in the United States — just as the ANC showed the support to the Palestinians, just as they showed solidarity with other liberation movements around the world — and he didn't do it. We cannot let white folks get away with traveling all the way to Central America to support liberation movements, but not support Puerto Rican independence right here in the United States.

We have to become very clear about who our enemies are and who our friends are. We have to look at the Counterintelligence Program and how it worked. When they wanted

to stop the liberal support of organizations like the Black Panther Party, what did they do? They sent letters. They had a letter they called a Dear Irving letter. Irving was a fictitious Jewish Communist that the FBI thought up. They would have Irving send these letters to various influential people. This is what they did to Leonard Bernstein. Mr. Bernstein did a reception for the Panther 21, for the Black Panthers in 1970, and he had all of his rich white friends with their checkbooks come up to his penthouse and listen to a presentation by the field marshal of the Black Panther Party, Donald Cox, and the relatives of certain Panthers who were in prison. These people were so moved by the story of the Black Panther Party and what was happening in the Black community that they started writing out checks to the Black Panther Party. They started making donations to the Black Panther newspaper; they wanted to hear more.

The FBI heard about this and wrote a Dear Irving letter. They had an article by that Tom Wolfe, I think it was called "Radical Chic," reprinted and distributed across the country to academics and white liberals. The letters told them that they were Mau-Mauing with thugs, that they were enchanted with these Black Bushmen called Black Panthers. Real racist stuff. Dear Irving wrote a letter to the supporters of Leonard Bernstein that said, "Did you know that the Black Panthers hate Jews? And that the Black Panthers said in their personal and in their internal memorandums that they're going to shoot all the Jews?" Then all of the liberal support from the great Black-Jewish alliance began to dissipate. The enemy understood that the key to any progressive movement is how effective it can forge principled alliances with other progressive movements.

The Counterintelligence Program went after the natural allies of Black people. When a Jesse Jackson stands up and says that there's a historical alliance between Blacks and Jews, and that this historical alliance is suffering lately, Jesse knows better than that. This alliance has always suffered. The people that have suffered the most have been us. Whenever it became necessary to give up the interests of Black people in order to perpetuate narrow white skin privilege, they gave it up. When the labor movement was moving toward a serious socialization of labor in this society, and that hinged on the integration of Black labor, the giving of jobs to Black people and the development of training programs for jobs for Black people, these unions closed ranks on Black folks. You can hardly get a job in the construction business in this city today.

Alliances with white people have always disintegrated over the issue of their racism and their failure to subordinate their racism to Black leadership. The Counterintelligence Program, knowing this, played on that. Our problem today is not that we don't have con-

sciousness as a people. I believe that we have more race consciousness today than we had in the 1960s. I see men and women who are in their 60s and 70s that are race conscious. This is cultural consciousness, and it's stagnant right now because there is no revolutionary wing of our struggle to pull it forward, take it to the streets, and take it to a higher level. This is where we are at today.

COINTELPRO Continues

I urge you to read the book *The Judas Factor: The Plot to Kill Malcolm X*. It gives you an overview, and enables you to understand that the reason that Africa is the way it is, the reason that Asia is the way it is, and Latin American and Black people in this country are the way we are, is because the United States government and its allies have carried out a systematic program of assassination, criminalization, and murder of revolutionaries.

In closing, I want to say that this Counterintelligence Program is not something that's in the past. It's not something that's over with. After the Cointelpro operations were discovered in 1969 when some white peaceniks broke into an FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania, and discovered FBI documents headed Counterintelligence Program, and sent them to the New York Times, the government said it had stopped that program.

But they started another one. When they

went after the Black Panther Party, they went after it in an effort to split it down the middle into two factions. Because of our weaknesses, because of our ideological and organizational failures, they were successful. Once the government split the Panthers into two factions, it then went after the most revolutionary faction, and promoted the most reactionary. It left the most reactionary faction under Huey P. Newton intact. It went after what it termed the most radical and terroristic faction, which became the Black Liberation Army.

Many of you who do not know the history of the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army, should understand that the Black Liberation Army came out of the Black Panther Party as a consequence of the Counterintelligence Program's effectiveness in dividing the party. Those of us who were forced underground were hunted down, murdered, exiled, or imprisoned. The way they went about doing this was to criminalize the BLA, paint the BLA as terrorist, so that the mainstream Black community would not protect it. It was these same preachers who endorsed D'Amato, these same pork chop preachers, these same bootleg, jackleg politicians, these same individuals who came out and said that they supported the police and that these individuals who were killing the police did not represent the Black commu-

nity. They said that. This was because the criminalization program was so effective.

The only way you can destroy a movement is to stigmatize its leaders and followers as criminals. That's the sure way to destroy it. Once this happened with the BLA, they invented another program called Newkill, which stood for New York killing of police officers. It was under the guise of this Newkill program that they first developed a working relationship between the federal, state, and local police agencies that ultimately became what we know today as the Joint Anti-Terrorist Task Force, or JATTF. These are the individuals who today go after our freedom fighters throughout the world and work with British MI5 and MI6, and with the Israeli Massad and all of these other racist intelligence agencies. The repression of the '60s has a direct impact on where we are today.

In closing, I want to say that you have to try and support a struggle that will build an antirepressive movement in our community. We have to support our political prisoners because they are the casualties and captured comrades in our ongoing struggle for freedom. Support of the political prisoners sends a clear message to the government that we will not again abandon our comrades and our freedom fighters and we will not again be subjected to the type of counterintelligence programs that have permitted them to isolate courageous fighters and destroy them. □

The Judas Factor: The Plot to Kill Malcolm X by Karl Evanzz (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1992, 389 pages, \$22.95).

Reviewed by Lee DeNoyer

The book mentioned in Dhoruba bin Wahad's talk, *The Judas Factor: The Plot to Kill Malcolm X*, was written by Karl Evanzz, an African American journalist.

While the title might lead one to believe that the book goes no further than the intelligence community's involvement in the fate of Malcolm X, it could just as well serve as a

covert intelligence gathering against the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), and the SCLC, just to name a few.

Why were the "security" agencies of the U.S. government so preoccupied with Malcolm X? Perhaps the reason is that he was so effective, and the revolutionary themes he was known for were so far reaching.

This book provides much evidence to support the theory that the responsibility for the murder of Malcolm X lies in the hands of the U.S. government. Mr. Evanzz extensively documents the efforts of the intelligence community, mainly under the auspices of COINTELPRO, to hinder or counter Malcolm X's influence. *The Judas Factor* shows the reader just how serious an effort the intelligence agencies put forth in their surveillance of the dynamic Black leader. His quick rise within the Nation of Islam (NOI), and the accompanying growth of that organization, was a major concern to those agencies. His subsequent split with the NOI did not, as they had hoped, diminish his impact. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Malcolm X, who after a visit to Mecca called himself El Hajj Malik El Shabazz, became not only a national threat to the racist capitalist status quo with his organizations Muslim Mosque, Inc., and the OAAU, but an international threat as well with his support for Fidel

Castro and Che Guevara and the national liberation organizations and anticolonialist governments in Africa. These actions were the straw that prompted the intelligence agencies to give Malcolm X their full, and most ruthless, attention.

The main source of research for the author, a widely published freelance writer who has been employed by the *Washington Post*, is 300,000 pages of declassified FBI and CIA files. These files contain a wealth of intelligence gathering on "subjects" as various as the Honorable Elijah Muhammad of the Nation of Islam to Satahota Takahashi of Japan's Black Dragon Society, by methods that range from the tapping of phones to the intercepting of letters to the placing of agents inside the targeted organizations. In addition to the herculean task of sorting through these documents Evanzz rounds out his research with interviews, books on and biographies of Malcolm X, and printed articles from numerous magazines and newspapers, including *Muhammad Speaks*.

As a result the book, to Mr. Evanzz's credit, does not point the finger of guilt for the murder of Malcolm X. It doesn't need to. The documentation is there to convince the reader that, if nothing else: the CIA and the FBI are by no means above suspicion, they use extremely questionable methods of operating, and are not squeamish regarding brutal murder. □

Review:

The Judas Factor

reference guide to the activities of U.S. intelligence agencies from the time of Marcus Garvey and the mysterious "suicide" of Malcolm's father, through the heyday of the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover, to the early 1970s after the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This expose covers the activities of the FBI, the CIA, and other U.S. government organizations, including the backing of puppet governments in the Congo during the late 1950s and early '60s, the murder of Congo Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, infiltration of the Nation of Islam, and the use of

Marxism and Black Self-Determination In Reply to Peter Johnson

by Vera Wigglesworth and Jim Miles

It is hard today to see the liberation struggle of African Americans at the center of the coming American socialist revolution. Like the union movement, the Black movement has been in retreat, mired in the capitalist Democratic Party and consequently without independent organization and leadership. It is not surprising therefore that in the absence of a mass Black revolutionary movement to demonstrate otherwise, there is a tendency among some (if not most) revolutionary socialists to view the Black struggle as purely a fight against racism, rather than a fight for self-determination. There is a tendency to subsume the black struggle within the working class struggle rather than correctly anticipating it as a powerful, separate movement of national liberation that will play the vanguard role in the process that will be the socialist revolution.

Yet the struggle for self-determination is what will place African Americans at the forefront of confrontations with the bourgeoisie. The other reasons that are often given — that Blacks have traditionally been the most militant fighters; that their condition of oppression means they have nothing to lose and have fewer illusions than whites; or that, being overwhelmingly proletarian in number as well as experiencing special oppression as Blacks, they are impelled to play a vanguard role — all these are true enough. But the coming fight of African Americans will not simply be for freedom from oppression, for equality, for equal opportunity. It will be a fight for political power to bring about, secure, and advance those aims.

Throughout the history of African Americans, the impulse of self-determination was the force driving through slave revolts, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the civil rights movement. The victory of the civil rights fight for equal rights and desegregation was made possible only by the massive mobilization and independent self-organization of the Black masses.

Today, despite the civil rights victory, despite legislation guaranteeing formal equality, any Black of any class can still be pulled from his car and murdered or cruelly beaten with impunity by the police. (Incidents like the beating of Rodney King go on constantly; they just don't get the publicity that incident did.) Despite significant gains by the small Black middle class, the overall economic condition of Black workers has

worsened, and the income gap between white and Black workers has not decreased. The hard-won right of self-representation has so far only produced the election of Black capitalist-party politicians, which has failed to secure the gains of the civil rights movement or to advance economic equality.

Given the limitations of the civil rights victory — limitations already reflected in the rise of the Black Power movement of the late 1960s and early '70s — the question of self-determination as the fight for political power is posed more sharply. Political power is the only way to secure and expand the gains of the civil rights movement, using whatever means are necessary, up to and including the exercise of the ultimate democratic right, the right to form one's own state.

As the capitalist economic crisis deepens Black workers will certainly fight side by side with white workers to win certain particular demands. But Black people have something more on the agenda: a struggle to determine their own destiny that would encompass a fight for the means to secure that right — geographical boundaries, organization, and laws — with armed capabilities to defend and enforce them. Because of the continued superexploitation of Black labor, made possible by national oppression, the generally more advanced political consciousness of Black workers makes African Americans more likely to be the first to implement proletarian forms of organization and struggle. The first workers' councils will probably be Black, certainly led by Blacks and championing the interests not just of Black unionized workers but the entire Black community. Thus, it's the vanguard role of Black workers leading white workers in struggle and the successful conquest of political power by Black people that will ensure the successful conquest of power by the U.S. working class as a whole.

Regardless of what form such self-determination would take, the struggle for it would bring African Americans into direct confrontation with the ruling class of this country (for whom such a demand would be anathema) and, if won, would strike a heavy blow at the power of the bourgeoisie, registering a major advance for the working class as a whole — especially if supported by the rest of that class. This is where the revolutionary party will play a pivotal role. Will it lead the general labor movement on the question of



support to the right of Black self-determination? Or will it betray that potential alliance and objectively serve the interests of the ruling class by opposing or equivocating on self-determination?

Lenin and Trotsky forcefully emphasized the central strategic role of Black people in the American socialist revolution, always in terms of the fight for their right of self-determination and always vigorously opposing as mere lip service any other characterization of the Black liberation struggle. To understand why they fought to impart clarity on this question with such urgency, revolutionary socialists need to reconquer both the historic dynamics of the Black struggle and the principle of the right to self-determination of the oppressed. This is the central question of what Trotsky called the permanent or combined revolution in the U.S.

It is precisely on this question that Peter Johnson's article "Revolutionary Integrationism and Black Liberation," published in the February 1993 issue of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism (BIDOM)*, is most confused. Johnson's position consistently denies autonomy and independence to the Black liberation struggle and thus its vanguard role in the socialist revolution. This is a prescription for defeat, one that would set back the struggle against the very same racism that Johnson is a sincere opponent of.

Lenin and National Self-Determination

To see more clearly the implications of either a positive or negative stance toward Black self-determination, it is vital to review the Marxist approach to self-determination, successfully applied during the Bolshevik revo-

lution to the various nationalities held captive under the Russian tsar.

Lenin pioneered our understanding of self-determination; a handy resource, from which all the quotes below are taken, is *National Liberation, Socialism and Imperialism: Selected Writings by V.I. Lenin* (New York: International Publishers, 1970). In the years 1913 to 1922, Lenin answered virtually every question underlying doubts about the principle of self-determination, its applicability, and how it is distilled from the dynamics of class struggle.

How does Lenin define self-determination?

The right of nations to self-determination implies exclusively the right to independence in the political sense, the right to free political separation from the oppressor nation (*Lenin, National Liberation...*, p. 113).

Lenin felt it necessary to clearly define self-determination as a right of the oppressed because of the widespread confusion and equivocations on this question in the Russian revolutionary movement, particularly among socialists of the Russian oppressor nationality.

Maintaining that this right is a fundamental characteristic of proletarian democracy, Lenin explained:

"The right to self-determination" implies a democratic system of a type in which there is not only democracy in general, but specifically one in which there could not be an undemocratic solution of the question of secession. Democracy, speaking generally, is compatible with militant and tyrannical nationalism [of the oppressor nationality, that is]. The proletariat demands a democracy that rules out the forcible retention of any one of the nations within the bounds of the state (*ibid.*, emphasis in original).

Johnson's article recognizes the definition of self-determination as a right of the oppressed to political separation, acknowledges Blacks as racially oppressed, and yet denies their right to form a nation. Johnson simply declares, independently of what African Americans may feel or come to feel, "There is no Black nation in the U.S. today," and, "There is no possibility of Black national self-determination today" (*BIDOM*, February 1993, p. 20).

Defining his own point of view as "Revolutionary Integrationism," Johnson envisages

that the concrete goal of the struggle for Black liberation is to remove by revolutionary means the obstacles to Black equality and integration, so that Black people, individually and collectively, can decide how they want to participate in building socialism in a unified workers' state (*ibid.*, p. 18).

Denying the oppressed the right to self-determination in the present, Johnson postpones the question of self-determination for African Americans until after full social-

ism has been achieved and all oppression ended(!):

We can leave it to future generations that have grown up without political, social, or economic coercion to decide for themselves how they, as truly free people, will relate (*ibid.*, p. 21).

This otherwise empty statement has one significant content: no one gets to decide now how they will relate — which means the bourgeoisie will decide! Contrast this to the clarity Lenin provided when he warned the revolutionary party to:

...demand the liberation of oppressed nations in a clearly and precisely formulated political programme that takes special account of the hypocrisy and cowardice of socialists in the oppressor nations, and not in nebulous phrases, not in empty declamations and not by way of "relegating" the question until socialism has been achieved. In the same way as mankind can arrive at the abolition of classes only through a transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, it can arrive at the inevitable integration of nations only through a transition period of the complete emancipation of all oppressed nations, i.e., their freedom to secede (*Lenin, National Liberation...*, p. 114, emphasis added).

When objections were raised that secession of oppressed nationalities would obstruct working class unity, Lenin asserted quite the opposite:

The close alliance between the Norwegian and Swedish workers, their complete fraternal class solidarity, gained from the Swedish workers' recognition of the right of Norwegians to secede. This convinced the Norwegian workers that the Swedish workers were not infected with Swedish nationalism, and that they placed fraternity with the Norwegian proletarians above the privileges of the Swedish bourgeoisie and aristocracy (*ibid.*, p. 79).

There is no way that during the fight for and building of socialism the question of self-determination will become irrelevant. As Lenin put it,

the necessity to proclaim and grant liberty to all oppressed peoples (i.e., their right to self-determination) will be as urgent in the socialist revolution as it was for the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution... (*ibid.*, p. 120).

In fact, the more proletarian in composition the movement against the bourgeoisie is, the more national self-determination applies:

The more purely proletarian the struggle against the general imperialist front now is, the more vital, obviously, is the internationalist principle: "No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations" (*ibid.*, p. 147).

The tasks of the proletariat of the ruling nations [Western Europe and the United States] are the same as those of the proletariat in England in the nineteenth century in relation to Ireland (*ibid.*, p. 118).

In Lenin's opinion, revolutionary socialists should not recoil from "this most advanced democratic demand" (that is, self-determination) simply because of the presence of petty-bourgeois or backward elements in the nationalist movement of the oppressed. He reasoned as follows:

To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations..., without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian mass — to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution...

Lenin called "ridiculously pedantic" a view of socialist revolution such as the following:

[One] army lines up in one place and says, "We are for socialism," and another, somewhere else says, "We are for imperialism," and that will be a socialist revolution!

Whoever expects a "pure" social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is.

The socialist revolution in Europe cannot be anything other than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all and sundry oppressed and discontented elements... But objectively they will attack capital, and the class-conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat, expressing this objective truth... will be able to unite and direct it, capture power, seize the banks, expropriate the trusts... measures which in their totality will amount to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of socialism (*ibid.*, pp. 160-161).

The only demand appropriate for workers of the oppressor nationality is one that is to be lodged against its bourgeoisie — the demand for self-determination of the oppressed. The only workers who have any standing to call for "integration" are the oppressed themselves.

People who have not gone into the question thoroughly think that it is "contradictory" for the Social-Democrats of oppressor nations to insist on the "freedom to secede," while Social-Democrats of oppressed nations insist on the "freedom to integrate." However, a little reflection will show that there is not, and cannot be, any other road to internationalism and the amalgamation of nations, any other road from the given situation to this goal (*ibid.*, p. 152).

Of particular importance to Lenin was combating the notion that separation of a national minority is "impractical" or "unlikely." Such considerations, compromising a clear support of self-determination, he viewed as downright national prejudice (what we today would call racist in relation to the question of Black secession). The position that separation is utopian

reveals a defect common to the socialists of the dominant nations... their echoing of the prejudices acquired from the bourgeoisie of the dominant nation (*ibid.*, p. 85).

Lenin stressed that

to brush aside the mass national movements once they have started, and to refuse to support what is progressive in them means, in effect, pandering to nationalistic prejudices, that is, recognizing "one's own nation" as a model nation (or, we would add, one possessing the exclusive privilege of forming a state) (p. 87).

Lenin also considered it important to see early efforts at self-organization as a necessary step along the road to emancipation of the oppressed:

Incidentally, autonomy, as a reform, differs in principle from freedom to secede, as a revolutionary measure. This is unquestionable. But as everyone knows, in practice a reform is often merely a step towards revolution. It is autonomy that enables a nation forcibly retained within the boundaries of a given state to crystallise into a nation, to gather, assess and organise its forces, and to select the most opportune moment for a declaration [of independence]... (p. 149).

Lenin's final thoughts on self-determination admonished that

the fundamental interest of proletarian solidarity, and consequently of the proletarian class struggle, requires that we never adopt a formal attitude to the national question, but always take into account the specific attitude of the proletariat of the oppressed (or small) nation toward the oppressor (or great) nation (p. 168).

Stalin vs. Materialism and the Dialectical Method

Despite the clear leadership provided by Lenin, unclarity still plagues discussion on Black self-determination today. One reason is an insufficient grounding of analysis in a serious study of past theoretical conquests and practice. Flowing from this is a certain formalism Lenin alluded to, that takes the form of abstract criteria or schematic conceptions rigidly applied to living dynamic processes.

The perspective outlined in the "Revolutionary Integrationism" article is based on the premise that a separate state for African Americans is undesirable. It begins the case for this by arguing that Blacks are not a nation; it develops this line by declaring a Black nation is unlikely to develop; and it concludes by saying that revolutionaries should oppose secession if African Americans were to actually attempt it. The article makes no mention of the revolutionary dynamics of the self-determination struggle by the oppressed.

The program advanced in Johnson's article is: to remove "by revolutionary means the obstacles to Black equality and integration, so that Black people, individually and collectively can decide how they want to participate in building socialism in a unified workers' state." This complete and unequivocal negation of the right to self-determination stems from first, a mechanical approach to the ques-

tion of the Black nationality, and secondly, a failure to understand the principle of self-determination and its class struggle dynamic.

Johnson insists that the definitive Marxist statement on the national question is embodied in the following 1913 definition by Joseph Stalin, using it to support his own contention, "There is no Black nation in the U.S. today."

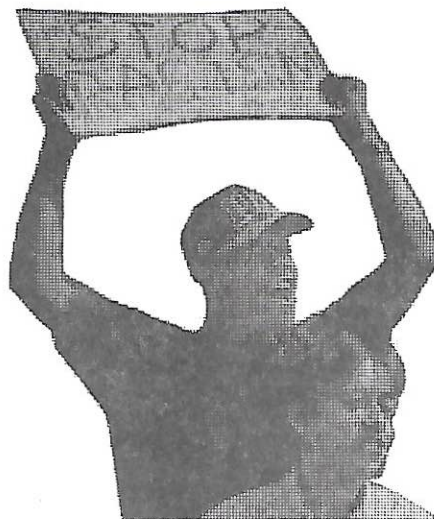
A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.

It goes without saying that a nation, like every historical phenomenon, is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end.

It must be emphasized that none of the above characteristics taken separately is sufficient to define a nation. More than that, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation.

Since Johnson cites Trotsky's "praise" of this article as Stalin's "one and only" theoretical work, to prove its "validity," we should note that Trotsky also said the article was "not devoid of pedantry...due most likely to the influence of Bukharin," whose views Lenin thought "can be classified as fully Marxist only with great reserve," since Bukharin "has never made a study of dialectics and, I think, never fully understood it" (see Trotsky, Stalin, Stein and Day, 1967, p. 158; and Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism, Pathfinder, 1975, p. 65). This pedantry, without the benefit of scholarship, characterized all of Stalin's works, both before and after he usurped power.

Stalin's definition of a nation has the same limitations as any definition of a living, evolving reality. After recognizing the "law of change" in the second paragraph, Stalin negates it in the third paragraph claiming "it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation." This undialectical approach was alien to the real method of both Lenin



and Trotsky. In this one statement (which is key to Johnson's argument) Stalin ignores a fundamental principle of Marxist dialectics, that all phenomena in the universe are in a ceaseless state of coming into existence and passing away. In the process of their birth, nations may not yet possess all the characteristics enumerated by Stalin. Thus they may simultaneously be both themselves, an oppressed minority, and something other than "themselves," a nation in becoming. This contradiction between what they "are" and what they may fully become can only be resolved by a struggle between themselves and their oppressors, a struggle whose outcome is not inevitable or predetermined.

Not only may a nation being born be without all the characteristics enumerated by Stalin, any nationality can be missing many of these features and still constitute a nation. It is not the criteria that create a nation, but consciousness. Consciousness of course has a material basis. Understanding this material basis will help us in turn to understand Black national consciousness. It is interesting to note that Johnson fails to give a materialist analysis of whether African Americans do or do not possess any of the "national" characteristics enumerated below.

A Common Language: In 1933 Trotsky raised the following objections to the views of the American comrades, who insisted that Blacks had no separate language or religion (culture) and were therefore not a nation:

[One] could say for example that Belgium has no rights as a nation. The Belgians are Catholic and a large section of them speak French. What if France wanted to annex them with such an argument? Also the Swiss people, through their historical connections, feel themselves to be one nation despite different languages and religions. An abstract criterion is not decisive in this question; far more decisive is the historical consciousness of a group, their feelings, their impulses. But that too is not determined accidentally but rather by the situation and all the attendant circumstances. (See *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, p. 28, emphasis added.)

The situation and attendant circumstances that created a separate Black English language were the survival and resistance of West Africans and their descendants under, first, centuries of slavery and, then, the subsequent oppression of Ku Klux Klan terror, segregation, and ghettoization after the Civil War. Unlike the American comrades, Trotsky himself was

"not sure if the Negroes in the South do not speak their own Negro language" and advised "the American comrades to study this question very seriously" (ibid. p. 26).

Thus, with little direct experience with Black Americans, Trotsky was able to understand that Blacks have always used a language that allowed them to talk freely among themselves while concealing their real discussion from their white oppressors. A simple

example of such cultural and linguistic differences is related by Malcolm X in the following story from his autobiography.

After a Harlem street rally, one of these downtown "leaders" and I were talking when we were approached by a Harlem hustler. To my knowledge I'd never seen this hustler before; he said to me approximately: "Hey, baby! I dig you holding this all-originals scene at the track...I'm going to lay a vine under the Jew's balls for a dime — got to give you a play...Got the shorts out here trying to scuffle up on some bread...Well, my man, I'll get on, got to go peck a little, and cop some z's —" And the hustler went on up Seventh Avenue.

I would never have given it another thought, except that this downtown "leader" was standing, staring after that hustler, looking as if he'd just heard Sanskrit. He asked what had been said, and I told him. The hustler had said he was aware that the Muslims were holding an all-black bazaar at Rockland Palace, which is primarily a dance hall. The hustler intended to pawn a suit for ten dollars to attend and patronize the bazaar. He had very little money but he was trying hard to make some. He was going to eat, then he would get some sleep. (See *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, New York, 1964, p. 310.)

A Common Culture: This does not need explanation. Can anyone today seriously deny the rich and unique contributions of African American literature, music, art, theatre, and customs?

A Common Territory: African Americans have always had a common territory, the U.S. itself. Only the predominant regional basis has shifted from the relatively contiguous rural South to the noncontiguous urban industrial ghettos. But Blacks have no control over the territory they occupy. The presence of the white American state in their territory is one of outright repression, lacking even the pretense of protection of community interests espoused for white communities. Defenders of the democratic pretensions of bourgeois ideology deny that the police, courts, and laws of this society constitute an alien state force in the Black community.

A Common Economic Life: Since the first day of their arrival on this continent, Blacks have shared a common economic condition which has been a determining feature of the Black nationality, evolving with the development of capitalism. For hundreds of years the overwhelming majority of Blacks were slaves. From the Civil War up until the First World War most Blacks remained sharecroppers in the rural south. During and after the Second World War, the basis of Black economic life shifted to the industry and urban ghettos of the North.

A common economic life, though dominated by the white institutions of capital, has always existed in the form of services providing a structure of support in local communities: medical care, schooling, churches, child care, funeral homes, insurance and

banking, legal assistance, personal grooming, and entertainment. Necessitated by segregation, but also historically a matter of preference in the Black community, Black services have until the past few decades been the only means for Black doctors, lawyers, and teachers, for example, to practice their profession or for Black enterprises to develop. A common economic life free of control by the white ruling class, putting African American needs before profit, would be a product of a victorious fight for self-determination.

An Historically Constituted, Stable Community of People: This should be obvious to all. Africans were forcibly brought to North America in the millions and have never since disappeared into the white ethnic "melting pot" of capitalist America. Nor are they likely to. Since the end of Radical Reconstruction, cultivation of racist ideology has been central to the maintenance of the ruling class's superprofits, derived from the superexploitation of Black labor and the preservation of an enormous reserve army of unemployed Black workers. In the meantime, African Americans have banded together and will continue to do so for survival, political action, mutual support, and cultural achievement.

Unfortunately "Revolutionary Integrationism" denies all of these foundations of Black national consciousness. Far from providing a materialist basis for analyzing the question of Black self-determination, the Johnson article's mechanical application of Stalin's pedantic definition leads to outright denial of the living material reality of the African American nationality — a denial shared by the American bourgeoisie and all backward elements of this society. It is not surprising that despite the rich literature provided by Lenin and Trotsky on the question of self-determination, a Stalin quote is used to deny this right to African Americans. Stalin, in the process of his political overthrow of the Russian revolution, became the chief architect of the Soviet "prisonhouse of nations," forcibly "integrating" within the Soviet state the many nations oppressed under the tsar, in violation of the intentions and plans of the Bolsheviks. It was precisely upon the question of the treatment of oppressed nationalities that Lenin began his political break with Stalin just before his death.

The legacy of Stalinist policy on the national question today is the genocidal war of "ethnic cleansing" in the former Yugoslavia and the national wars in the former Soviet Union.

Did Trotsky Revise His Position on Self-Determination?

Aside from implying that by 1940 Trotsky suddenly and uncritically endorsed Stalin's rigid criteria for nationhood, Johnson claims that by 1939 Trotsky had reversed his posi-

tion favoring Black self-determination: "Trotsky no longer held the CP/USA position of raising the slogan of national self-determination for the 'black belt' South. He agreed with Johnson's [C.L.R. James's] formulation."

As Evelyn Sell pointed out in her excellent contribution last December, the Stalinist position was a violation of self-determination, a position that Trotsky never held, of deciding for Blacks that they must have a separate state and even dictating where that state should be. In the 1933 discussion Trotsky made this clear:

We of course do not obligate the Negroes to become a nation; whether they are is a question of their consciousness, that is, what they desire and what they strive for (*Trotsky On Black Nationalism*, p. 24, emphasis added).

As to how "likely" self-determination would be, Trotsky remarked,

If the Negroes do not at present demand self-determination it is of course for the same reason that the white workers do not yet advance the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat (*ibid.*, p. 29).

Trotsky believed it vital for the revolutionary party to carry on

an uncompromising, merciless struggle not against the supposed national prepossessions of the Negroes, but against the colossal prejudices of the white workers and make no concessions to them whatever (*ibid.*, p. 30, emphasis added).

Did Trotsky renounce these positions by 1939? On the contrary, Trotsky countered C.L.R. James's continued insistence that the very idea of Black self-determination was "reactionary" by strongly asserting the opposite:

We are ready to help them [Blacks] if they want it [self-determination]. As a party we can remain absolutely neutral on this. We cannot say it will be reactionary. It is not reactionary. We cannot tell them to set up a state because that will weaken imperialism and so will be good for us, the white workers. That would be against internationalism itself. We cannot say to them, "Stay here, even at the price of economic progress." We can say, "It is for you to decide. If you wish to take a part of the country, it is all right, but we do not wish to make the decision for you" (*ibid.*, p. 45).

To counter C.L.R. James's lukewarm formulation of the self-determination position, Trotsky stressed once again the revolutionary potential of Black nationalism:

To fight for the possibility of realizing an independent state is a sign of great moral and political awakening. It would be a tremendous revolutionary step. This ascendancy would immediately have the best economic consequences (*ibid.*, p. 48).

Trotsky's actual evolution on the question of Black nationalism was best summed up by the veteran Black Trotskyist Larry Stewart. During Lenin's lifetime Trotsky had not yet

recognized the national aspects of the Black struggle. But after 1928 Trotsky

began to mobilize support for Lenin's policy [on Black self-determination], which was different from both the original [1920–22] Comintern position [rejection of Black self-determination] and the distortion introduced in 1928 [by Stalin, that a Black nation must come into existence in the South].

Trotsky didn't merely continue the Comintern's work in the 1930's — he revived Lenin's policy on U.S. Blacks and helped to make it part of the program of the SWP [Socialists Workers Party] and FI [Fourth International], which it had never been in either the Leninist Comintern or the Stalinized Comintern. (*Revolutionary Principles and Working-Class Democracy*, FIT, 1992, pp. 317–318.)

George Breitman and Black Nationalism

Another manifestation of the "Revolutionary Integrationism" article's failure to grasp the class struggle dynamic of Black self-determination is its allegation that George Breitman sharply revised "in a nationalist direction" the Socialist Workers Party's position on Black Liberation in the 1969 SWP resolution "A Transitional Program for Black Liberation." Johnson contends that the document revised the SWP position on four points.

"First," Johnson claims, "Blacks in the U.S. are identified as 'an oppressed nationality.' This is presented as a reality rather than a future possibility."

But the SWP was not the first to make this identification. Lenin in 1917, had already referred to Blacks in the U.S. as an "oppressed nation."

In the United States, the Negroes...account for only 11.1 per cent. They should be classed as an oppressed nation, for the equality won in the Civil War of 1861–65 and guaranteed by the Constitution of the republic was increasingly curtailed in the chief Negro areas (the South) (*Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 23*, p. 275).

Note carefully what Lenin's criteria are here for defining Blacks as a nation: an oppressed minority denied equality! Additionally, Lenin's 1920 draft of the "Preliminary Theses on the National and Colonial Questions" for the Second Congress of the Communist International contained the following:

[All] Communist parties should render direct aid to the revolutionary movements among the dependent and underprivileged nations (for example, Ireland, the American Negroes, etc.) and in the colonies (*ibid.*, Vol. 31, p. 148).

The Johnson article's second claim is that in the 1969 SWP resolution, "'self-determination' is presented as the goal of the 'nationalist' aspect of the Black liberation struggle, rather than a possible future goal."

Of course! It is automatically appropriate for self-determination to be the goal of the

oppressed. The reality the Johnson article bypassed is that by 1969 it was the goal of millions of Blacks. In 1970 the SWP noted the following:

One measure of the immense rise in nationalist consciousness has been the recent Newsweek survey showing that one-fifth of the Afro-Americans now believe that the only way they can achieve real progress is through the establishment of a separate Black nation. This mass separatist sentiment is the clearest single sign of wholesale rejection of illusions about the future of capitalist America (*Towards an American Socialist Revolution*, Pathfinder, 1971, pp. 163–164).

The 1969 resolution was perfectly in accord with the 1939 resolution for it recognized an unfolding reality which the earlier resolution could only anticipate: "The question of whether the Negroes in America are a national minority to which the slogan of self-determination applies will be solved in practice. The raising or support of the slogan by the masses of Negroes will be the best and only proof required" (SWP 1939 resolution, cited in Trotsky on Black Nationalism, p.77, emphasis added).

"Third," Johnson claims, "'self-determination' is advocated by the SWP, rather than held as a possible future slogan" (emphasis added).

As above, Johnson confuses support for the right of self-determination with the act of self-determination. The SWP had always advocated the right of Blacks to secede, as was its revolutionary obligation. But such advocacy also means support to the exercise of that right when (and only when) an oppressed nationality chooses to exercise it. The 1939 SWP resolution not only allowed for the possibility of advocating self-determination once Blacks raised it themselves but also provided for another possibility:

Negro members of the Fourth International...must recognize the progressive and revolutionary character of any demand unfolding among great masses of Negroes for a Negro state, and if necessary advocate it (*ibid.*, p. 78, emphasis added).

Towards National Cultural Autonomy or Political Rule by the Black Working Class?

"Finally," and to Johnson this is "most revealing,"

"self-determination" is redefined. It is no longer used in the Marxist sense of the decision by a nation whether to secede and form a separate state, but rather in the "Bundist" sense of "control of the Black communities and all the institutions within them" (*BIDOM*, February 1993, p. 19).

Unfortunately Johnson does not enlighten us as to the term "Bundist," a reference to the ethnic doctrine and political strategy of the General Jewish Workers Union (Bund) of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia. The Bund's 1901 program of "National Cultural Autonomy" was a proposed general legal

framework for Jewish educational institutions, courts, and cultural life within and throughout the Russian Empire (see Peter Buch's introduction to Leon Trotsky on the Jewish Question, Pathfinder, 1970, p. 6). Lenin vigorously polemicized against the Bund's strategy of relying on the chauvinistic, undemocratic tsarist state system to secure reforms, which the Bund counterposed to self-determination and the right of secession in general.

What does the Bund's reformist schema have to do with a transitional revolutionary strategy for Black working class control of the Black community in the U.S.? Absolutely nothing.

The 1969 SWP resolution recognized the reality and revolutionary potential of a widespread movement among Blacks for "community control" and offered the following democratic and transitional demands to advance the struggle;

1. Replace police occupation of the black community with a community-controlled police force drawn from residents of the community.
2. Black control of all government funds allocated to the black community and control over all plans for renovating and constructing housing and other communal facilities and improvements.
3. Community control over all institutions in the black community, such as hospitals, welfare centers, libraries, etc.
4. Establish community councils to make policy decisions and administer the affairs of the black community. These councils should be composed of representatives elected by workers in various community institutions — factories, hospitals, educational institutions — as well as delegates elected on a block basis.

The local councils or boards of control should be joined together on regional, state and national levels, the aim being to create a National Council of Black Communities. This should be composed of elected, not appointed, delegates representing the local constituencies.

Such a National Council could work out common policies and speak with one voice on all matters affecting the communities as a whole and their relations with all other forces and agencies. It would thus exercise far more authority than any single community could. To prevent the National Council from bureaucratic usurpation of power, elections should be held regularly and delegates should be subject to recall at any time so that they remain under the control of the local committees they represent (*The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, 1973, p. 169, emphasis added).

For Black workers to take control of the Black community away from the white capitalists through community councils based on factories and workplaces as well as neighborhood blocks, and then affiliate to a National Council of Black Communities, as the resolution suggested, would have been a profoundly revolutionary act and challenge to the capitalist state. It would not only have

been a transitional step toward a separate Black nation with or without contiguous borders, if African Americans so chose, but would have posed the establishment of a Black state of the Paris Commune or soviet type, the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., political rule by the working class through democratically elected workers councils.

Permanent Revolution and Transitional Demands

Trotsky foresaw even in the conditions of the 1930s the possible emergence of a black workers' state prior to victory by the American working class as a whole. Considering that "the self-determination of the Negroes belongs to the question of the permanent revolution in America," Trotsky declared:

It is very possible that the Negroes will proceed through self-determination to the proletarian dictatorship in a couple of gigantic strides, ahead of the great bloc of white workers. They will then be the vanguard (*Trotsky, ibid.*, pp. 25, 30).

With the massive migrations of Blacks to the urban industrial North during World War II, Trotsky's insight proves even more clear: the national oppression of Black workers forces them to assume proletarian forms of organization and struggle sooner than the white workers.

Thus will the African American national struggle "grow over" into combination with the socialist revolution, the seizure of political power by the working class. Far from revising its program, Breitman helped lead the SWP in applying the transitional method to the Black fight for self-determination by building a bridge between the African American national democratic revolution and the socialist revolution through the advancement of

a system of transitional demands, the essence of which is contained in the fact that ever more openly and decisively they will be directed against the very bases of the bourgeois regime. The old "minimum program" is superseded by the transitional program, the task of which lies in systematic mobilization of the masses for the proletarian revolution (*Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, 1973, p. 76).

Clearly, the 1969 resolution, drafted by Breitman, stands in direct continuity with the SWP's 1939 resolution, revealing a genuinely materialist response to political developments in the African American community. These developments received their clearest political expression in the evolution of the Black nationalist leader Malcolm X, who although not yet a Marxist, was already a revolutionary internationalist and pro-socialist at the time of his assassination.

Malcolm X's example demonstrated that consistent nationalism of the oppressed leads to revolutionary conclusions.

Integration vs. Equality and Self-Determination

Only through their own initiative, self-organization and independent political action, have African Americans conquered any democratic rights at all in this country. From the very beginning of the Civil War Blacks forced the issue of their right to fight for their own freedom, assuring the destruction of slavery through the brave fight of 200,000 Black soldiers. On that basis they eventually won a fight for political power in the South following the Civil War. Blacks then lost power in the counterrevolution that overthrew Radical Reconstruction. This loss of political power resulted in the loss of Black equality, which African Americans fought to recover a century later through the civil rights movement.

What the Black masses demanded in the civil rights movement was desegregation, not integration. What they expressed was not a desire to sit next to whites, to use white restrooms, to live in white neighborhoods, but a demand for the democratic right to be treated equally, to have equal access to the resources and facilities of this society.

Integrationism was the perspective of white liberals and "Uncle Toms" prior to and during the civil rights movement. It was a failed perspective that sought to demobilize and subordinate Black independent political action to dependence upon white liberal "leaders". But Blacks couldn't wait upon whites to recognize segregation as wrong in order to end it. A nationwide consensus that segregation was wrong came after Blacks initiated, built, and led a movement to destroy Jim Crow. In similar fashion workers forced the issue of a higher standard of living not by waiting until the capitalists recognized workers' need for it or the 8-hour day, but by winning it.

You don't even hear the word integration any more, not only because of the victory of the civil rights movement but the inherently degrading feel of the word, thanks to the impact of the Black Power movement. "Integrationism" is a backward term, because it arose during, and now looks back to, the time before Blacks overthrew Jim Crow.

Inherent in the "revolutionary integrationist" perspective is the idea that somehow the prejudices of white workers will be resolved during the course of a struggle for socialism which will "remove by revolutionary means the obstacles to equality." But why would blacks want to join with those that deny their right to be recognized as a people, a nationality? They would rightly recognize such a denial as a denial of equality. No unity would be possible. Just as in the Civil Rights movement, Blacks will not wait until whites recognize them as equals to carry out tasks of national self-determination. If they did, equality would never happen. Would there have been a retrial of the cops who assaulted Rodney King last year if there had been no

massive Black social explosion in L.A. and other cities?

Equality will come about in this manner: Blacks in concerted self-determining action, up to and possibly including separation, will force equality. Equality is more than just a mere perception or an equal share of resources or even of opportunity. It is the equal right to be free of dependent status, the right to determine one's own destiny. To deny the living reality of the African American nationality is to deny the depth and significance of their experience in North America and the explosive force they will become in the opening of the socialist revolution.

Which Side Are We On?

The position that revolutionary socialists take on the right of African Americans to self-determination has everything to do with a strategy for victorious socialist revolution. We must ask ourselves: "Whose interests will be served? What direction of motion would be encouraged? What dynamic would be reinforced?"

If African Americans agitate for self-determination, which layer of white workers: progressive, or reactionary, would feel threatened? If revolutionary socialists worry about class unity in regard to this question, which layer would we be adapting to and encouraging? What would happen to class unity if Black workers have to battle white workers for self-determination? And if, in avoiding our difficult responsibility to advance the consciousness of white workers, we tell Blacks to subordinate their democratic demand to the backwardness of white workers, how would we be any different than the reformists who throughout African American history have obstructed Black independent action with their hand wringing about "alienating white people" — and the ruling class.

Rather than being concerned, as Johnson is, about "what we tell Black workers," our main task is educating white workers, since it is for this sector that the most distance must be traveled along the road to class solidarity:

In the internationalist education of the workers of the oppressor countries, emphasis must necessarily be laid on their advocating freedom for the oppressed countries to secede and their fighting for it. Without this there can be no internationalism. It is our right and duty to treat every Social-Democrat of an oppressor nation who fails to conduct such propaganda as a scoundrel and an imperialist. This is an absolute demand, even where the chance of secession being possible and "practicable" before the introduction of socialism is only one in a thousand. (*Lenin*, p. 151, emphasis in original.)

The route to a free and voluntary association of nations on the basis of equality will probably pass through a transition period of separation that coincides, more or less, with the withering away of all national states.

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New York Union Boss Leaves Teamsters

by Frank Lovell

Federal investigators disclosed April 12 that Barry Feinstein, longtime president of Local 237 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, had agreed to resign. His resignation resulted from plea bargaining to escape prosecution.

Feinstein was accused of embezzling and misusing union funds in the amount of at least a half-million dollars, illegally appropriated to maintain his Manhattan penthouse apartment, for travel expenses and other personal matters. As part of the deal with the government to drop charges, Feinstein agreed to repay \$104,000 to Local 237. He will be allowed to collect his full pension in an undisclosed amount upon retirement. At age 58 Feinstein qualifies for early retirement.

According to the *New York Times* account, lawyers for Feinstein and government investigators agreed that his pension could not be touched even if he went to trial and was found guilty on all counts. "They noted that his pension was vested and that the court-appointed administrator of the union, Frederick B. Lacey, lacked the authority to reduce it," the *Times* reported.

As part of the deal Local 237's executive board agrees to disclose to the union membership all compensation and expenses paid to officials. Feinstein's yearly salary was \$200,000 from Local 237, and he was on other payrolls as well.

All terms of this latest deal must be approved by Judge David Edelstein of Federal District Court in Manhattan before it becomes final. An earlier deal, much more favorable to Feinstein, was rejected by Federal administrator Lacey who exercises control over Teamster union affairs where

corruption is involved. This time Lacey approved the deal and allowed it to go to the district court for final approval.

Most union observers recognize that Feinstein has squirmed out of the fix he was in with the least possible damage to his false image as a "tough union negotiator." He served during the 1980s as the "senior statesman" for the unions representing municipal employees, and as such made friends in high positions. All speak well of Feinstein and regret his absence in future labor negotiations. Felix Rohatyn, the investment banker who chairs the Municipal Assistance Corporation, was quoted as saying, "You could always talk to Barry ultimately about the reality of the situation, and do it privately and dispassionately."

The *Times* story on Feinstein's departure from the labor scene tells an other reason for his popularity among top circles of the ruling class: "He was one of the first labor leaders to support Mayor David N. Dinkins in 1989, and in the state political arena he was the chief lobbyist for an alliance of state and municipal unions that has doled out \$500,000 in political contributions in the last seven years."

The following is excerpted from an article in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* No. 93, February 1992, "The transformation of the Teamsters Union."

In New York City...Barry Feinstein, head of Teamsters Local 237, remains silent. He is the beneficiary of a carefully cultivated system of connections in the local labor movement, in city government, and among sectors of the employing class. He inherited his position as head of Local 237 from his father who

organized a breakaway from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) to get a Teamster charter in 1952. Since then Teamster Local 237 has been a factor in city and union politics, and has played a role inside the teamsters international in support of the old system.

In 1980 Barry Feinstein faced a State Investigation Commission probe. It revealed that two of Feinstein's associates, Calvin Winick and William Wallach, looted the local union welfare fund over an eight-year period, through excessive commissions, phantom contacts, and double billings. Feinstein escaped criminal charges of collusion in the matter. But the commission called for his ouster as the fund's chairman, citing "clear evidence" of complicity.

Feinstein's wife, Maggie, was on the Teamster payroll (\$60,000 per annum) until her death last August. She was the founder in 1980 of Local 237's Retiree Division, also director of the Women's Division.

At the 1986 Teamster convention in Las Vegas, Feinstein delivered a laudatory speech in support of (then) international president Jackie Presser against government charges of racketeering. "When one of us is under attack," Feinstein thundered, "our family joins hands and forms a bond that the media cannot break, that government cannot break, that no man can break." In this way he identified himself with the interests of the mob and sought to demonstrate his usefulness to it. He was a candidate for vice president on the Shea slate (in the 1991 Teamster election), and is solidly ensconced in the leadership of the Teamsters Eastern region. Feinstein is not one to quickly relinquish his six-figure paycheck and the extra benefits attached.

Anti-Choice Terrorists Escalate Violence

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to interference through physical conduct" in situations where women are seeking abortions. Not enough!

Even passage of abortion-rights legislation is not enough! Three major bills are currently pending in Congress: the Freedom of Choice Act, the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, and repeal of the Hyde Amendment, the measure which has prohibited almost all federal funding for abortions. For five years, physical attacks on clinics have been carried out by foes of abortion rights. Their actions have repeatedly shown their disregard for court rulings and existing laws. In fact, their terrorist tactics have escalated steadily. The most recent addition to their arsenal of weap-

ons is the use of butyric acid, a chemical which induces vomiting and dizziness. On March 9, the day before Dr. Gunn's assassination, five San Diego clinics were sprayed with the chemical. Four women were hospitalized. Pregnant women were endangered, and many hundreds of persons were exposed to lingering fumes.

The availability of safe, legal abortions has been drastically cut as a result of the combined efforts of anti-abortion terrorists, legislators, U.S. presidents, and judges. A 1990 study by the Alan Guttmacher Institute revealed that there were no abortion facilities in 50 percent of U.S. urban counties and 93 percent of rural counties; also, the number of doctors, hospitals, and clinics providing

abortions dropped 11 percent between 1982 and 1988. A recent study by Columbia University found that 47 percent of graduating obstetricians and gynecologists had never performed a first-trimester abortion. Abortion rights supporters should fight vigorously for appropriate laws, governmental funding, and protection from terrorists. But this is not enough, given the lack of available health care providers and facilities.

It's not enough to increase the numbers of trained medical personnel and health care facilities. According to the National Abortion Federation, 122 acts of violence against clinics and staffs have taken place during 1993 — that is, in less than three months! This statistic becomes even more ominous in light

of boldly publicized plans of anti-abortion groups.

"Operation Rescue is training more foot soldiers for its battle against abortion," a reporter explained at the beginning of the March 26 "America Close Up" segment of NBC's national television news program. The report showed Keith Tucci, executive director of Operation Rescue National, leading a twelve-week course involving students from nineteen states. Tucci said, "Private investigators are teaching us how to get all available information about people [clinic staff and patients]."

The TV report provided examples of OR tactics. A clinic director quoted a message received on the clinic's speaker phone: "God is going to get you, and you're going to get waxed tonight." One of the doctors, who quit after Dr. Gunn's murder, told the TV inter-

viewer, "I had one of the activists pull up next to me in his pickup truck, point his finger at me, like he was shooting *me*." The thirteen-year-old son of a clinic employee described how he was pressured by an OR trainee: "She said, 'You and your mother are going to burn in hell.' I dreamt that all my friends and I and my mother were all in a fiery place and our skin was melting."

Also on March 26, CNN cable news reported on an OR "impact team" being trained in Palm Bay, Florida. The twenty-two students from around the country will be graduated Easter week, and the next "impact team" will receive training this summer in Minneapolis. The news report included a portion of a trial about OR's actions against a Sanford, Florida, clinic. One female staff member was shown testifying in tears as she described harassment at home and at work,

and the constant fear she felt. Katherine Spillar, from the Feminist Majority Foundation, told a CNN reporter about the tactics used by anti-abortion activists: "They're trespassing onto private homes, knocking on front doors. As the family enters the home, they're photographing and videotaping. They're talking to their neighbors. They're passing out literature that accuses these people of killing babies and being murderers."

All abortion rights supporters and all women's rights advocates must become involved in the massive campaign which must be organized to counter the anti-abortion campaigns already underway as well as the threatened escalations of intimidations and violence. □

March 27, 1993

Martin Luther King Remembered

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The United States claims to have lost 148 people. That may be true, or it may not be true, but although we didn't lose many, we have to mourn each of those lives. We have to recognize that a majority of the 148 died from what we euphemistically call friendly fire. We fired between 55,000 and 56,000 missiles, and some hit our own people. We left 50 tons of depleted uranium in Iraq, which will create deadly radiation there for hundreds of thousands of years. Given the average casualty rate from World War II to the beginning of the Persian Gulf war, we lost fewer aircraft in that "war" than we lost in war games (in which live ammunition was not used) during that period. We didn't have a single tank or armored vehicle hit by enemy fire. There was no conflict. We showed that from afar we can destroy a country without setting foot on it.

We destroyed their water system and tens of thousands died from polluted water. We destroyed their food system from farm to market, including farm markets. Missiles costing hundreds of thousands of dollars were used to hit a farm market. Food treatment plants were targets — ninety percent of their poultry was wiped out in an instant. They were left with no electricity, no oil refineries, no energy sources. Municipal water facilities were destroyed throughout the country, from the storage pools to filtration plants to pumping stations. Two years later, when it seemed like they might be getting uppity and we were getting some lip, the United States moved in to kill. And we're told that better than 80 percent of the people in the U.S. favor the raids and less than 15 percent opposed them. The rest didn't have an opinion. That shows how our work is cut out for us. We should never forget what happens to African Americans — like Rodney King — when they give a little lip, or even when they

don't. They get the hell beat out of them; they may get killed.

I had thought there were two great lessons from Vietnam that had to be learned. One was that we must revere the lives of others as our own: we have to respect their lives and love their children as we do our own. There is a report dated September 24, 1992, in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. It's a very clinical report which describes an international medical team survey that took months to complete and involved over 16 thousand separate interviews in Iraq that asked one question: "How many children under 5 died in Iraq between January 1, 1991, and August 31, 1991, as a direct result of U.S. bombing and sanctions?" It was an inquiry of hospital workers, mothers, medical workers, and others who would know. The answer: at least 46,900 infants under five years of age died in Iraq in that 8-month period as a direct result of our military violence. And we celebrated the slaughter.

We need to recognize that unless we can have a domestic policy and a foreign policy that demands social justice for every human being, we won't have either. We have to work the rest of our lives to reform the institutions that are holding us in our state of poverty to serve the rich and the plutocracy. We have to do it at home and we have to work internationally. The poor United Nations, created in the scourge of war, has become an instrumentality of war. We have to abolish the Security Council. Don't we know what it is? Can't we see that the five permanent members are the major nuclear powers on earth? Don't we know that they have sold 90 percent of all the arms manufactured and sold since 1945 and have profited from those sales? Do we intend to continue going on under their authority, which is now dominated by the United States, and corrupted by the United States, by bribes and otherwise?

We need to insist upon social justice for every human being on the planet. We could have an international health program that would carry out the inoculation of every infant and child on earth for the six common communicable diseases that kill tens of millions annually. It could be carried out in six months at home and abroad. Rubella still damages fetuses in the United States in central city America, where poor people live, and out in rural areas, where young women don't get vaccinations. You can tell this when the rubella epidemic occurred, from the birth certificates of brain-damaged and deafened children. We could save tens of millions. In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas started that kind of massive health program and were roundly criticized for it. Cuba carried out that kind of program throughout Latin America and was roundly criticized for it. Even UNICEF has tried to start a similar program. We could do it now.

We could demand a world food bank in the United Nations. It would prepare not only for seven lean years that might come, but would have food ready for shipment to hungry people anywhere on earth, on the streets of New York or in the deserts of Somalia, before they suffer from malnutrition. There are a billion people on earth that suffer physical and mental handicaps from malnutrition. They are hungry every day for all of their lives. That program could be carried out very quickly. The earth can feed its people. It's a question of will. But wealth does not want to.

We need a worldwide literacy program. It could move into countries we have brutalized for 150 years or more, where illiteracy still runs 70 percent and higher, and teach the poor to read, so they can fulfill themselves. We need to do that right here, right now, beginning at ages three and four and five with all children, particularly those who are deprived

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Letters

On Committees of Correspondence

The article by Malik Miah and Alex Chis in the April 1993 *BIDOM*, "Revolutionary Socialists and the Committees of Correspondence," provides useful information on the possibilities for revolutionary socialists to work within the COCs. Obviously, an important part of this work centers around not just activism but political discussion with those questioning the legacy of Stalinism.

However, while Chis and Miah advocate revolutionary socialists' getting involved in political discussions with and joining the COCs, which I also support, their article raises a question as to just what sort of political discussions would bear fruit in reconstructing a mass revolutionary socialist movement.

While calling on revolutionary socialists to "reject dogmatism and sectarianism," they claim, "We don't need a debate over our past errors and views. What we need now is a discussion of how we can move forward." But how can we move forward to the construction of a revolutionary socialist movement without discussing and understanding the past mistakes of the workers' movement, particularly in the 20th century?

Discussing the program of revolutionary Marxism, the generalization of those lessons, in a friendly and comradely manner, is the best way to influence the comrades of the COCs toward revolutionary socialism. Two questions related to working-class independence seem especially relevant. One is the question of the general relation of national democratic revolutions to the socialist revolution. Can the first *grow over into combination* with the other, or is it necessary first to complete the democratic revolution before the socialist revolution can begin? Does failure to combine the revolutions lead to working-class defeats? This question has been at the heart of all 20th century revolutions in the capitalist world from the Russian revolution of 1905 through the Nicaraguan revolution in the 1980s.

Flowing from the above is the question of demands to advance the working class toward power. Do we simply fight for reforms as ends in themselves or do we advance a strategy of working-class political independent action and self-mobilization that increasingly challenges the foundations of capitalist rule, thus building a bridge between current struggles and the socialist revolution?

Lastly, it is important for revolutionary Marxists to defend the genuinely democratic tradition of democratic-centralism as

practiced by the Bolsheviks in Lenin's lifetime. A study and general discussion of Paul Le Blanc's *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party* would be most useful in this regard. To lead a successful socialist revolution in North America, a future revolutionary socialist party will have to be armed with the program of revolutionary Marxism. It falls on revolutionary Marxists to help advance this process through comradely discussion and defense of that program.

Jim Miles
Chicago

Greece and Macedonia

I am writing in reaction to Lance Selfa's article in your No. 103 [February 1993] regarding Greek socialists on trial in Greece for treason. Their "crime" is solely based on printed materials and may be considered a classic "thought" crime. I find Selfa's piece very troubling as it manages to surround a civil rights case where the issues are clear-cut with considerable misinformation about the subject the authors were addressing: the Macedonian crisis. I think he has done a considerable disservice to your readers.

At the heart of Selfa's essay is his view that the Greeks are behaving childishly over the effort of a former Yugoslavian province to be accepted as a state with the name Macedonia. He writes, "The Greek government has asserted that an independent Macedonia might raise territorial claims against Greece." Might? What I will call Slavic Macedonia (there is an adjoining Greek province named Macedonia for many centuries) has published maps showing large parts of Greece and Bulgaria as "unredeemed" Macedonia; it has issued postage stamps showing Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city, as part of "unredeemed" Macedonia; and it has adopted the insignias of Philip of Macedonia as its national coat of arms. The latter is particularly significant, as Philip's historic Macedonia is almost entirely within the borders of modern Greece. The culture that Alexander the Great, Philip's son, spread was called Hellenistic for good reason, and its language was Greek. Slavs did not enter this region until a thousand years later, and Turks some five hundred years after that. Greeks believe the attempt to identify the new state with the ancient state of Philip sets up the historical pretext for expansionism. Greeks further note that the area now calling itself Macedonia had a Slavic name prior to the end of World War II, when Tito specifically renamed it Macedo-

nia as part of his long-term claims in the region.

Slavic Macedonia is a prime candidate for a civil war *à la* Bosnia, as its two-and-a-half million inhabitants are divided into various ethnic and religious communities. From 25–35% of the population is composed of ethnic Albanians, who would prefer to unite with Kosovo and/or Albania. Another large bloc are Serbian Orthodox Christians, who would prefer to remain in a Yugoslavia now dominated by Serbia. The remaining population is divided between Christians and Muslims, Slavs and Turkic peoples, and pockets of Vlachs, Gypsies, and other minorities. Any attempt to force a Macedonian nationality from this mix will be disastrous.

Worse yet is the scenario for a full-scale Third Balkan War. Slavic Macedonia could never pose a military threat to Serbia, Greece, or Bulgaria unless aided by an outside power. What Greece fears is a civil war in which Turkey presents itself as a savior of Muslims and/or Turkic peoples. It might attempt to slice off northern Greece as it has successfully sliced off northern Cyprus. From a global perspective such a development could trigger a right-wing coup in Russia, which has already expressed concern over the Western policies regarding Serbia and various Turkish actions throughout Central Asia. The possible lineup of nations is similar to that which existed during World War I.

Yet another wild card is the Bulgarian view that many of the people in Slavic Macedonia are Bulgars, a counterclaim to the Slavic Macedonia contention that many people in Bulgaria are "Macedonians." Selfa doesn't have a hint of this complexity in his rather silly view that Greek public opinion is being manipulated by the rather clumsy, right-wing government of Mitsotakis as a means of keeping that government in power.

The last thing any Greek government wants is to expand its northern borders to take in non-Greeks. It has already rejected that option in regard to Albania, even though a considerable Greek population remains on the Albanian side. Rather than having national groups agitating for separation, Greece is being swamped with refugees. Mitsotakis would like to find some solution to the Macedonian crisis, but every time he hints at a compromise, he pays a heavy political price. Papandreu, the head of the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement, the major opposition party and likely the next prime minister, is far more uncompromising. The major left groups, almost all of which evolved from the old

Communist Party, have downplayed the issue. The right has always accused the Communist left of having agreed to trade part of northern Greece as payment for Tito's aid during the civil war. Most of the left parties do not wish to take any position that would revive that kind of charge. The small Trotskyist left (to which the socialists Selfa defends belong) is handicapped in terms of public image by virtue of not having participated in the resistance (stemming from its opposition to the war), which has left the movement with the stigma of not being truly patriotic.

Selfa goes on to say that "Athens" is not much concerned with the national aspirations of what he acknowledges to be a rather small "Macedonian" population in Greece. I can only guess he is referring to Slavs living in Greece. I would point out that neither he nor anyone else could ever draw a border in which all Greek villages were on one side and all Slavs and Turks on the other. There are also Greek-speaking Slavs and Slavic-speaking Greeks. The actual borders are rugged mountains in which there are also scattered pockets of Vlach shepherds and Gypsies. Given this hodge-podge of peoples, agreement on present borders as a condition for recognition of a new state (the Greek position) seems quite rational.

Within Greece there are only two ethnic/religious minorities with an organized presence: Turkish Muslims mainly living in Thrace, and Greek Jews. Neither of these groups are directly involved in "Macedonian" self-determination. The ethnic Turks would like nothing better than to see Turkey annex their mixed-ethnic lands, a prospect that would be just one more round in a nearly five-hundred-year struggle total-

ly unrelated to Macedonian identity. Greek Jews, on the other hand, have issued strong statements through their major organizations that support the present borders and endorse the Macedonian policy of the present government.

None of the above excuses the Greek government for prosecuting its citizens for a thought crime, but it provides some context. The laws the pamphlet writers ran afoul of are rooted in the Venizelist laws following the Second Balkan War. They and their offspring make it a crime to question Greek boundaries, as that kind of proposition is seen as aiding the irredentist aspirations of hostile neighbors.

I believe that Selfa has served the interests of the pamphleteers poorly. He focuses on their views rather than their prosecution. Thus, the bulk of his essay in *BIDOM*, like his long letter in the *New York Review of Books*, concentrates on the argument of the writers regarding Macedonia or at least his interpretation of same. While the views of the authors need to be aired, the issue here is one of Greek law, not international politics. Many of us who may disagree with the views of the pamphleteers are fully supportive of their right to publish such views. We expect a defense committee to inform us of whether the writers were consciously challenging Greek law or were simply caught off guard. If the former, what is their long-term strategy? If the latter, are they now taking on the law as a matter of principle or will they simply be satisfied in having the charges dropped? What has been the response in Greece? Which usually progressive groups have supported them and which have not? On what basis? Is the defense committee interested in linking up with progressive Greek-

American organizations or is it satisfied to have individual signers of the kind who usually take part in such protests? If it is interested in wholesale Greek-American support, a force to which the Greek government responds, what is the strategy for outreach? The kind of Greek-bashing Selfa indulges would seem entirely self-defeating.

Rather than address the defense issue, Selfa concludes his essay by offering his "solution" to the Macedonian crisis. He states that the best way to avert a Third Balkan War is "a strategy which links support for Macedonian self-determination with Greek workers' opposition to New Democracy..." This is truly pseudo-Marxist *reductio ad absurdum*.

Dan Georgakas
Brooklyn

Congratulations

Congratulations for putting out a theoretical magazine that has not only stimulating Marxist analysis but a healthy measure of respect for the process of other tendencies of thought. The February issue, with the feature articles on the African-American struggle today, was splendid.

BIDOM has become my favorite Marxist publication in that it not only displays the broadmindedness of *Against the Current* but has much of the *concrete bite* the latter seems to forfeit. Also, the history of the Fourth International and the degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party are things to know. A breath of fresh air at a time when the "left," as it were, seems to want to suffocate. Thank the gods you're out there!

M. Hureaux
Seattle

Revolutionary Dynamics of Black Nationalism

Continued from page 32

Once again, Lenin sums up the revolutionary Marxist position best:

[By] transforming capitalism into socialism the proletariat creates the possibility of abolishing national oppression; the possibility becomes reality 'only' — 'only!' — with the establishment of full democracy in all spheres, including the delineation of state frontiers in accordance with the "sympathies" of the population, including complete freedom to secede. And this, in turn, will serve as a basis for developing the practical elimination of even the slightest national friction and the least national mistrust, for an accelerated drawing together and fusion of nations that will be completed when the state withers away. This is the Marxist theory (*ibid.*).

How Lenin would have enjoyed Malcolm X's succinct dialectic: "Before we can have any black/white unity, we've got to first have some black unity." □

April 10, 1993

Martin Luther King Remembered

Continued from page 34

— the children of the poor. If we won't do it here, we won't do it overseas. We have to recognize that there's a single purpose in domestic and foreign policy of this government and the other governments of the rich and powerful nations: to keep the poor and the downtrodden in their place. Unless we act boldly now, among the more than a billion new lives to be born in the remainder of this millennium and century and decade, with 855 million having beautiful darker skin, the great majority will live short lives of hunger, sickness, ignorance, pain, and violence. Let's promise never to rest until social justice is achieved for all. □

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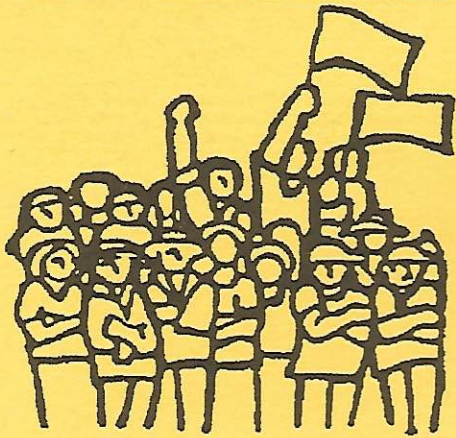
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Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century



The Manifesto of the Fourth International

This document was adopted by a meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (FI) in 1992. It is the product of months of discussion within that world organization and an extensive process of rewriting and revision from an original draft proposed before the FI's World Congress in 1991.

The FI is an international organization of revolutionary Marxist parties and groups from dozens of countries throughout the world. It was founded in 1938 under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, dedicated to a consistent and forthright struggle for the common interests of working people and the oppressed in all nations — to their mobilization in struggle against capitalist exploitation, colonialism, and bureaucratic dictatorship, and against all forms of racial and sexual discrimination.

It should be clear, from the perspectives presented here, that the FI remains true to that purpose today. This, in itself, stands as a major accomplishment in a world where many former leftists and radical activists are rushing to embrace the “new realism” of a capitalism that has supposedly “triumphed over socialism” during the cold war.

But reality is a far cry from the “new world order” proclaimed by U.S. President George Bush after his victory against Iraq in 1991. It is, as the Manifesto points out, a world of increasing disorder — of insecurity, crisis, preventable hunger, poverty, and disease. These things are more the rule than the exception for most of the billions of people on this planet.

In short, we are living in a world that cries out for a renewed commitment to the fight for social change, for a more just and humane political and economic system. Just such a commitment, and a perspective on how those needed changes can be brought about, will be found in the pages of this pamphlet.

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