

In Defense of Marxism

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Women in Struggle



Women Zapatista guerrillas in Chiapas state, Mexico

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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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Bill Clinton's State of the Union Address: Its Meaning for Working People

by Vera Wigglesworth and Jim Miles

President Bill Clinton's State of the Union address given on January 25 was a classic statement of the "new" liberalism.

Effective salesmanship conveyed the image of a leader concerned for the social welfare, gave a human face to inadequate and reactionary proposals, and thus advanced — while disguising — the real program of his administration: strengthening the domestic position of the American capitalist class and expanding its international profit opportunities.

The 1992 elections that turned George Bush out of the White House certainly indicated that if the steep decline in workers' standard of living — manifested in homelessness, joblessness, lack of medical insurance coverage, and shrinking wages — were not addressed, the erosion of confidence in the government, the "two-party system," and American capitalism as a whole would accelerate. Enter the liberals, whose role in the bourgeois electoral scheme is to formulate reforms that would maintain the rule of big business. Neo-liberalism, in the White House for the first time, is merely the old conservative agenda with some of the rhetoric of the old liberalism. It represents a growing consensus on domestic and foreign issues between the liberal and conservative factions of capitalist politics. There is no working class movement — with its own political party — to split them. Because the social crisis in this society is characterized by a lack of working class political response, any reforms proposed by Clinton will be particularly stingy, and any reforms implemented will be stingier still.

The way Clinton talked about his health care proposals is a prime example of progressive rhetoric that covers a wholly inadequate solution. Citing a story of one family's struggle for medical care, he skillfully put the Republicans in a bad position:

I know there are people here who say there's no health care crisis. Tell it to [the Andersons]. Tell it to the 58 million Americans who have no coverage at all for some time each year. Tell it to the 81 million Americans with pre-existing conditions [who] are paying more or can't get insurance at all...or can't ever change their jobs because they or someone in their family has one of those pre-existing conditions...[You] tell it to those people, because I can't. There are some people who literally do not understand the impact of this problem on people's lives. And all you have to do is go out and listen to them.

It is no wonder that Bob Dole, Senate minority leader, sounded a little nervous delivering the Republican reply to the State of the Union speech. Their line, "There is no health care crisis," doesn't go over too well!

But Bob Dole needn't worry. The profits of, and private control over, the health care corporations will remain intact. As Clinton said, his plan "builds on what works today in the private sector to expand employer-based coverage, to guarantee private insurance for every American." The contradictions in Clinton's statements reveal questions that remain to be answered. How can employer-based coverage guarantee insurance for everyone, if millions are unemployed? How is "the freedom to choose a plan and the right to choose your own doctor" compatible with his statement that "if your employer is providing good benefits at reasonable prices, that should continue"? (One must use the employer's plan — and the plan's designated doctors.) If the present system is "an absolute bureaucratic nightmare," how will an additional layer of government bureaucracy make it more efficient?

On the one hand, Clinton said, "If we just let the health care system continue to drift, our country will have people with less care, fewer choices and higher bills." On the other hand, Clinton said he planned to use "the market to bring down costs and to achieve lasting security." But the "drift" of the health care system (which is not a system at all, but private companies profiting from health care), is simply the market at work, with the logical market consequences of less care, fewer choices, and higher bills!

Clinton's health reforms will be financed by the very workers who need relief. Budget cuts from entitlement programs such as Medicare are one proposed source of funding. Increased taxes are another. The most certain outcome of Clin-

ton's health reform plan is guaranteed profits for the insurance and pharmaceutical companies.

The only way to guarantee comprehensive medical care regardless of employment status is to implement a single-payer health care system, with the government as payer. Canada's single-payer system has proved that universal coverage can be administered at one-tenth the cost of the present private insurance process. (See box next page for news on the fight for a single-payer plan; also see Dayne Goodwin's article in *BIDOM*, July-August 1993, for a fuller exposition of the health care issue and more on the Canadian health care system.) Private insurance companies provide no useful service to health care, but augment the administrative cost burden they place on health care with the cost of profits they extract.

Clinton's condemnation of the inefficiencies of private sector medical insurance didn't prevent him from raising the idea that some public schools be run by private corporations. This idea is linked to training future labor for corporate needs at public expense. "Our school-to-work initiative will for the first time link school to the world of work, providing at least one year of apprenticeship beyond high school. After all, most of the people we're counting on to build our economic future won't graduate from college." And Clinton intends to keep it that way. But the working class needs to demand free college education for all who want it, and the right to general as well as technical education.

Clinton covered a reactionary welfare reform proposal with humanitarian language. "The people who most want to change this system are

Editor's Note

The focus for the present issue — the struggle for women's liberation — is reflected in articles by Linda Thompson on International Women's Day, by Carol McAllister on the situation facing working women in Malaysia and Pittsburgh in the face of global economic restructuring, and by Mary Hillery on the pioneer Chinese Trotskyist and feminist Chen Pi-lan.

This internationalist approach finds expression in other articles. We are especially fortunate to be able to share the account of Rosendo Mendoza on the profoundly significant events initiated by the latter-day Zapatistas in Mexico. Articles by Marilyn Vogt-Downey, Renfrey Clarke, and Boris Kagarlitsky provide us with important information on the current situation of Russian workers, and a review by Anne D'Orazio of Vogt-Downey's outstanding an-

thology on the USSR from 1987 to 1991 reminds us of the historical background of these recent events. Likewise, the review by Hayden Perry sheds light on South African developments.

The global character of the class struggle comes through clearly in the discussion of the North American Free Trade Agreement by veteran working-class activist Asher Harer. Related to this, Jim Miles and Vera Wigglesworth compare a Marxist view to President Clinton's view of the "State of the Union." Shafeah M'Balía and Melanie Benson highlight additional problems and struggles of the U.S. working class. The first installment of a polemical contribution by Mary Scully, and the conclusion of Roy Rollin's article on Leninism, continue our discussion of building a revolutionary workers' party in the United States.

the people who are dependent on it. They want to get off welfare, they want to go back to work, they want to do right by their kids." Then, in contradiction, he made three threats: teenagers with children out of wedlock will not receive a welfare check if they set up a separate household; those who owe child support will be hunted down, their wages garnished, and/or their licenses suspended; and worst of all, after two years of job training and child care, anyone on welfare who can, *must* work. Clinton provided no answers to two obvious questions: What if there are no jobs? Must one work a job at any wage, however low?

Indeed, there were no employment proposals; rather a series of vague neo-liberal ideas were advanced that looked to growth in the private sector to provide new jobs. Supposedly, new defense technologies, environmental technologies, and the "information superhighway" (a threat to privacy) will somehow generate jobs. And of course the North American Free Trade Agreement is supposed to generate jobs as well.

With regard to NAFTA, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), Clinton said, "We did more to open world markets to American products than at any time in the last two generations. That means more jobs and rising living standards for the American peo-

ple." He should have more honestly said, "We did more to open the world to American capital." And as American capital follows the lower labor and environmental costs of production in Mexico, this will mean job losses, not increases in the U.S. It will also mean job losses and land losses in Mexico from the influx of American corn and other agribusiness products. This was one of the reasons for the Chiapas peasant rebellion in Mexico. The downward pressure on Canadian wages has already been felt as jobs migrated to the lower-wage U.S. A similar downward pressure on U.S. wages is certain to follow.

In order to compete with Mexico's almost nonexistent environmental protection costs, corporations producing in the U.S. will inevitably apply pressure to relax standards in the U.S. It is ironic that an administration whose vice president is supposedly an "environmentalist" has, by driving NAFTA through, done more in the long term to violate Mexico's weakly regulated environment and to erode the gains for the environment made in the U.S.

Most ominous is the loss of sovereignty in control over national and local economies. As the head of a right-wing think tank in Vancouver stated in reference to NAFTA, "a trade agreement simply limits the extent to which the U.S. or other signatory governments may respond to pressure from their citizens." (See Elaine Bernard speech on NAFTA, *BIDOM*, January 1994.)

It is clear that far from increasing opportunity, choices, and "empowerment" — a term Clinton used several times, his perspective is really the opposite. He has no plan to address racist attacks on Blacks by police or fascist gangs; no plan to increase the effectiveness of antidiscriminatory laws. He made no mention at all of his total retreat on gay rights in the military or of the need to end anti-gay attacks and discrimination. He made no mention of the condition of women or their right to abortion. There was no plan to expand day care services except as part of Clinton's welfare proposals.

The only concrete and implementable plans are those for expanded corporate power and gain, such as NAFTA, and those that lower the standard of living of the majority of people and that impose increasing restrictions on their opportunities and liberties. The latter is clearly evident in his crime and drug proposals.

More Police, Fewer Guns, Life Imprisonment

Clinton's reactionary demagoguery reached a high pitch over the issues of violent crime and drugs: "Those who commit repeated violent crimes should be told, When you commit a third violent crime you will be put away and put away for good. Three strikes and you are out." Legislation like this has a long history of being used in frame-up attacks against strikers fighting to save their jobs and unions, and participants in other social struggles, and it will be no different in the future. In reality, life imprisonment is also Clinton's solution to racism, unemployment, and the decay of capitalist society. Rather than sponsoring a jobs bill to provide a program of

massive public works at union wages to ensure jobs for all, Clinton leaves those at the very bottom without jobs and with the continued alternatives of either starving homeless in the streets or robbing convenience stores and selling drugs.

Rather than addressing the very real issue of cops who routinely beat and kill or maim working people, as in the case of Rodney King, Clinton called for 100,000 *more* police on the streets and for legislation that would establish "a police corps to encourage young people to get an education [and] pay it off by serving as police officers, which encourages retiring military personnel to move into police forces."

To make sure that no one in the ghetto can defend themselves from police assaults, Clinton continued the assault on the right to bear arms with an admonition that nothing "should stop the United States Congress from banishing assault weapons that outgun police."

But more and better armed police will not solve the problem of drugs, which Clinton falsely blames on a "stunning and simultaneous breakdown of community, family and work — the heart and soul of civilized society." The fact is, as Malcolm X long ago observed, that the police are instrumental in ensuring the trafficking in drugs, particularly in working class communities of the oppressed nationalities. Drug deals could not take place without their concurrence.

Like the true neo-liberal that he is, Clinton tries to shift the solutions for the problems of capitalist decay away from government and on to the backs of individual working people in the form of abandoned "family values."

Foreign Policy

Clinton's discussion of U.S. foreign policy revealed a commitment to extend the neo-liberal offensive against working people at home to workers and farmers abroad, particularly in the former colonial world, Eastern Europe, and the ex-USSR.

Clinton's hypocritical claims to support democracy in the nations where Stalinist rule collapsed are belied by his continuing support for the dictatorial capitalist government of Boris Yeltsin in Russia and its attempts to drive the Russian working class into abject poverty and immiseration through inflation, unemployment, and privatization of nationalized industries. In his speech Clinton linked the future prosperity of American working people to the success of "democratic and market reforms...all across the former Communist Bloc."

In fact just the opposite is the case. Workers in Russia and Eastern Europe will have to massively re-enter the political arena, create their own political parties, take control of their factories, and overthrow the capitalist governments of phony democrats like Yeltsin in order to create a real democracy for working people. The example set by such a victory would shake up and inspire the political thinking and actions of working people in the U.S. and around the world. On the other hand, a decisive defeat of

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In reaction to the type of national health care plan Clinton spelled out in his State of the Union speech, a number of organizations around the country concerned with health care have renewed the effort to win a single-payer, Canadian-style health plan instead of the profit-oriented, insurance-company dominated, choice-denying plan proposed by Clinton. (An excellent critique of the current U.S. health "system" is in the February 28 *Nation*.)

A nationwide coalition called Single Payer Across the Nation (SPAN) has been organized to collect hundreds of thousands of signatures in a petition drive to culminate April 29. The week of April 22-29 is designated Health Care for People Week, with local single-payer educational events in communities across the nation. This campaign also coincides with a drive to collect one million signatures to place a single-payer plan on the ballot for a statewide referendum in California for the November 1994 elections.

The initiating national cosponsors of SPAN include the following: Health Care: We Gotta Have It! Neighbor to Neighbor, Physicians for a National Health Program, Public Citizen, and the Universal Health Care Action Network (UHCAN!). Also, National Association of Social Workers, the Gray Panthers, Church Women United, and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America.

For more information, contact SPAN at 2800 Euclid Avenue, Suite 522, Cleveland, Ohio 44115. Phone: (216) 241-8558.

— *This information was provided by Jean Tussey, who is active in the Northeast Ohio Coalition for National Health Care*

Zapatista Rebellion Opens Door to New Stage of Mexican Revolution

by Rosendo Mendoza

The New Year's uprising, led by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), has shaken the foundations of the semi-dictatorial Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) regime, which has ruled Mexico for more than 70 years, and opened new fissures within the ruling PRI monolith. The movement began in Chiapas and has also radically transformed the country's entire political landscape.

One of the key reasons the EZLN had such a major impact has been the way the organization has combined a platform of deep-felt, immediate, and transitional demands with tactics and a discourse drawn directly from the historic revolutionary traditions of the Mexican people. Unlike the "foquista" organizations of the 1960s-1970s and even the Central American political-military projects of the past two decades, the EZLN's decision to begin the armed struggle was the direct product of a prolonged process of mass political and social organization by the region's indigenous and *campesina* populations.

The Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (see sidebar on next page) contains a 10-point program of demands, but spokespersons have put particular emphasis on three key issues of national concern as the catalyst for the decision to take up arms: (a) the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, denounced both as a "death sentence" for the people of the Chiapas highlands and betrayal of the Mexican people at the hands of U.S. imperialism; (b) the experience of the 1988 electoral

fraud, used to return the PRI to power, thereby closing off any hope of an electoral road to change; and (c) the 1992 counter-agrarian reform implemented by Salinas, that represented an historic defeat for the peasantry and essentially closed the door to any future land distribution programs.

The military tactics employed, according to the EZLN's key military strategist Subcomandante Marcos, are based on the experience of Francisco "Pancho" Villa's forces in Chihuahua during the early stages of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917. But the functioning of the movement as a whole appears to have more in common with the "Commune of Morelos" led by Emiliano Zapata.

In an effort to discredit the movement and in a gesture of disdain for the capabilities of Indians and peasants, officials in Mexico City and Washington have drawn on their Cold War rhetorical arsenal, insisting that the uprising must be the work of outside agitators, armed from abroad, frequently citing Cuba as the most likely source.

Impartial observers and reporters, however, have clearly documented the indigenous character of the movement, and the EZLN has been very forthcoming in detailing both their sources of funds and arms. "Our weapons come from three basic sources," Marcos told reporters recently. A few were bought here and there from different sources; others are the small-caliber arms *campesinos* traditionally use for hunting

and to defend themselves from the armed brigades at the service of local landlords, and the bulk of the EZLN high-powered weapons were provided by corrupt army and police officials. "When they arrest drug traffickers they take away their arms, but only a small part are turned in, and the rest are sold on the black market. We bought AK-47s and M-16s from them. They thought they were selling them to other drug traffickers," Marcos explained.

The movement's main leadership body is the Revolutionary Indigenous Clandestine Committee (CCRI, the leadership body from which the EZLN takes its lead), made up entirely of women and men from the area's indigenous communities. (Marcos has told reporters that only three non-Indians, or "ladinos," belong to the EZLN, and even he, as a non-Indian, has not been granted full rank as Comandante.)

The members of the CCRI are elected by the communities from throughout the region that make up the movement. All major decisions (including the one to launch the uprising and the recent vote to begin negotiations with the government) are democratically made within the communities, and all members of the CCRI are subject to recall at any time by the population.

It is estimated that 90 of the 119 villages and towns in the municipality of Ocosingo effectively support the EZLN, with similar figures offered for the other three municipalities in the main area of combat. There are also indications of broad, organized support in other parts of the region.

The fact that a movement of such proportions could develop over a span of at least 10 years is testimony not only to the astuteness of the region's population but also to the racist and arrogant nature of the regime of Carlos Salinas and the entire state apparatus, which disregarded the significance of early signs of the developing movement.

Media Wars

The rebels have captured the imagination of millions of Mexicans. Despite government instructions to the media to censure all but official versions of events and a massive blitz in defense of the military, EZLN declarations have made their way into a few newspapers and magazines and two Mexico City dailies: *La Jornada* and the main financial publication *El Financiero* have printed EZLN communiqués and interviews in practically every issue.

Californians March in Solidarity with Chiapas Rebels

Southern Californians carried out a number of actions in January in support of the Chiapas rebellion. On January 7, 400 demonstrators marched at the Mexican consulate in Los Angeles. (See back cover for reproduction of a leaflet used to build another demonstration there on January 21, with support from groups outside California. Similar actions occurred in New York, Denver, Phoenix, Tucson, Chicago, Boston, and elsewhere.)

Protesting the Mexican government's violent tactics against the EZLN, the January 7 demonstrators carried signs demanding "Stop the Massacre of the Maya" and chanted "Viva la Revolución!" The previous day about 50 persons picketed the Mexican consulate in San

Diego. Algimiro Morales, a spokesperson for the binational Mixtec-Zapotec Front, explained, "We do not believe that violence is the alternative. Nonetheless, we believe the Zapatistas have the legitimate right, their conditions are more than sufficient for an armed struggle."

Pointing out that indigenous groups in other rural Mexican states are also victimized by systematic exploitation and deprivation, Morales said that the tensions in Chiapas exploded because of extreme conditions, including abuses by the dictatorial regime of the former state governor, who is currently Mexico's interior minister. The Mexican Consulate in San José was also picketed by supporters of the peasant rebels.

Subcomandante Marcos has become an overnight literary and political phenomenon through his poetic polemics and powerful descriptions of life in the war zone. His particularly moving response to the government's bogus amnesty offer, "What Will They Forgive Us For?" has been widely distributed, and his "Chiapas: The Southeast Between Two Winds" was published as a four-page supplement in the Mexico City daily *La Jornada*.

Several papers have also published lengthy interviews with women and men commanders and members of the CCRI, providing a highly articulate and politically eloquent explanation of the reasons for, and objectives of, the movement. These have served to broaden support on a national level.

In contrast to the terror tactics and summary executions carried out by government troops, EZLN combatants have gained moral authority through their strict respect for the rules of war, releasing all captured police and soldiers unharmed and focusing attention on respect for the rights of civilians in the region.

The EZLN's lone prisoner, plantation owner and former Chiapas governor, General Abasolón Castellanos, has been unharmed and allowed interviews with the press at a jungle hideout. An EZLN court found the general guilty of a long list of human rights abuses, condemning him to "a life term of manual work in an indigenous community to earn his bread." The sentence was immediately commuted — based on a proposed prisoner swap — with the EZLN announcing Castellanos was to be "set free and instead will be condemned to carry for the rest of his days the shame and pain of having received the pardon and compassion of those who for so long he humiliated, kidnapped, tortured, and murdered."

Impact

The political reverberations of the Chiapas uprising have shaken the regime of Carlos Salinas de Gortari and all of Mexican society. A massive outpouring of support for the people of Chiapas has been registered throughout the country. Caravans have been organized to carry food and clothing to the region, in light of the army's blockade and efforts to starve many communities suspected of supporting the EZLN.

Indigenous groups from throughout the country have expressed their support for the uprising. On January 30, the statewide council representing the Indian population in the state of Guerrero delivered a statement of full support to the EZLN to San Cristóbal Bishop and peacemaker Samuel Ruiz.

Nowhere was support clearer than in Chiapas, where virtually every campesino organization in the state, including those directly tied to the government, has expressed some form of support for the EZLN and has at the same time seen the uprising as an opportunity to mobilize themselves, even in regions well outside the area affected by fighting the first half of January. In the state capital of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, campesino organizations virtually shut down

Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle

**Today we say Enough Is Enough!
To the People of Mexico:
Mexican Brothers and Sisters:**

We are a product of 500 years of struggle: first against slavery, then during the War of Independence against Spain led by insurgents, then to avoid being absorbed by North American imperialism, then to promulgate our constitution and expel the French empire from our soil, and later the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz denied us the just application of the Reform laws and the people rebelled and leaders like Villa and Zapata emerged, poor men just like us. We have been denied the most elemental preparation so they can use us as cannon fodder and pillage the wealth of our country. They don't care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a roof over our heads, no land, no work, no health care, no food or education. Nor are we able to freely and democratically elect our political representatives, nor is there independence from foreigners, nor is there peace nor justice for ourselves and our children.

But today, we say *enough is enough*. We are the inheritors of the true builders of our nation. The dispossessed, we are millions, and we thereby call upon our brothers and sisters to join this struggle as the only path, so that we will not die of hunger due to the insatiable ambition of a 70-year dictatorship led by a clique of traitors that represent the most conservative and sell-out groups. They are the same ones that opposed Hidalgo and Morelos, the same ones that betrayed Vicente Guerrero, the same ones that sold half our country to the foreign invader, the same ones that imported a European prince to rule our country, the same ones that formed the "scientific" Porfirista dictatorship, the same ones that opposed the Petroleum Expropriation, the same ones that massacred the railroad workers in 1958 and the students in 1968, the same ones that today take everything from us, absolutely everything.

To prevent the continuation of the above and as our last hope, after having tried to utilize all legal means based on our Constitution, we go to our Constitution, to apply Article 39 which says:

"National Sovereignty essentially and originally resides in the people. All political power emanates from the people and its purpose is to help the people. The people have, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify their form of government."

Therefore, according to our constitution, we declare the following to the Mexican federal army, the pillar of the Mexican dictatorship that we suffer from, monopolized by a one-party system and led by Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the maximum and illegitimate federal executive that today holds power.

According to this Declaration of War, we ask that other powers of the nation advocate to restore the legitimacy and the stability of the nation by overthrowing the dictator.

We also ask that international organizations and the International Red Cross watch over and regulate our battles, so that our efforts are carried out while still protecting our civilian

population. We declare now and always that we are subject to the Geneva Accord, forming the EZLN as our fighting arm of our liberation struggle. We have the Mexican people on our side, we have the beloved tricolored flag highly respected by our insurgent fighters. We use black and red in our uniform as our symbol of our working people on strike. Our flag carries the following letters, "EZLN," Zapatista Army of National Liberation, and we always carry our flag into combat.

Beforehand, we refuse any effort to disgrace our just cause by accusing us of being drug traffickers, drug guerrillas, thieves, or other names that might be used by our enemies. Our struggle follows the constitution, which is held high by its call for justice and equality.

Therefore, according to this declaration of war, we give our military forces, the EZLN, the following orders:

First: Advance to the capital of the country, overcoming the Mexican federal army, protecting in our advance the civilian population and permitting the people in the liberated area the right to freely and democratically elect their own administrative authorities.

Second: Respect the lives of our prisoners and turn over all wounded to the International Red Cross.

Third: Initiate summary judgements against all soldiers of the Mexican federal army and the political police that have received training or have been paid by foreigners, accused of being traitors to our country, and against all those that have repressed and treated badly the civil population and robbed or stolen from or attempted crimes against the good of the people.

Fourth: Form new troops with all those Mexicans that show their interest in joining our struggle, including those that, being enemy soldiers, turn themselves in without having fought against us, and promise to take orders from the General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

Fifth: We ask for the unconditional surrender of the enemy's headquarters before we begin any combat to avoid any loss of lives.

Sixth: Suspend the robbery of our natural resources in the areas controlled by the EZLN.

To the People of Mexico: We, the men and women, full and free, are conscious that the war that we have declared is our last resort, but also a just one. The dictators are applying an undeclared genocidal war against our people for many years. Therefore we ask for your participation, your decision to support this plan that struggles for work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice, and peace. We declare that we will not stop fighting until the basic demands of our people have been met by forming a government of our country that is free and democratic.

Join the Insurgent Forces of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation!

General Command of the EZLN — 1993

banking operations by blocking access to all banks in a protest against the scarcity and high cost of farm loans.

The 280 organizations that make up the Chiapas State Indigenous and Campesino Council (CEIC) reaffirmed earlier statements of "100 percent support for the EZLN's demands," in a text released January 31. "Following the long and seemingly endless night, the Zapatista lightning bolt was needed to dispel the darkness. . . . The historic opportunity is now opened for us to be recognized as peoples, with full rights," the CEIC statement read in part. Similar support declarations have been voted in peasant and Indian assemblies around the country.

The uprising has sparked mobilizations throughout the state, in which the population has demanded the removal of corrupt PRI officials. As of February 7, 5 municipal seats had been taken over by townspeople, 10 more were partially under community control, and at least 10 haciendas had been occupied.

The people of Teopisca, for example, ran the corrupt PRI mayor out of town on February 7, taking direct control themselves and raising a platform strikingly similar to that of the EZLN. "We haven't protested for 70 years, and now we have said 'enough,'" an elderly Indian woman who led the takeover later told reporters.

When President Salinas traveled to Tuxtla Gutiérrez for an unannounced, lightly orchestrated attempt at a photo opportunity, indigenous leaders embarrassed the darling of international finance by telling him that "the agrarian problem has led to massive persecutions of campesino leaders, jailings, murders." One Chamula Indian representative denounced the fact that the head of the state's official human rights commission is a major plantation owner actively engaged in forcibly driving campesinos off their lands.

As far away as Tijuana, at the exact opposite corner of the country, *maquiladora* plant workers were actively distributing reproductions of EZLN publications and communiqués. Tens of thousands of protesters have turned out for demonstrations throughout the country to protest the military's attacks on the people of Chiapas and often to express support for the struggle unleashed by the EZLN.

Existing protest movements have clearly been affected throughout the country, and in almost every strike and protest rally, Zapata is clearly present. "I won't sell, and I won't let them push me off my land. We will take up arms first," Miguel Rubio told the financial daily *El Economista* during an interview in distant Guadalajara. Rubio is one of thousands of "middle-class" farmers who make up the El Barzón movement against the banks and the government's farm policies.

At electoral rallies of left-of-center presidential candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and his Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), EZLN banners and slogans are a common fixture, and references to the Zapatistas are the most widely applauded parts of campaign speeches.

Striking sugar cane cutters in the state of Michoacán have formally asked to join the EZLN, repeating the Zapatista phrase that "it is better to die fighting than to starve to death." And 3,000 campesinos in southern Puebla announced the formation of the Southern Zapatista Movement (MZS) as they resigned from the PRD and applied for EZLN recognition.

Support demonstrations have also been held outside Mexican embassies and consulates in the U.S. and in several European countries. Workers at the Alfa Romeo automobile plant in Italy reportedly carried pictures of Zapata during a recent protest rally.

Salinas's Shell Game

In light of the obvious failure of the Mexican armed forces to come even close to putting down the uprising, despite a savage assault on the region, and in the face of massive outpourings of support for the people of Chiapas, Salinas implemented a policy shift in mid-January, in a characteristic attempt to silence international criticism, neutralize domestic opposition, and isolate the regional uprising. He began with a series of bogus peace gestures.

On January 12, the same day that 100,000 people took to the streets in Mexico City behind a banner that read "Stop the Massacre" (many chanting "EZLN"), Salinas announced a "unilateral ceasefire." The day before, he had sacked his Interior Minister, Chiapas governor-on-leave Patrocinio González, and named Manuel Camacho as his "Commissioner for Peace and Reconciliation." This was part of a larger cabinet shuffle.

He also ordered Elmar Setzer Marseille — Patrocinio's hand-picked gubernatorial successor, who, in his characteristically racist way had reassured the public following the New Year's uprising that the fighting only involved a "handful of monolingual delinquents" — to be replaced by another PRI apparatchik billed as a human rights advocate and "man of the people," Javier López, whose first measures included calls for a birth control campaign against the state's Indian population and meetings with cattle barons and other key members of the local oligarchy. López was ratified as substitute governor by a near-unanimous vote of the state legislature, with the exception of the lone PRD deputy, who cast his vote for the EZLN's Subcomandante Marcos to wild applause from the galleries.

Meanwhile, the army has continued to use false reports of imminent EZLN offensives to sustain its attacks against villages suspected of supporting the rebels and a generalized campaign of terror in the region despite the rebel organizations' decision to sustain its own ceasefire. Reports continue to pour in, documented by human rights and church groups, of rapes, torture, and disappearances, along with a more generalized government policy of trying to starve into submission regions where the EZLN commands overwhelming support.

In fact, the government has responded to events by unleashing a selective wave of repression and intimidation. Security forces have car-

ried out illegal arrests, beatings, and even disappearances of social activists and peasants in places as far away as the northern Pacific-coast state of Sinaloa.

Officials have floated reports of possible guerrilla activities in states such as Oaxaca, Guerrero, San Luis Potosí, and Hidalgo to "beef up security." Bombings in and around Mexico City, initially attributed falsely to the EZLN, particularly an explosion at a major shopping mall, appear at second glance perhaps to be the work of official forces intent on justifying a more violent crackdown. On January 12, police opened fire on a peaceful anti-electoral-fraud protest outside the Mexican capital, leaving two protesters shot and scores of others brutally beaten.

The government has also tried to mobilize its traditional social base inside Chiapas. Tiny marches organized by business groups, cattle ranchers, and PRI-controlled social organizations have taken to the streets of several cities in support of the army and frequently to demand "extermination of the Indian threat," a call that has been repeatedly echoed by the head of the official trade union movement, Fidel Velázquez.

But in a reflection of the growing tensions within the PRI, these demonstrations have sometimes taken on an anti-government character, denouncing Salinas's inability to violently and quickly suppress the rebellion. "We don't need food," the region's cattle barons recently protested in light of government-sponsored food distribution in some areas. "We need financial liquidity."

Internal Conflict

The selection of Camacho as "peace commissioner" raised eyebrows, since he had been the main rival to Luis Donaldo Colosio (Salinas's hand-picked successor) for the presidential candidacy of the PRI. By far the most sophisticated politician in the Salinas cabinet and the PRI's consummate negotiator, Camacho had amassed a considerable following, even with the PRD during his tenure as Mexico City mayor, a position he lost after publicly expressing disappointment at not having been selected as Salinas's successor.

Having been dispatched to the post of foreign minister, to place him outside the domestic political scene, Camacho's appointment as "peace commissioner" was widely viewed as reviving his presidential aspirations, particularly in light of the fact that the rebellion had clearly overshadowed Colosio's own lackluster presidential campaign. It also shed light on growing conflicts within the PRI and even inside the presidential cabinet.

In the days following Camacho's appointment, both Colosio and Cárdenas were besieged by constant questions as to whether or not they might step aside in favor of a Camacho candidacy. But Salinas soon made it clear that Camacho was on a short leash, undercutting some of his initial gestures aimed at opening talks with the EZLN and creating a series of parallel peace bodies which could be more easily controlled from the presidential residence of Los Pinos.

At the same time Salinas used his myriad of commissions and councils to coopt leftist political figures and even participants in the movement against the army's intervention. This set the stage for an even broader gesture to isolate the EZLN and try to turn the country's attention back to institutional politics.

Near the end of January, Salinas and his team convoked all political parties and presidential candidates to hurriedly sign an accord, calling on the people to join forces in an effort to "strengthen the country's democracy and constitutional order" and to "face with responsibility and patriotism the obstacles that stand in our way." The text used as bait vague promises of new electoral and other legal reforms while committing its signatories "to promote and maintain the political and social guarantees that create a favorable climate for productive investments and economic growth in a framework of stability."

All major parties signed the accord, but as every major newspaper commented the next day, the signature that mattered most was that of left-of-center candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who, in signing his first accord with the regime that stole his 1988 electoral victory, praised the pact as a clear gesture of democratic will on the part of the government.*

With the signatures of all leading presidential candidates and parties firmly attached to his "Pact for Peace, Democracy, and Justice," Salinas called a closed meeting on January 27 of the "*salinista nomenclatura*" to lay down the line. There is to be no change in the government's long-term economic, social, or political strategies, he declared, thereby rendering the promises contained in the "Pact," to be formally unveiled later that same day, totally spurious. Colosio would remain as the PRI's presidential candidate. The uprising, Salinas explained, had nothing to do with poverty, discrimination, nor criticisms of a supposed lack of democracy, but was entirely the doing of a few people who had failed to notice the fall of the Berlin Wall.

He then turned his attention to the task of shoring up faith among international investors in the stability of his "economic miracle." Following his brief stopover in Chiapas, he took off to join the rich and influential for a getaway at the meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he reassured international financial leaders that Chiapas was a small regional affair caused only by the worldwide drop in coffee prices and the duping of a few Indians by some "highly trained professionals."

Peace Talks

Despite the headway he has made in recent days to try and regain the initiative, Salinas is far

from achieving his objectives and dispelling the impact of the January events. Much will depend on the extent to which the mass movement will continue to radicalize and whether or not Salinas and his mainstream political allies manage to redirect discontent into the safe channels of rigged elections and parliamentary cretinism.

But in the eyes of millions of people, both inside Mexico and beyond, the EZLN-led rebellion has laid bare the ugly face of the neoliberal monster, focusing attention on the growing hunger and absolute poverty facing millions of Mexicans at a time when Mexico now boasts more billionaires than either Great Britain or France.

Unlike the peace process in El Salvador, which came on the heels of a decade-long militarization of society and the wearing down of the mass movement and revolutionary armed forces, the upcoming talks in Chiapas appear to signal a new opening for broad-based struggles inside Mexico. And there is not the slightest doubt that the EZLN has come out of the initial confrontation socially, politically, and militarily much stronger. For the time being the political costs for the Salinas regime to renew its efforts to achieve a fundamentally military solution would appear prohibitive.

It is clear that support for the EZLN is a mass phenomenon that is serving to revitalize and radicalize the mass movement and has helped to convince thousands that despite years of defeats it is now possible for even the most disenfranchised to challenge the system. In this sense, the recent events serve to recall the prediction made more than half a century ago by the revolutionary Marxist Leon Trotsky in the sense that the next Mexican revolution would take up where Zapata's Revolution of 1910 had left off.

EZLN combatants and commanders have repeatedly stressed that they have no intention of laying down their arms until their demands are met, and there are not the slightest signs that the PRI regime has any intention of peacefully giving way to the EZLN's call for Salinas's resignation and the creation of a broad-based "transition government" to allow for fair elections. Nor is the government in a position to offer any serious response to the call for a new agrarian reform and other basic social demands that would imply the dismantling of the capitalist restructuring project Salinas and his advisers in Washington are determined to sustain.

The government has tried to limit the initial peace talk agenda to merely local issues, and Camacho has publicly insisted that any discussion of national questions will in no way be binding. Meanwhile, the EZLN has stressed the obvious: that the causes of the rebellion are fundamentally of a national character and have called on organizations from around the country

to send contingents to surround the site of the peace talks, tentatively slated to begin some time in early February.

Broaden Support

The EZLN has repeatedly affirmed its faith that the future of its struggle lies in the development of a broad-based, nationwide movement, while often downplaying the significance of its own actions. "The process toward peace talks arises from a fundamental factor, not out of the good will of the federal government, not out of our supposed political-military might, but rather out of the firm actions of what some refer to as Mexican civil society," an EZLN communiqué reads.

The EZLN has issued a call for the formation of a national revolutionary movement that would form a united front of all organizations willing to fight for "liberty, democracy, and justice." In two communiqués, the first titled, "The land which gave us life and struggle belongs to all," the CCRI and the Comandancia General of the EZLN stated:

Our form of struggle is not the only one, and for many perhaps it may not be the proper one. There exist many other valuable forms of struggle...and other honest, progressive, and independent organizations.... We have organized [the EZLN] because it was the only option they left to us.... The EZLN calls on all Mexicans to take up this standard. Not the flag of the EZLN, not the flag of the armed struggle, but rather the standard which is the right of all thinking beings, the conviction of our people...liberty, democracy, and justice.... This is a task that belongs to all... To everyone in their own field of battle, with their own forms of struggle, and own organizations and ideas.

But despite the massive support which the rebellion clearly enjoys, the leaders of most social and political organizations have reacted more slowly and cautiously, locked into the business-as-usual routine to which they have grown accustomed.

Also hampering the more rapid development of organized expressions of discontent are the years of political and social defeat imposed on the mass movement during the course of the decade-long neoliberal offensive, which was greatly intensified under Salinas. Major legal reforms and economic and social measures have combined to greatly disorganize and destructure the traditional social base of the left and of the social movements themselves.

In the coming weeks, much will depend on the breadth of the solidarity movement, at home and abroad, which can be mobilized in support of the people of Chiapas and to stay the repressive hand of the Salinas regime. □

Mexico City, February 7, 1994

*As a result of widespread criticism from campaign supporters and government indications that no new session of congress would be called to deal with the promised electoral and social reforms, Cárdenas has begun to express second thoughts regarding the accord. At a major campaign rally February 5, standing before a massive banner bearing the EZLN call for "Liberty, Justice, and Democracy," Cárdenas denounced the government's duplicity and included numerous favorable references to the EZLN in his speech.

What NAFTA Means for U.S. and Mexican Workers

by Asher Harer

Following is the transcript of a talk given by the author to his local (Local 10) of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) in San Francisco on November 18, 1993, the day after the North American "Free Trade" Agreement was passed in the House of Representatives. The talk was transcribed for BIDOM by Lee DeNoyer.

My name is Asher Harer. I joined the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union in 1942 and retired in 1974. It was about the best thing I ever did in my life, joining this union, and I'm proud to be a member of it still, and you all should be proud to be members of the ILWU.

I've been studying this question of NAFTA for about a year. I heard Ron Carey, president of the Teamsters Union, on the radio today. He said, "Clinton betrayed us." I say not so. Clinton was true to his constituency: big business, the multinational corporations. After all, he was the governor of Arkansas, a right-to-work, non-union state and he helped keep it that way. Oh, he made promises to labor all right, to get elected — empty promises. As a matter of fact when he was running against Bush, he said he was opposed to NAFTA. Then there are the promises he made in order to buy votes for NAFTA; they're actually obscene. He did not *sell* NAFTA, he *bought* NAFTA. But NAFTA, for me, and I think for labor, is a wake-up call!

NAFTA is one further step toward the globalization of the United States capitalist economy, the elimination of objectionable tariffs and barriers to trade and investment. It puts workers in all three countries in direct competition with each other, depressing wages and conditions to benefit global intercontinental corporations. The transnational corporations want no interference in what they consider their right to make a profit. They have no country. They are not responsible to our country or any other country. They will move wherever they can make the most money. And at whose expense? Always at the expense of the workers.

The ILWU is a relatively strong union but it is also the target of NAFTA. For example, NAFTA is designed to attract foreign investments to port facilities in Mexico to create a nonregulated intercontinental transportation network with no borders. They have plans for new port development in Mexico, and this was preceded by the smashing of the Mexican longshore unions. The *Dispatcher* [the ILWU newspaper] of October 20, 1992, was very specific on this question. The Mexican police came in with helicopters, with all sorts of weapons and so forth, and took over the union headquarters in Vera Cruz by force of arms. They took over all of the records — everything — they took over the facilities and expelled all of the former

officials and activists in the union and reorganized non-union. Wages fell from \$7.00 per hour to \$7.00 per day. That's what NAFTA means. This was in preparation for NAFTA.

Now in Mexico, the effects of NAFTA overall are also very bad.

Believe it or not. I don't know how many of you here speak Spanish or are of Latino origin, but in case you weren't aware of it, there have been two revolutions in Mexico in this century. One from 1910 to 1920, led by Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa and Francisco Madero. And in the 1930s there was another revolution, led by Lázaro Cárdenas (father of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who ran for president last year — and was cheated out of his victory). These two revolutions were aimed against foreign domination. They prohibited foreign investors from owning land, oil, or other natural resources, and banks, [or being involved in] health or education. All these things were taken over by the government, and many were made free for the benefit of the people.

Now all this legislation is under attack. The multinational corporations are moving in, welcomed by President Salinas, who is, by the way, a Harvard graduate in business management. The 1916 Mexican Revolution has been changed; not yet legally, but by force. Its gains are being sold off to the multinational corporations — television, radio, mines, oil, drilling rights, beaches, and land are being sold. The *ejidos* (cooperatives) that were set up by the early revolution for the peasants so that they could own their own land, government subsidized, are being confiscated and the land is being sold to foreign investors. Driving the peasants off the land means that there are more cheap laborers — desperate laborers — for the maquiladoras.

Maquiladoras are sweatshops [mostly in northern Mexico near the U.S. border]; you've probably read about them. There's been quite a bit lately in the *Dispatcher* about them. They are owned mostly by foreign capital set up to exploit the low-paid Mexican workers at less than \$1.00 per hour. State-of-the-art plants surround the maquiladora areas, but the workers live in shacks with no running water or toilets under miserable, miserable conditions. The children are malnourished, sick, some are born without brains. The average worker can stand that kind of life for only one year. The larger factories, Ford, General Motors, AT&T, and so

forth, are a little better, but not much. They are not up to minimum U.S. standards. The Salinas government and the Confederacion Mexicana de Trabajadores (CMT), the bureaucratic arm of the Mexican government, represent a rising profit-oriented class in Mexico — the rich — seeking close collaboration with their counterparts in the United States. They are all involved in beating down the workers' and peasants' living standards and labor unions in order that Mexico can become a safe and profitable haven for big business, of course. And Salinas de Gortari and his pro-NAFTA buddies are getting their cut and spending it wisely. They spent \$50 million lobbying in the United States to get NAFTA passed.

There have been mass protests in Mexico; the Mexican workers are against NAFTA, just like the American workers are against NAFTA. The Mexican electrical workers defeated NAFTA-supported officials in recent elections; the health workers are opposing the taking over of the nationalized health care, and 120,000 health care workers organized a big mass strike and stopped it. But NAFTA will change all that. It will disarm them.

In order to really understand NAFTA, one needs to know who sets the agenda and who's calling the shots, first for Bush, and now for Bill Clinton and various congressional supporters of NAFTA. It is the USA NAFTA, that's the name of it, an organization of 2,300 corporations and lobbying groups. These 2,300 corporations and corporate lobbying groups have aptly appointed "state captains" to make sure that NAFTA was passed. General Motors is the state captain for Michigan, Eastman-Kodak is the state captain for New York, Bank of America is the state captain for California, Hewlett-Packard is the state captain for Washington, Dupont is the state captain for Delaware and West Virginia, and Monsanto is the state captain for Montana. The last two, Dupont and Monsanto, rank one and three as toxic polluters.

These 32 state captains laid off 177,639 workers between 1990 and 1992. They have shifted many of their plants to Mexico or other low wage countries. For example, General Motors now has 50 plants in Mexico. They closed plants in the United States and there were 10,000 jobs lost. The U.S. NAFTA captains are the greatest of all polluters in Mexico. Some are

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The Russian Working Class at a Turning Point

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

The following is based on a speech by the author at the City University of New York Law School on January 16, 1994, to the Marxist Forum.

On December 12, the mass of workers in Russia dealt Boris Yeltsin and the International Monetary Fund a stunning blow by rejecting the Yeltsin economic reform program. They did this by staying home (thus refusing to legitimize the manipulated electoral proceedings) and by voting *against* pro-Yeltsin candidates. But the rejection was unmistakable.

Much has been made in the corporate media about the electoral achievements of the Liberal Democratic Party headed by right-wing demagogue Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. The LDP received some 23 percent of the votes that were cast for half of the deputies to the so-called "lower" house of the Duma (the parliament) — a rather small percentage of the eligible voters. The media interpretation is that this revealed a shift to the nationalist right among the electorate and a rejection of Yeltsin's reform program. Yeltsin will now need to make concessions to the Russian chauvinists, we are told, and will have to be more concerned to provide a "safety net" to help cushion the blow of the market reforms, because Zhirinovskiy's campaign showed that is what people want.

Zhirinovskiy is a grandstanding buffoon. During and before the campaign he became notorious for his outlandish statements — advocating Russian military expansion, for example, and summary public executions of gangsters and common criminals. Many call him a fascist and characterize his election as proof of a fascist threat. By comparison, we are asked to believe, Yeltsin looks good.

But this is a superficial, even false, assessment of the situation. The dictates of the IMF cannot be imposed democratically. This has been abundantly clear for some time. People do not want a program that means for them unemployment, malnutrition, sickness, impoverishment, unheated dwellings, fuel shortages, factory closings, and rising homelessness — all of which are the natural consequences of the IMF prescriptions. On the contrary, such conditions can only be imposed by crushing popular movements and institutions.

The Yeltsin regime and the marketeers, while claiming to be "democrats," have found their credibility and popular support continually eroding as the market reforms progressively devastated the economy and undermined the social benefits that the old system, for all its faults, had been obliged to provide (subsidized food prices, low-cost housing, full employment, etc.). As the events of September and October 1993 showed, the wing of the old bureaucracy around Yeltsin that backs the reforms — really a capitalist counterrevolution — was prepared to resort to a system of one-man rule with great fanfare. And they had full imperialist support in

their efforts to push through the economic program demanded by the imperialist lenders in the interest of profits for a narrow layer of former bureaucrats and their overtly criminal cohorts.

What Zhirinovskiy is advocating, Yeltsin has already begun to implement. For example, on December 15, Zhirinovskiy outlined the goals of his party:

1. To end subsidies to the former Soviet republics. (The Yeltsin government had de facto ended these with the currency reform measures of July 1993, when all pre-1993 rubles were declared invalid. Deliveries of new rubles to the non-Russian republics from then on were contingent upon their presenting gold or some other collateral to the Russian Central Bank. All subsidies were officially ended by October 1, 1993.)
2. To protect the Russian armaments industry, which is critical to the functioning of the industrial economy and which provides a great many jobs, by promoting arms exports. (The Yeltsin government has already been boosting arms sales abroad. In 1993 such sales amounted to \$2.5 billion and are projected to account for \$9 billion in 1994 — a nearly fourfold increase.)
3. Withdrawal of Russian army units from all foreign territories. This contrasts sharply with Zhirinovskiy's expansionist campaign rhetoric, which was absurd on the face of it: the Russian army is collapsing for lack of supplies, recruits, fuel, equipment, and morale. Therefore, the Yeltsin government has not been known for its "saber rattling." However, where the Yeltsin government has sent troops — to Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia — or maintains them — as in Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan — to prop up the old Stalinist apparatchiks and protect their hold on power against mass pressure from below, there is no reason to believe that Zhirinovskiy would do otherwise.

Although what Zhirinovskiy advocated economically varied with his audience, he has repeatedly emphasized his anti-Communism and his support for capitalism. He supported the suppression of the Russian Supreme Soviet (the previous "parliament"), was a proponent of Yeltsin's dictatorial constitution, and campaigned for its adoption. What Zhirinovskiy's campaign opposed was the way the reforms had led to the humiliation and degradation of Russia and sent a once great power begging for help from foreigners, thus opening Russia to foreign economic domination. That was the basis of his appeal to Russian patriotism.

There is, of course, considerable truth in Zhirinovskiy's description of Russia's "humili-

ation." However, the solution does not lie in Russian nationalism, but in international working class solidarity, in linking up with struggles for social justice wherever they are waged, especially in the advanced capitalist countries.

The "Red-Brown Alliance"

The appeal to Russian nationalism is nothing new in the Soviet experience. Crude Russian chauvinism was fostered by Stalin and his apparatus and preserved and nurtured by his successors. All the new organizations that have emerged from the ruins of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union have allied themselves with right-wing nationalist forces. This alliance of Stalinists and fascistic Russian nationalists has been dubbed the "red-brown alliance."

The truth is that Russia has been hurt not just by "foreigners." Massive financial crimes by well-placed Russian apparatchiks and their Russian mafia friends have done as much to harm the economy as imperialists have.

An example of this can be seen in the Russian banking industry. There are about 2,000 banks in Russia. About 100 do roughly two-thirds of all banking business, and 13 of these own about 80 percent of the foreign currency in that country. Of the roughly \$15 billion stashed in bank accounts abroad by Russian bankers, the 13 are responsible for roughly \$10 billion. Meanwhile, these banks have loaned only \$300-\$500 million inside Russia — or less than half a billion! In addition, the International Moscow Bank — which is a joint venture with foreigners — has some \$33 billion deposited abroad, which earned its clients \$47 million in interest in 1993 alone. (See Valeri Martiana, "Russia: Banks and Capital Flight — The Battle for the Currency Market," *Delovye Liudi*, September 1993; circulated on e-mail, November 6, 1993.)

Depositing capital abroad is not characterized as criminal activity, that is, it breaks no Russian laws. This is *legal* activity. The capitalist bankers are only doing what comes naturally to capitalists — seeking investments that are safe and profitable. They just don't happen to be in Russia.

Yet we should remember that all the misery the Yeltsin government has imposed and is prepared to impose on the Russian workers and their allies was aimed at getting the full \$3 billion allocation from the IMF, the \$6 billion ruble stabilization fund, and the \$44 billion in credits and loans promised by the G-7 nations during negotiations to reschedule the payment of the \$46 billion debt the Russian government already owed foreign lenders in 1993.

Meanwhile, the \$44 billion that is *legally* allowed to leave Russia would go a long way toward solving many of the social and economic

problems without getting further in debt to imperialist lenders. That does not take into account the incalculable amounts being taken out *illegally* through evasion of existing laws.

To continue further on this point, the Russian Interior Ministry itself announced in early January 1994 that gangsters, known as the "mafia," control "most of the nation's banks" through a variety of measures, including contract murders. In 1993, at least 10 bankers were assassinated in the streets, allegedly by rivals. Among the victims was the powerful head of the bank that controlled agricultural loans. This mafia control extends to government banks, the report went on. The same gangs apparently control a total of some 40,000 private and state-run Russian companies!

Zhirinovsky has been playing on the legitimate anti-imperialist fears of ordinary Russian people to mislead them into a dead-end patriotic fervor. However, one need not look abroad to find vicious and determined exploiters. In fact, Yeltsin and the Russian parliament both have passed laws to protect Russian plunderers, bankers, and other aspiring capitalists from their powerful imperialist competitors.

Zhirinovsky Has No Monopoly on Racism

Even before the drama began to unfold surrounding the stand-off between Yeltsin and the parliament in September and October 1993 — before the emergence of Zhirinovsky into the spotlight — the Yeltsin government and its supporters, such as Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, had been moving against non-Russians in the capital.

According to the Helsinki Watch report of November 1993, over 17,000 "illegal" residents — particularly those with mythical "Caucasian" features — were driven from Moscow as a result of a racist government campaign. Mayor Luzhkov epitomized the Russian chauvinist mentality the officials were fostering when he said: "It is better to have Russian traders selling cabbage than Caucasians selling fruit."

Allegedly to placate the rising tide of Russian nationalism, Yeltsin has decreed tough new border controls (more stringent identification checks on asylum seekers) and restrictions to prevent Russian companies from hiring labor from the former Soviet republics and "farther afield." Workers without work permits will be deported. (Sound familiar?)

News reports are also crediting Zhirinovsky's victory for the fact that Yeltsin's government is allegedly retreating from some drastic austerity measures. The Yeltsin government announced that social spending will increase from 9 percent of the budget to 13 percent. Chernomyrdin, Yeltsin's prime minister, condemned the reformers and declared that there will be no more "shock therapy" in light of the election results. Prominent proponents of the shock reform program like Yegor Gaidar and Boris Fyodorov have resigned from Yeltsin's cabinet. There are even reports that Yeltsin — who went

into virtual seclusion for weeks following the December elections — is gravely ill and may soon die.

However, it is not fear of Zhirinovsky that haunts the Yeltsin government. It is the massive rejection of the program of economic reforms evidenced by the December 12 election results which has thrown the marketeers into a turmoil. Despite all the advantages enjoyed by the pro-Yeltsin/IMF clique around Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, they only managed to get 15.4 percent of the vote with low voter turnout. The support for the centrist opposition grouped around the factory directors in Civic Union was even less.

Need for Organized Political Response by the Working Class

Unfortunately, however, this rejection is a long way from saying that the workers — faced with the terrific attack on their lives — are presenting an organized political response.

Evidently, the Kremlin rulers are prepared to try to take advantage of the workers' political weakness. Addressing international business leaders in Davos, Switzerland, "an ebullient Chernomyrdin," quite dapper "in a light green and black checked sports jacket with a matching silk tie and looking sun-tanned," stated: "Reform in Russia is irreversible... We will never turn back from the course we have taken... [We] are going to go further and further down this road full steam ahead" (Reuters, January 29, 1994). So much for Chernomyrdin's declaration of no more "shock therapy."

An organized response is going to be vital to workers in the months ahead. Despite the untenable position Yeltsin has ended up in — with an obstreperous parliament, popular rejection of his policies, and waning support — it appears that the imperialist lenders have no sympathy for his dilemma whatsoever. He and his government will be pressed to forge ahead, imposing the pro-capitalist and anti-worker measures the IMF prescribes.

According to a Reuters report, an anonymous diplomat who attended the G-7 meeting in Paris December 17 stated that the G-7 representatives "sense the Russians think they are doing all they have to do to get a deal with the IMF... But the G-7 doesn't agree with that and they are going to be told to try harder."

Thus, the funds denied in September — which prompted Yeltsin to disband the parliament to try to force through his measures — are still being denied even after all the efforts Yeltsin has made to prove his reliability to the imperialists.

In order to obtain loans and investments from imperialism, the Yeltsin government — or the new Duma, for that matter — will have to intensify further the already brutal attacks on workers. This means enforcing bankruptcy laws which will close up to 50 percent of Russian industry, making stringent cuts in cash emissions and budget allocations to reduce the inflation rate to 5 percent and balance the budget in line with IMF demands, and making more and

more concessions to profit seekers, both domestic and foreign. While a temporary retreat from some of the most brutal aspects of the IMF program may be necessary, since there is obviously no popular mandate to pursue such policies, a full retreat offers no solution. It would mean reverting to the very same stagnation of bureaucratic planning that had spurred the Stalinist bureaucrats to institute the reform process in the first place.

The outcome of the crisis will be determined by the extent to which the working class majority is able to forge its own organizations. These organizations must be able not only to defend workers' economic interests against these reforms by a privileged minority but ultimately to overthrow this minority and establish a government and economy which is ruled by the working-class majority in its own interest. That is the historic challenge — which would be to make the political revolution — which has been on the horizon for many decades but has now taken on much greater urgency.

Transformation of Unions Needed

This will require the energetic transformation of the trade unions. Such a transformation, however, will not be possible without coordinated and premeditated efforts by the most advanced layers of workers. And these politically advanced workers cannot carry out such a campaign unless they are organized into a revolutionary vanguard organization that is able to formulate and advance transitional demands in a timely way. Such an organization, a political party, must advance a program that will show how workers can take the lead in reviving the economy under workers' control, utilizing the phenomenal wealth that is available to meet people's needs.

Unless this happens, the political malaise in Russia will continue to be dominated by anti-worker forces. This includes the former Communist Party apparatchiks, under whatever new party label they appear, in alliance with Russian national chauvinists and sundry other reactionaries. The result could indeed be a "red-brown alliance" — that is, the emergence in Russia of a brutal expansionist regime similar to the Milosevic gang in Serbia, although that does not appear to be an immediate threat. What is most threatening at the moment is that a conglomeration of former Stalinist bureaucrats, neo-fascists, capitalist adventurers, and just plain racketeers — with ample imperialist backing — will be able to resort to whatever authoritarian measures they feel are necessary to ensure their continued self-enrichment, in league with or in competition with foreign imperialists.

But there is an alternative: for the working class to organize itself effectively, forging its own independent leadership, to work in concert with its allies domestically and internationally. This is indispensable if it is to defend itself against the current attacks. □

Bureaucrats and Militants in the Era of Capitalist Restoration

by Boris Kagarlitsky and Renfrey Clarke

Text distributed by KAS-KOR Labor Information Center, Moscow.

In Russia, the times are troubled. In the seven years since Mikhail Gorbachev proclaimed his “policy of openness,” countless aspects of Russian life and society have changed beyond recognition. The Soviet Union has disintegrated. The Communist Party, after expiring, has been reincarnated; after being banned, it has been restored. Government ministers have been purged and parliaments dispersed. Parliamentarians have completely lost the confidence of citizens. Only one structure remains solid, holding out against all odds. That structure is the trade unions.

The labor movement in Russia cannot boast of dramatic successes. Nevertheless, it is striking that the trade unions should have proven viable when other institutions have collapsed, and when times have not exactly been favorable for the labor movement elsewhere in the world.

The traditional Soviet trade unions played an important role in society, but one which rarely attracted much attention. The unions concerned themselves with questions of social welfare; organized workers’ leisure-time activities (in particular, providing facilities for children); helped provide workers with consumer goods; and at times, consulted with enterprise managements on questions related to industrial safety. The leader of the trade union at an enterprise was in effect an unofficial deputy director with responsibility for social matters. During the perestroika period the trade unions remained virtually untouched by the reforms. The unions continued to deal with their accustomed tasks, distributing travel concession vouchers and hard-to-get consumer products to the workers’ collectives. It was only in 1990 and 1991 that serious changes began in the union structures.

The miners’ strikes of the summer of 1989 showed that the old trade union structures were unable to cope with the challenges presented by the new conditions. In most cases, the strikes were not accompanied by a mass exodus of members from the official union, or by attempts to form new union bodies. The miners in most cases continued to regard the existing union as a useful organ of distribution — worth belonging to, but quite irrelevant to labor conflicts. Workers’ struggles were seen as the province of strike committees, which in the course of 1989 and 1990 arose in all the coal mining regions of the USSR. But as the months passed, the leaders of the strike committees came to understand the

potential of the trade union as an organizational form. A section of the activists in the miners’ movement took leading posts in the traditional union bodies.

Eventually, other activists began establishing a new union. The first generation of activists in the independent labor movement held numerous hopes that turned eventually into cruel disappointments. The leaders of the workers’ committees took a suspicious attitude toward the intelligentsia, but were readily coopted by government apparatchiks and local populist leaders who used the miners to further their own intrigues. Within a few years many leaders of the strike committees became prosperous business entrepreneurs and state officials. The slogan “The workers’ movement should stay out of politics!” was used to justify a refusal to pursue an independent working-class political course, and later, to bind the workers’ committees to the policies put forward by Yeltsin and his neo-liberal associates — policies that were anti-worker in their very essence.

The New Trade Unions

The emergence of alternative trade unions represented the first serious challenge to the “traditional” structures. Large numbers of “alternative” trade unions arose after 1989 and attracted worker activists who were dissatisfied with the bureaucratism and inactivity of the official trade union structures. The largest of the new organizations was the Independent Union of Miners (NPG). Somewhat earlier, the Association of Socialist Trade Unions (SOTSPROF) had been formed. The word “socialist” in this name was later tactfully changed to “social,” and then dropped entirely. This reflected the organization’s political evolution. The left socialists and anarcho-syndicalists who had been active in SOTSPROF during its early days were purged from the leadership.

The new trade unions immediately launched a furious struggle against their traditional counterparts, which they saw as their main adversaries. Before long the “alternative” union leaders, who had originally acted as oppositionists criticizing the old unions for their links with the state, themselves began appealing to the government in hopes of winning support against their rivals. The anti-Communism of most of the “alternative” union federations drove them into the embraces of extreme neo-liberals.

After the collapse of the USSR, when the Russian government set its sights openly on broad privatization and the construction of capitalism, the leaders of the “alternative” unions gave their backing to any decision made by the Russian authorities. They ignored the fact that many of these decisions were openly hostile to workers’ interests.

It is not surprising that the new trade unions failed to win the majority of workers to their side. Even where a significant exodus from the old unions took place, people were in no hurry to join the new organizations. Political purges, splits, and financial scandals in the “alternative” unions began attracting publicity. Press reports spoke of the NPG having received money from the Russian government for the purpose of organizing the anti-Gorbachev strike in the spring of 1991. NPG members publicly accused their leaders of corruption and of misappropriating money. Analogous scandals took place in SOTSPROF and smaller organizations.

As the conflict grew between the Russian authorities and the leadership of the traditional trade unions, the “alternative” unions began to enjoy increasing government support. In the Russian Trilateral Commission on Labor Relations, the number of places allotted to the “alternative” unions was out of all proportion to their membership. The leadership bodies of SOTSPROF were provided with office space in state buildings (for example, in the Moscow Soviet), and the state-owned mass media gave these unions generous publicity. The “alternative” unions also received substantial support from the American trade union federation, the AFL-CIO.

During the 1992 strike by teachers and health workers, representatives of SOTSPROF appealed to workers in these sectors — admittedly, without success — to refrain from joining the stoppage. After two years, the “old” and “new” unions had effectively swapped roles. The “alternative” union organizations merged increasingly with the authorities, while the traditional unions took on the role of an independent opposition force.

Meanwhile, changes were taking place in the traditional unions themselves. The All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions was dissolved, and the General Confederation of Trade Unions was established to take its place. After the collapse of the USSR, this was transformed into an “international association.” The Russian unions set up the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) headed by Igor Klochkov. The traditional unions continued to play the role of consumer cooperatives and of a “safety net,” helping their members solve everyday problems that ranged from buying cheap sugar to finding places for children in summer camps; in conditions of acute economic crisis, these functions of the traditional unions were valued more and more highly.

At the same time, the unions took on new and unfamiliar tasks. New people, many of whom had never been part of the old bureaucracy, appeared in the leadership of the branch and

territorial organizations. Some of these new leaders were people who had been active in the strikes of 1989 and 1990.

The changes in the trade unions followed a contradictory course, but for millions of people who were suffering from the economic crisis and from the government's policies, the FNPR remained the sole Russia-wide structure through which something at least might be achieved. The most radical renewal took place in the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions (MFP). The MFP's new chairperson, Mikhail Shmakov, immediately let it be known that he intended to turn the federation into an influential social force, capable of defending its positions both against the authorities and the leadership of the FNPR.

Shmakov, who turned 45 in 1993, is a typical representative of the new generation of union leaders who took up their posts between 1989 and 1992. As these people came to prominence, rapid changes began to occur. The new leaders sought to break as rapidly as possible with the past of the "official" trade unions.

They brought with them a new style and new ideas. Shmakov was the first person in the Russian trade union movement to enter into dialogue with the young radicals of the "informal" left-wing organizations that had arisen during the perestroika years. Radical left activists who earlier had been making furious attacks on "the old trade union bureaucracy" were soon to be found among the consultants and officials of the trade unions.

Many of these people not only learned to wear ties, but also proved unexpectedly effective in their new roles. One of the first such people to go to work for the trade unions was Andrei Isayev, a prominent Moscow anarchist and organizer of some of the first opposition meetings in 1987 and 1988. As chief editor of the MFP's newspaper *Solidarnost*, he transformed it in the space of a few months from a dull and unpopular organ into a lively and original publication. The print run of *Solidarnost* leapt from 5,000 in August 1991 to 30-40,000 in 1993. The readers came to include not only union activists and officials, but also members of the intelligentsia searching for an alternative to the liberal experiments.

In an effort to define the position of the trade unions, Isayev advanced a thesis on the need for a "left conservatism." "We weren't bad revolutionaries," he wrote in *Solidarnost*. But now, he argued, it was time for leftists to become conservatives. There was no paradox in this; the forces of the left had brought about important changes for the better on the world scale. These conquests had to be defended from the neo-liberal reaction that had gone on the offensive after the collapse of the Communist system. In order to defend the welfare state and the real social conquests of the Soviet period, leftists had not only to challenge the new authorities, to protest and to summon people to struggle, but also to reaffirm historical traditions.

Faced with the kind of "progress" suggested by Thatcher, Yeltsin, and Gaidar, Isayev argued,

there was nothing alarming about appearing conservative. Isayev's formulation summed up the thinking of many union leaders and activists and was also in line with the moods of the masses. In meetings and demonstrations, people were condemning the destruction of the country's productive potential and speaking of the need to save the social and productive infrastructure.

After August 1991, when the Communist Party was suspended and the structures of the USSR collapsed, the trade unions remained almost the only mass organizations in the country. More than 80 percent of union members remained faithful to their organizations despite the changes that had taken place. The FNPR and the regional federations retained their property and incomes.

Lack of Clear Strategy

Compared with the chaos and corruption prevailing in Russia, the trade union bureaucracy, which was accustomed to precisely observing traditional norms, seemed a model of honesty and efficiency. However, the trade union leadership lacked both a clear strategy and a full understanding of its own strength.

At first the FNPR leaders were ready to give critical support to the Russian government, while the MFP leadership called for a more radical and independent course. But as the social costs of the reforms became obvious, the FNPR officialdom underwent a radicalization. The trade unions fought for the indexation of wages and for the setting of the minimum wage at a level equal to the subsistence minimum income. Privatization, accompanied by job losses, and often by the shutting down of enterprise union organizations, aroused acute dissatisfaction among unionists. Within the FNPR, the conviction grew that the social interests of workers were being defended far better in state sector enterprises than in privatized ones. This, of course, ran directly counter to the philosophy of the Russian government.

The authorities held talks with the trade unions and made various concessions on matters that were not crucial to the government's pro-capitalist strategies. However, the wage indexation law adopted in 1991 was not observed. Moreover, the Finance Ministry made a deliberate practice of refusing to provide state-owned enterprises, and even other government departments, with the funds they needed to pay wages on time.

This could not fail to radicalize the trade union movement. An illustration is provided here by the story of Pavel Kudyukin, deputy minister of labor and the only Social Democrat in the "reform government" of Yeltsin and Gaidar. Following a series of strikes and demonstrations organized in 1992 by the "traditional" trade unions, Kudyukin spoke of confiscating the property of the FNPR and conducted a bitter polemic against left-wing critics of the government. But after a year or so Kudyukin resigned from his post and joined with the FNPR in harshly criticizing the antisocial policies of the authorities.

While striving to end the dominance of Communist ideology in the trade union movement, the FNPR leaders constantly stressed that the unions needed to stay out of politics and to keep their distance from political parties. Nevertheless, the heightened conflict with the government showed that trade unions could not remain apart from the political process. At a mass meeting of MFP activists in October 1992, Andrei Isayev called for "a new course and new reforms," which the trade unions needed to advance in place of "the failed reforms of the liberal Gaidar team." The concept which Isayev and other labor movement radicals put forward involved a mixed economy with a strong state sector capable of becoming the "locomotive of development." A further element was an agreement between the government, enterprise managements, and the trade unions to ensure control over prices and wages.

The FNPR leadership faced the problem of finding political allies willing to aid its struggle for a new course. Klochkov and a number of other trade union leaders spoke out in support of the initiatives of the centrist Civic Union. Meanwhile, many trade union activists were involved in moves to establish the Party of Labor. The trade unions joined with the Civic Union in campaigning to preserve functioning industries and economic links between regions of the country, and in calling for the development of the internal market. However, the Civic Union rested above all on enterprise managers, while the task of the FNPR was to defend the interests of hired workers. The Party of Labor sought to formulate a program that expressed these interests, calling for the defense of the public sector, for full employment, and for social welfare provisions.

Strike Wave: Summer 1993

Meanwhile, the trade unions and the government in the summer of 1993 were effectively at war with one another. In the Urals region, factory whistles sounded and defense plant workers gathered for mass meetings, while in Rostov Province in the south coal miners held a one-day warning stoppage. In the Maritime District in the Far East, a general strike took place on August 10. Ships that had not been unloaded lay in the ports and sounded their sirens. The crews of foreign ships replied with their own sirens, expressing solidarity with the strikers. The main issue behind these struggles was the violation by the government of the general wage agreement that had been negotiated with the FNPR. At the meetings, workers demanded not just the observance of this document, but that the government should resign. In the first ten days, one and a half million people took part in collective actions.

Unlike earlier waves of strikes and demonstrations, the struggles during the summer of 1993 were led by the trade unions and took place on the scale of the country as a whole. For the first time since 1905, workers were mounting protest actions simultaneously in the most diverse sectors and regions, advancing general, nationwide demands.

The success of the traditional unions in drawing millions of their members into action in the summer of 1993 took the government by surprise. The FNPR had earlier showed its ability to conduct tough, effective negotiations on general, regional, and sectoral wage agreements designed to defend workers' jobs and incomes. But the union federation's weak spot had been its inability to mobilize workers in active struggle. When the authorities worked out tactics for dealing with the trade unions, they consciously exploited this weakness. Making concessions during talks, they then refused to fulfill the obligations they had accepted, confident that the unions could not hit back.

In 1992 the FNPR had been powerless to counteract this policy. As a result, the authorities did not expect that the trade unions would be able to mount serious resistance in 1993 either. However, the situation had changed dramatically. Two years of liberal reforms had not only resulted in a catastrophic decline in production, the collapse of the internal market, falling living standards, and hyperinflation. People had also become more conscious of their interests and sensed the need to personally defend their rights. The opposition to Yeltsin was growing with every day.

When it violated its general wage agreement with the FNPR, the government did not anticipate that the unions would be able to mount serious resistance and did not expect the call for collective actions to receive broad support. The authorities received a rude shock. Still, the fact remained that the union leaders and activists were operating without a clear strategy and program of action.

However much the FNPR suffered as a result of "trade union bureaucracy," its most dangerous malady was arguably spontaneism. The demands which the trade unions were putting forward in mid-1993 were ones which had arisen spontaneously from below; the higher echelons of the union leadership simply recorded these demands, summarized them, and presented them to the government.

The strength of the collective protests was in large measure the result of this responsiveness to rank-and-file sentiment. But the failure to develop a consistent analysis, and the lack of a coherent political project, represented crucial weaknesses. Relying largely on trial and error, the unions consistently lagged behind the development of events. The FNPR let almost a year go by without declaring its opposition to the government's course. While the MFP immediately found a niche in constructive opposition, the all-Russia union federation tried to maintain a line of critical support for the reforms. This was while Gaidar and his team were implementing a program which had been dictated by the International Monetary Fund and which required the smashing of the trade unions as effective organs of workers' self-defense.

Labor movement activists in Russia discovered the price of these errors from their own

experience. In the course of 1993 the FNPR repeated the path which the Moscow unions had traversed in 1992. Meanwhile, the MFP had become far less radical. The MFP leaders had become hostages of their own success. With their determined actions in 1991 and 1992 they had won concessions from the city government, but now they were having to concentrate on preserving their gains and "not rocking the boat."

The events of October 1993 resulted in a serious defeat for the Russian trade unions. Labor struggles practically ceased while the political conflicts in Moscow were being fought out. After the parliament was overthrown the government confiscated the social welfare fund from the trade unions, and in some regions the authorities tried to seize union assets.

Strike Wave Abates

The collective strike actions in August had to a significant degree unfolded spontaneously, and in September they began just as spontaneously to abate. In August it had been possible to foresee two scenarios: an optimistic one, in which the unions mastered the situation and became an important social force, and a pessimistic one, in which the unions lost control over events and became incapable of effective action. Everything developed according to the pessimistic scenario. After Yeltsin's Decree No. 1400, which declared the parliament dissolved, Klochkov was faced with a choice. If the trade unions failed to threaten strikes in favor of the constitution, no one would take their declarations seriously. But if the unions called for strikes, they would not be able to organize them successfully. The result was the adoption of an ambiguous call for protest actions "up to the use of strikes"; this failed to bind anyone to a concrete course of action, and frightened nobody. Seeing that the FNPR was helpless, the authorities launched their next onslaught, stripping the unions of control over the social welfare funds and threatening the FNPR with dissolution.

The Russian government does not appear to want the complete abolition of the FNPR, since there are numerous everyday problems which the authorities are simply unable to solve without the help of the trade union apparatus. However, the government succeeded in intimidating the trade union leaders. After the bombardment of the "White House," panic broke out among the union officialdom. A congress of the FNPR was held, and a new leadership was elected. MFP leader Shmakov became chairperson of the Russia-wide federation. A new stage was proclaimed in the trade union reforms. However, Shmakov took the helm at a time when prospects for the trade unions were far from promising. The new leadership was forced to make concessions, and to try to avoid head-on confrontations with the authorities. Shmakov and his colleagues stressed the need for moderation, while at the same time striving to bring the situation under their control.

Will the attempts to reform the FNPR prove successful? Members of the organization are faced with a complex of interlocking necessities: the need for labor movement struggle if the rights of Russian workers are to be defended; the need for broad rank-and-file involvement if this struggle is to triumph; and the need for union structures to be open, accessible, and democratic if involvement is to be a reality. There can be no confident predictions as to the outcome. The only certainty is that Yeltsin and his ministers will bitterly resist attempts by the unions to maintain jobs and living standards. If the Moscow authorities and the MFP have managed a degree of "social partnership," this will not be repeated on the level of Russia as a whole. The Russian government simply does not have the resources which the Moscow authorities have been able to throw into the solving of social problems.

Even before the elections of December 1993, the likely nature of Russian labor relations during the next period was beginning to emerge. During November, energy sector workers fought and won two important battles against the government. Ironically, the labor organizations involved included the Independent Union of Miners, whose leadership has increasingly been forced by government attacks on the coal industry to abandon its pro-Yeltsin stance. A hunger strike by NPG leaders in the Vorkuta coalfields in the north of European Russia, capped by a general strike of miners in the region on November 11, obliged national leaders of the NPG to plan a Russia-wide coal strike for the first days of December. This was called off after the government promised to provide funds to cover unpaid wages and to take action to clear debts owed to the coal industry.

In the Nadym region of northwestern Siberia, a 9-day strike by workers in the natural gas industry forced the state-owned gas firm Gazprom on December 1 to agree to a list of demands that included prompt payment of wage arrears dating back as much as six months. Management negotiators also promised to draw up and implement a program for relocating laid-off workers in the south and center of Russia.

Few Russian trade unionists have the strategic power of the gas industry workers, and in many cases the government would be well content to see workers shut down production in loss-making plants. But falling real wages, swiftly deteriorating social welfare benefits, and the prospect of catastrophic levels of unemployment are nevertheless forcing workers to look toward collective action to secure their self-defense. If this action cannot consist of strikes, it may well take the form of open political struggle. Whatever the case, workers will look toward the trade unions as natural tools for organization. The pressure for the renovation and democratization of union structures will increase, and to the extent that this process goes ahead, the effectiveness of workers' actions will multiply. □

Yeltsin's Attacks on Workers Rights, and Problems of Leadership in Russia's Unions

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

Among the most important aspects of Yeltsin's attempts to establish presidential rule was his offensive against the giant trade union federation, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FITUR).

The workers, especially the organized workers, are the biggest obstacle to Yeltsin's success in completely implementing the economic program of the International Monetary Fund. Not only have the measures imposed so far caused living standards to plummet but the implementation of the new bankruptcy laws — combined as they are with elimination of subsidies that had previously been vital to the functioning of most industries, with no alternative sources of funding available — will force at least 50 percent of the industries to close.

This means a drastic rise in unemployment, with entire communities centered around specific factories, plunging into poverty. The ingredients for massive social upheavals are in the making.

The Federation of Independent Trade Unions is the successor in Russia to the old All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (AUCCTU) of the Stalin period. The AUCCTU went out of existence in October 1990 in the wake of the miners' upsurge of summer 1989, which completely bypassed the "old unions." In January 1992 the FITUR had nearly 74 million members. It includes unions in all trades and occupations. The FITUR has not been a fighting union. It has remained in large part what the AUCCTU had been, that is, a dispenser of goods and benefits to workers, for example, vouchers for children's summer camp and sick pay, from an enormous welfare fund at the Federation's disposal. Undoubtedly, many workers remained in the Federation and its unions solely to get these benefits that were so important — even vital — to them.

The FITUR had not opposed Yeltsin's economic reforms but had, on the contrary, tried to reconcile workers to them and to adapt itself to the privatization measures by trying to learn collective bargaining techniques. The FITUR officials aspired to master the business unionism of the type practiced by the AFL-CIO bureaucracy in the U.S. Their goal was to get the government and the enterprise bosses to sign "collective agreements" guaranteeing that the workers' living standards would not decline during the "transition to the market."

Such a "master agreement" was achieved in the spring of 1993, but the government and the

bosses did not carry out their pledges. To try to balance the budget in line with IMF dictates, the government and the local bosses simply withheld wages — a large budget item — for months at a time. By the summer, the workers' patience was wearing thin and a strike movement spread across Russia involving some 1.5 million workers from the Pacific coast to the Urals and on west. In the process, local officials in FITUR-affiliated unions found themselves called upon to lead militant actions by angry workers. The FITUR leadership was being forced from below to take a more militant stance. (See article by Renfrey Clarke, August 19, 1993, distributed by KAS-KOR by e-mail from Moscow; also the article by Clarke and Kagarlitsky reprinted elsewhere in this issue of *BIDOM*.)

A FITUR "Plan for Action During the Transition to a Market Economy" was being worked out. It included preparation for massive general strikes by the end of the year (*KAS-KOR Digest*, May 1993).

The Yeltsin government has been able to at least temporarily torpedo any such plans. Following Decree No. 1400, which dissolved parliament and instituted presidential power, the Yeltsin government took the following actions against the FITUR:

1. Militia forces (police) were sent to establish a cordon around the headquarters of the FITUR in Moscow and telephone lines into the building were cut off.
2. On September 29, Yeltsin issued a decree that removed the FITUR's social welfare fund from its jurisdiction.
3. Following the October 4 attack on the parliament building, the Yeltsin government informed FITUR President Igor Klochkov that if he did not resign, the union federation itself would be banned; this would have meant confiscation of the FITUR's property.
4. The government also made it clear to the FITUR that it should stay out of politics during the "campaign" period preceding the December 12 elections and referendum on Yeltsin's new constitution. The government made it known that it had a decree waiting to be issued that would eliminate the policy of automatically deducting union dues from workers wages, thus depriving the FITUR of its income.

In the face of these threats Klochkov resigned. At the FITUR conference October 28, the new president, Mikhail Shmakov — former

president of the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions, part of the FITUR — made it clear that the federation was not going to try to mobilize its members either in defense of the union's right to control the welfare fund or against any other threats from the government. Instead, the FITUR officials indicated they had no intention of standing up against the government and its policies. They resolved to decentralize the organization, retaining the center only for dues collection and maintenance of membership rolls.

The FITUR remained on the sidelines during the pre-election period, leaving the political arena to demagogues and marketeers of the Zhirinovsky type.

By December 1993, the FITUR membership may have declined to just over 50 million! All FITUR talk of calling massive general strikes has disappeared from the agenda. (See Renfrey Clarke's article of November 2, 1993, distributed by KAS-KOR through e-mail.)

The FITUR officials have apparently chosen to retreat in the face of the Yeltsin government's threats. Unless the federation can transform itself into an organization that shows it is prepared to fight for its members, the decline in membership will surely continue.

This is a serious default on the part of the FITUR officials. The FITUR, even with 50 million members, has vast potential for leading the forces that could defend workers economic and political rights against government attacks. The attacks on the FITUR are a calculated attempt to undercut not only the strength of the workers movement but the strength of all forces capable of defending democratic rights. Moreover, there is the obvious concern over the fate of the resources for the workers' welfare now that the FITUR can no longer guarantee them. Where have they gone? Who now has charge of them? Will the workers see them at all?

There has been no call for help or international solidarity with the workers and/or the FITUR against the theft of these resources or against the threats and attacks on the union and, consequently, on its members' rights to control what should be their organization. However, supporters of workers rights and democratic rights need to help publicize these actions by the Yeltsin government, which are — to say the least — aimed at weakening the ability of the workers to defend their rights and their living standards. □

Election Victory in Whitakers, NC

On the Ground Running: Workers Win First Step for Independent Political Power

by Shafeah M'Baliala

The author is editor of Justice Speaks, newspaper of the Black Workers for Justice (P.O. Box 1339, Rocky Mount, NC 27802; subscriptions \$10 per year for individuals, \$15 for organizations; \$5 for introductory sub as part of current sub drive). This is an edited version of a report she gave to the Washington, D.C., conference of Workers Unity Network, November 4, 1993.

Three Black workers won elections for 3 seats on the 5-person Whitakers Town Commission November 2. By winning a majority on the council, they have thereby won control of the government of this 51.6 percent Black town with a population of about 1,200. This is the first time that the African American community there has had any representation, much less control of the town.

Janice Bellamy, Doris Ann Howington, and Jesse F. Leake, in a non-partisan election, ran a united campaign, "Voices for the People," that addressed the issues of a town park for its youth, proper usage of the monies from a Community Block Development Grant, equal and fair representation of the entire Whitakers population, and support for the town's African American police chief and department. As candidates, their supporters, and other community activists attended town council meetings, monitored their minutes and budgets, etc., it became crystal clear to everyone that the struggles over specific issues were really one struggle for power to control and direct town government, goods, and services for the benefit of all the people.

All three candidates have been active in town or county affairs: one is a worker at the Consolidated Diesel Company (CDC), a second is a former worker at the Rocky Mount Undergarment plant, and the third works with housing development. Campaign workers were drawn from community and workplace organizations in the town and surrounding area. These included the newly reconstituted Whitakers Community Club, the Bloomer Hill Community Association, the Black Workers for Justice, the staff of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice Southern Regional Office, and very importantly, the Workers Unity Committee at Consolidated Diesel, located immediately south of Whitakers.

Consolidated Diesel Company, a joint operation of the Cummings Engine Co. and the Case Co., produces diesel engines for farm equipment. Because of the company's size, it wields a good deal of economic, and therefore, political influence in both Edgecombe and Nash counties. Its workforce is about 65 percent Black and has a history of activism within and outside the plant. The Workers' Unity Committee three years ago won a yearlong campaign for Dr.

Workers Unity Network: An Independent Voice

On May 15-16, 1993, a group of 25 trade unionists and activists met in Cleveland, Ohio, to establish the Workers Unity Network (WUN). The network's program combining the fight for political empowerment, self-determination, and equal rights for African-Americans with the struggle to establish a workers party and organize the South is spelled out in WUN's Statement of Purpose:

The Workers Unity Network (WUN) strives to promote organizing the South as key to strengthening the labor movement and the cause of working people nationally, and advancing the fight for Black liberation. We urge solidarity with community-based campaigns to organize Southern workers, and we support workers such as those at Standard Products in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, who are victimized for trying to form a union.

WUN stands for independent working-class political action; for unions and worker-based community groups to run candidates for public office; for labor to break immediately and totally with the Democratic Party; and for educating on the need for a workers' party based on the working class, organized and unorganized, with oppressed nationalities and women playing a central role, which is essential if unity and empowerment of the working class is to be won.

WUN also stands for international labor solidarity and support for the struggles of working people around the world. We oppose U.S. interventionism in other countries, whether military, economic, or any other form which is carried out in the interests of the capitalists and bankers at the expense of the working class and exploited masses of people.

The inseparability of the issues WUN focuses on was underscored in the statement that went out announcing the Network's first conference.

Blacks and the working class as a whole cannot win freedom and real power in the

U.S. so long as this country is ruled by the two parties of big business. But an independent labor party which challenges that rule can only be effective if it has significant organizational leadership and a sizable base among African-American workers. It will get this leadership and participation only by championing the struggle for equal rights and Black empowerment.

Since its formation, WUN has experienced significant growth. It now has nearly 100 members from at least 17 states, who belong to 24 different unions and a number of worker-based and other community organizations, including the New Directions Movement in the UAW, Black Workers for Justice, Labor Party Advocates, and Jobs with Justice.

Issues for Action

Further growth of the network is projected based on its program and activities. WUN members are involved in solidarity actions in support of the striking miners and locked-out Staley workers. They participate in the struggle for a single-payer health plan, meaningful labor law reform, and statehood for D.C. They are part of social movements opposing racism and sexism, NAFTA, privatization, and U.S. interventionist wars and occupations. The network seeks to relate these and other progressive struggles, including the fight to protect our environment, to the need to transform this country fundamentally by bringing to power a workers party which will truly represent the interests of working people and the great majority.

WUN supports Labor Party Advocates and other worker-based organizations that stand for independent working-class political action. In addition, WUN seeks to participate in united fronts with other forces that are engaged in progressive struggles, even though these forces may not currently agree with WUN's call for a workers party.

Of special concern to WUN is the struggle of workers at Standard Products in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, to organize a union. These workers waged a campaign in 1993

King's birthday as a paid holiday and has jointly sponsored an annual King Day program with the Bloomer Hill Community Association. This year, the Whitakers Community Club has been invited to cosponsor the annual event.

Political and Economic Significance Way Beyond Size

The political and economic significance of this victory of Black working-class forces over white supremacy is much greater than the size of the

town of Whitakers itself. Whitakers sits in both Nash and Edgecombe counties, just like the city of Rocky Mount, 12 miles to the south. Nash is majority white; Edgecombe is majority Black, with a majority Black county commission. In the so-called "Twin County" area, virtually all the resources and economic and industrial development are located "on the Nash side."

The current county boundaries and resource allocation date back to the post-Reconstruction era, when the local white power structure was

determined that never again would the Black population wield control in the area. The Edgecombe-Nash county boundary was moved east, switching important revenues from the major railroad freight center located in Rocky Mount from Edgecombe to Nash County.

A part of the "land and power" issue is that Whitakers' town boundaries were drawn to maintain a majority white town population — blocking out the communities immediately surrounding it (Bricks, Bloomer Hill, Village Heights) which all were, and are, primarily Black populations.

With the "good old boy" white power structure in control of the Whitakers government, the town has had little to do with the county of Edgecombe — and at times, relations have been openly hostile.

In the early 1980s, while trying to woo Consolidated Diesel Company to the area, the white power structure, including Whitakers, the Chamber of Commerce, and others, tried to build new water and sewer lines to the company while completely bypassing the Black community of Bloomer Hill, which lay directly in the path of the lines.

The area has been seen as a sort of "outpost," largely neglected by Black political organizations. This will most probably change.

With the new town leadership comes the possibility of new, friendly relations, even annexation, with Edgecombe County and the surrounding communities. Annexation would provide these communities a greater measure of services and political representation while (if all three communities were included) possibly tripling the size of the town and doubling its population, and, of course, making it a solidly Black governmental entity.

If the recent win can be turned into a movement that inspires Black working-class and political forces in the next town south, Battleboro — which has similar political boundary issues as Whitakers and Rocky Mount, then changing the political climate in this 20-plus mile stretch just south of Interstate 95, can open up to even include changing the county boundaries to "take back" the industrial development area into Edgecombe County.

Fighting for Position in the Struggle for Control of Political and Economic Resources

This victory allows the establishment of an independent working-class political trend within the Black political movement in Edgecombe County. It could springboard into a counterbalance with the Black middle-class forces who have been growing increasingly conservative, *under corporate pressure and enticements*, since winning the majority control of the Edgecombe County Commissioners.

Consolidated Diesel has recently offered to give "leadership training" to the new Whitakers commissioners. The Chamber of Commerce and local corporations regularly give donations to area churches. Some county commissioners, in

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for UAW representation. The campaign was defeated by flagrantly illegal company tactics. A number of workers active in the organizing effort were fired. Standard Products plants in other parts of the country are unionized, and solidarity efforts are urgently needed to help the Rocky Mount workers win union representation as well.

Membership in WUN is open to workers, employed and unemployed, organized and unorganized, who agree with the Network's program. There is no fee to join and no dues. Members who are able to do so are urged to make monthly contributions.

The next meeting of the Workers Unity Network will be **SATURDAY MAY 14, 1994, IN CLEVELAND, OHIO** at the Ramada Inn/Cleveland Airport (off Rte 480), 9 a.m to 5 p.m.

The meeting will assess the progress toward the projected 1995 convention to found a labor party in the U.S., called for by Labor Party Advocates (LPA), and will discuss what the WUN should be doing, including the critical role the South must play in building a workers' party. There will be an update on workers' struggles at Standard Products in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and at the Staley plant in Decatur, Illinois. Baldemar Velasquez, president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, will give an update on the situation facing farm workers. There will also be a report on the May Day "Organize the South" Labor Conference sponsored by the Labor Task Force of the Southern Organizing Committee. And Virginia Robinson will report on "Democratic Unionism in Action: How the Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers Union Functions."

A high point of the meeting will be a discussion on the question "How Can the Labor Movement Be Rebuilt From the Bottom Up?"

The lead-off speaker will be Tom Laney, former president of UAW Local 879 in St. Paul, Minnesota, and a leader of the UAW New Directions caucus. For more information, write to WUN at P.O. Box 24377, Cleveland OH 44124, or phone 216/382-4597.

Jean Tussey Testimonial

After the Workers Unity Network meeting participants are urged to stay in Cleveland to attend a testimonial event to honor Jean Tussey, a "charter member" of WUN, for her

54 years contribution to the workers movement and the fight for social justice.

JEAN TUSSEY TESTIMONIAL
DATE: SATURDAY, MAY 14, 1994
TIME: 7-8 p.m., buffet dinner
8 p.m., program begins
PLACE: UFCW Local 880
2828 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio

For decades Jean Tussey has been deeply involved in labor's unending struggle for a better life for workers, here and throughout the world; for organizing the unorganized; for support on the picket line; and for union solidarity. At the same time she has been an activist in the women's movement; the fight for equal rights and political empowerment for Black and other oppressed peoples; the campaign for universal and comprehensive health care; the defense of civil liberties and civil rights; and the ongoing struggle for peace and justice.

A hallmark of Jean's work has been her initiative in helping establish the Greater Cleveland Labor History Society, to preserve the story of the origins and development of Cleveland labor.

Join us May 14 to honor Jean and recall the events she shared with unionists and other concerned activists over the past many years.

Sponsored by Friends of Jean Tussey

Cosponsors: American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 100; Black Workers for Justice; Coalition of Labor Union Women (Cleveland chapter); Communications Workers of America Region 3; Communications Workers of America Local 4340; Farm Labor Organizing Committee; Greater Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor; Hard Hatted Women; Institute for African American Studies; Jobs with Justice; Labor Notes; Labor Party Advocates (Cleveland chapter); Northeast Ohio Anti-Apartheid Committee; Northeast Ohio Coalition for National Health Care; Orange Blossom Press; People's Fightback Center; Senior Action Coalition; Teamsters Local 407; TransAfrica; United Auto Workers Region 2; United Food and Commercial Workers Region 6; United Labor Agency; Women for Racial and Economic Equality; Women Speak Out for Peace and Justice; Workers Unity Network; Workmen's Circle; Youngstown Workers Solidarity Club. □

Meeting the Challenge II — Fighting Back

by Melanie Benson

The author, a member of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005 in Minneapolis–St. Paul, reported for our magazine a year ago on the Twin Cities' first "Meeting the Challenge" labor conference, which focused on exposing labor-management cooperation schemes. Her report on this year's conference, which focused on how labor can fight back against the employers' offensive, begins with some memorable quotations.

"The labor movement would be in much better shape if conferences like this were going on around the country." — conference participant

"This exceeded last year's conference. THANK YOU!" — railroad worker

"The mountains of tasks we face are not insuperable. We can win!" — *The Nation* journalist Alexander Cockburn

"We only get what we take with our own hands...Remember what the labor movement is...the self-organization of people in the workplace for a democratic transformation...You never shift power sneakily. You meet power with power!" — Elaine Bernard, director, Harvard Trade Union Program

"We must examine the possibility of a political party of labor to articulate a new agenda, create a new political cadence...The time is now, the opportunity is now." — Tony Mazzocchi, special assistant to the president of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union

"I'll be a troublemaker!" — Ida Boddie, president of the Rocky Mount, North Carolina, chapter of Black Workers for Justice, laid off after 26 years (with no retirement) for trying to organize a union

"It's about standing up for yourself, not waiting for anyone else." — Dan Lane, Allied Industrial Workers Union, representing 750 workers locked out of the Staley corn-processing plant in Decatur, Illinois

Quoting the Staley workers on the question of strike support: "It's not just the money, it's that every time I feel despair, you're there." — Steve Ashby, Chicago Staley Solidarity

"Think big, stay solid." — Bruce Glover, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, Burlington Northern Railroad

"The NAFTA struggle showed the way. The coalition of unions, human rights organizations, peace and justice groups, and environmentalists showed labor where its friends were, and they weren't in the White House." — Alexander Cockburn

The conference "Meeting the Challenge II — Fighting Back from the Workplace to the Nation's Capital" was held in St. Paul, Minnesota, January 28–29, 1994. Sponsored by 30 labor organizations, the conference attracted, educated, and inspired close to 500 labor activists, students, and workers from 39 international unions and 14 states, who gathered to discuss topics of critical importance to labor.

Labor in the '90s: How to Move Forward

"Radical confidence" [We have a position and will stick to it, though the odds are immense], a

phrase borrowed from the environmental movement, is what Alexander Cockburn called for to face the challenges confronting the labor movement — challenges no one underestimated. Cockburn set the tone for the conference by asking and answering three basic questions:

Q: What does the New World Order (international business) want from labor?

A: Its destruction or cooptation.

Q: What does it need?

A: An endless ratcheting down of wages in a global economy.

Q: What is the role of the present administration?

A: "It's an open question whether unions will be needed in the workplace of the future." — Labor Secretary Reich

"We are going to have to reconcile ourselves to having a higher percentage of people at lower wage levels." — President Clinton

Tony Mazzocchi called for the formation of a nonelectoral political party of labor to create a working class consciousness, articulate a cohesive ideology, and shape an organizing agenda for unions. Elaine Bernard lambasted the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Clinton's proposed "managed competition" health care system. Dan Lane gave an update on the status of the lockout of the Staley workers in Decatur, Illinois, describing the situation as "a war taking place in southern and central Illinois." He announced a spring offensive in Decatur and invited others to join.

Labor-Management Cooperation

The dangers of labor-management cooperation schemes were strikingly illustrated by Gerry Tucker, a 33-year veteran United Auto Workers member and leader of the New Directions caucus in the UAW. Since the "jointness" virus infected the relationship between auto workers and corporations twenty years ago, there has been a tremendous deterioration of the union's ability to fight back in the workplace. Economic concessions, a halving of the workforces at Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors, and the threat of more plant closings have made fear the driving wheel in the industry. Between the thousands of clipboard-carrying "jointness" enforcers and union staff appointees, workers are discouraged from filing grievances, injuries skyrocket, and speedup is the order of the day. General Motors alone has built 33 new plants in Mexico, increasing the threat of "whipsawing," pitting workers in one plant against workers in another.

In sharp contrast to the UAW, the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) has fought back against so-called Employee Involvement (EI) programs, explained Greg Pofert, APWU na-

tional business agent. From Moe Biller, APWU president, to every local and state conference of the APWU since 1984, EI has been soundly rejected. After 66 unfair labor practice complaints were filed against the U.S. Postal Service, an April 1992 National Labor Relations Board settlement on EI resulted in stronger language against such programs than the law itself. The APWU, Pofert said, fights EI with UI — Union Involvement — a real voice for the workers, real workplace democracy.

Peter Rachleff, professor of history at Macalester College, warned that the mandate of the Clinton-appointed Commission on the Future of Labor-Management Relations is "the relaxing of Section 9(a)(2) of the National Labor Relations Act." That section reads, "It shall be an unfair labor practice for an employer...to dominate or interfere with the formation or administration of any labor organization or contribute financial or other support to it." A weakening of that provision could allow for the reestablishment of company unions, the ultimate in "labor-management cooperation."

Reviving the Labor Movement

The possibility of a world price for labor based on supply and demand, the need for international solidarity, and a concrete example of it, were discussed by Amy Newell, international secretary-treasurer of the United Electrical Workers Union (UE). She explained that Western European corporations are planning on major investments by 1995 in Eastern Europe, where wages are markedly lower (\$25 per hour in Germany, as opposed to \$2.70 per hour in Poland). The same dynamic exists between the U.S. and Mexico. Because the UE wants to go beyond the traditional "symbolic" relationship between the AFL-CIO and unions in other countries, it has developed a strategic organizing alliance with the FAT, an "honest, independent, democratic" labor federation in Mexico, in a common struggle against common employers. This alliance includes financial assistance, the promise and *delivery* of solidarity when repression increases, and a U.S. tour by FAT members.

Elaine Bernard described Canada's experience with a labor party, acknowledging both the positives and the negatives. She brought the audience to its feet again with a rousing analysis of how labor must fight capital in order to win.

Solidarity Kids Theatre

The most moving and galvanizing part of the conference was undoubtedly the Solidarity

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Our Revolutionary Heritage — International Women's Day

by Linda Thompson

Beginning in 1967 International Women's Day was reinstated and celebrated by women students in Chicago who were part of the second wave of feminist consciousness in this country. It has grown and become an annual event that is a symbol of unity within the women's movement, here and abroad. However, very few of the women who celebrate this event today know its origins as a socialist holiday or of the revolutionary women responsible for its beginning.

International Women's Day

It was Clara Zetkin, a member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), who conceived of an international holiday for women and who pressed for her idea to become a reality. Zetkin was already political, a leader of the German socialist women's movement, when she participated in Bastille Day in Paris in 1889. At that time the Second International Workingmen's Association was being formed as an assembly of socialists, trade unionists, and political clubs. The organization formulated a program that included the protection of female and child labor and the 10-hour day for all workers. However, specific concerns with women's issues were not included in the first May Day celebration in 1890, which was held by the International. Zetkin was to raise these and other feminist concerns consistently over the years.

In Germany, until as late as 1908, women were prohibited by the government from officially belonging to organizations. Despite this prohibition, and in the face of entrenched sexism among many Social Democratic men, women like Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg, and others were active as members of the SPD, the German section of the International, and played leading roles in the revolutionary left wing of Social Democracy, both nationally and internationally. In 1890 provision was made by the Social Democrats for special women's meetings to select women delegates to party congresses if male objections prevented their election by regular channels. Clara Zetkin was elected as a delegate to every party congress after 1892 and rose to a position of leadership on the SPD executive, the first woman ever to hold such a position in the Social Democracy.

Under the leadership of Clara Zetkin and Louise Zietz, socialist women caucused on August 17, 1907, before the annual meeting of the Second International (in Stuttgart, Germany). This first International Socialist Women's Conference included 59 women from 15 countries and established an International Women's Bureau to strengthen organizational ties among women in various countries. They developed an agenda addressing issues for women in every area of life and elected Clara Zetkin as secretary, thereby formalizing her position as leader of the international socialist women's movement. At

this meeting the first suggestion was made for an annual demonstration for women, similar to May Day. But the desires and wishes of the women were lost in the political debates at the general meetings of the International.

In 1908 women in Germany were granted freedom of association and assembly, if not the vote, and after that the SPD ended the autonomy of women within the party and integrated their organizations into the male-dominated structure. Zetkin was opposed to this decision, as she was a firm believer in the need for a separate organization of women within the party. She understood that this was the way women as a minority in the party could exercise greater leverage and maximize representation of their interests as a specially oppressed group. She saw that autonomy was necessary to maintain the vanguard nature of the socialist women's movement and its ability to act as a bloc to influence key political decisions.

In the United States on Sunday, March 8, 1908, socialist women and women workers in the needle trades called a women's demonstration on Manhattan's Lower East Side to demand the right to vote and to encourage the building of a powerful needle trades union. Hundreds of women assembled in Rutgers Square and held a highly successful demonstration. This event prompted American socialist women to choose the last Sunday of February in 1909 as a holiday that women could celebrate annually.

These demonstrations by American women had an impact on their European sisters. When Clara Zetkin learned of them she made a motion at the 1910 Copenhagen women's conference of the Second International that the date March 8 be set aside each year to celebrate the struggle for equal rights and suffrage for women in all countries. Her motion was passed by the conference, and socialists in Europe held their first International Women's Day in March of 1911, commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the Paris Commune. Russian socialist women followed suit in 1915, under the leadership of Alexandra Kollontai and others. They celebrated International Women's Day on the last Sunday in February, which coincided with March 8 on the Western calendar.

International Women's Day continued to be celebrated after the collapse of socialist internationalism during World War I. On Women's Day in 1915, in contrast to the conservative male-dominated Social Democratic leaderships in Germany and Austria, which had voted for their governments' war budgets, socialist women denounced the war and called on wives and mothers to end it.

Russian women took to the streets against the wishes of the socialist and trade union leaders on International Women's Day in 1917 (Febru-

ary 23, according to the old Russian calendar) — to protest against the deteriorating living conditions and the deaths caused by the war. The women demanded bread and peace. They marched from the bread lines to the factories, sparking the five days of strikes and mass demonstrations that forced Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate. One result of the 1917 Russian revolution begun in February and culminating in October was the granting of full legal equality for women, including the right to vote.

In 1922, at Zetkin's initiative, Lenin declared International Women's Day a holiday in Soviet Russia and, through the Third (Communist) International, encouraged Communist parties everywhere to celebrate this expression of feminist internationalism and solidarity.

The Socialist Feminist Heritage and a Project to Preserve It

It is important for socialist women to appreciate the initiatives taken by our sisters who came before us and the contributions that the socialist movement has made to the development of feminist theory and action. Especially in the United States it is far too easy to lose sight of the strategic role that Marxist feminists can play in bringing fundamental change and inspiring struggle. Too often our feminist revolutionary heritage is obscured or omitted by male Marxist writers. It is fitting that this issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* features the life of Chen Pi-lan, a Trotskyist heroine and a role model for socialist women everywhere.

It is necessary to preserve and spread this rich and meaningful socialist feminist heritage. A project is being launched to catalogue and preserve the lives and experiences of Marxist and Trotskyist women in particular, before the lessons they have to teach us are lost. This can be accomplished through taking oral histories of Trotskyist women who are still alive and who also have knowledge of our revolutionary comrades who have died, such as Antoinette Konikow, Grace Carlson, Rose Karsner, and Sylvia Bleecker.

This project can also be accomplished by assembling already existing writings and articles by and about revolutionary women. There is a certain urgency to the task, since many of these women comrades are advancing in age. There is a need for women to participate in this project and contact older women comrades to begin to interview and document their stories. Also articles, photos, memorabilia, and any other aspect of socialist feminist history is needed.

The project is nonsectarian and will not be the property of any organization or individual, but will be collectively held by interested parties and deposited in an appropriate archive. Anyone who wishes to participate in the project or who has ideas of who should be interviewed or written about should contact Linda Thompson, Evelyn Sell, or Dianne Feeley through this magazine. After the documentation is assembled a celebration of these women's lives could be held on International Women's Day, affirming and acknowledging a significant and often overlooked chapter of American feminist history. □

Global Economic Restructuring and Women's Experiences

by Carol McAllister

Shifts in the world capitalist system have had a profound effect on the forms and conditions of women's work, and thus on their experiences of oppression and their struggles for liberation as both women and workers. Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania — two places where I have had the opportunity to live and carry out research — are almost halfway around the world from each other. Recent changes in their economies — rapid industrialization in the one case and extensive deindustrialization in the other — may at first glance also appear to be worlds apart. In reality, though, these two apparently opposite developments are related aspects of a common process of global capitalist restructuring.

These different, though linked, forms of economic transformation and the crises they generate also have curiously similar impacts on women's lives and roles. Both building on and reinforcing existing forms of gender subordination, the effect of global economic integration in both Negeri Sembilan and Pittsburgh has been to promote the proletarianization of women while also profoundly increasing the insecurity and casualization of women's work. These two cases are thus instructive of the role gender plays in the current transformation of capitalism on a world scale and in the subsequent recomposition of the international working class.

Capitalist Development, Rapid Industrialization, and Malay Women

Beginning in the period of British colonial domination and accelerating in the postcolonial era initiated in 1957, Malaysia has been experiencing a process of intensive capitalist development. Since the early 1970s, the national government has been pursuing a specific model of development based on export-processing industrialization, with an aspiration in recent years of becoming one of the Newly Industrialized Countries as represented presently by the Four Tigers of Asia (Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan). After a serious economic crisis in the mid-1980s, resulting in the retrenchment of tens of thousands of workers, the local economy has shown a steady and rapid growth, including an increasing conversion from the production of primary resources (especially natural rubber, palm oil, and tropical timber) to the manufacture of industrial components and products.

The Malaysian development strategy is, however, characterized by dependence on one or two key industries, most notably electronics, and the continued domination of the local economy by foreign investors. A 1992 report in *Far Eastern Economic Review* claims: "The cutting edge for this shift in priorities, which has made Malaysia one of the fastest growing economies in the world, has been a surge in foreign manufacturing investments which hit M\$16 billion (US\$6.2 billion) in 1991." This surge was facilitated by an "overhauling [of] the country's investment rules in 1987 to favour foreigners." A 1989 report in the same publication indicates the entry of Hong Kong and Taiwanese companies into a situation dominated by Japanese, American, and British firms. All

of this sets the stage for the changing experiences of Malay women.

During 1978–79, when I carried out field research in the Kuala Pilah area of Negeri Sembilan, young women for the first time in their community's history were being drawn in large numbers into the system of wage labor. Many of these women, along with their female counterparts from other regions of Malaysia, formed the backbone of the workforce in the Japanese- and American-owned electronics plants that had mushroomed since the early 1970s as part of the new strategy of export-processing or "offshore sourcing" by international capital. Other young women, also working in Free Trade Zones, were employed by the longer-standing but expanding textile industry. More recent reports indicate that 80 percent of the 85,000 jobs that have been created in electronics alone are held by women. And 70 percent of these women workers are Malay. (Malaysia is a multi-ethnic society, made up primarily of people of Malay, Chinese, and Indian descent; Malays are the majority group, but had been primarily rural.)

Some of these new jobs are located in the rural areas, but most require Malay women to relocate, at least on a temporary basis, from their rural villages to urban settings or industrial zones. Young, unmarried female factory workers were most prevalent in the 1970s and early 1980s. There are indications, however, that women are now staying longer in these jobs through the experience of marriage and childbearing. This is a significant new development that will affect female roles, family patterns, and the structure of both rural and urban Malay society.

The main attraction for multinational companies to locate their plants in Malaysia is the availability of a cheap, though well-educated, labor force. A 1989 report, for example, indicated that female production workers in electronics factories were paid around US\$4.20 a day. At the same time, many of these young women have at least a high school education. Such wage scales are in turn supplemented by other economic benefits for investing in a free-trade zone, such as tax holidays and exemptions from import-export duties. There are also the advantages for employers of a political climate that prevents labor militancy, including stringent control over union organizing and activity. The laxity of health and safety regulations provides another attraction for investors which, however, has very deleterious results for factory workers and local communities. This includes the recent occurrence of a number of deaths among women working in electronics plants that are thought to be linked to the exposure to toxic chemicals throughout the industry.

Capitalist development and the growth of export-processing industries has also meant the expansion and transformation of other aspects of Malaysia's economy. Negeri Sembilan women now regularly travel to nearby towns or to the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, seeking work in the clerical, sales, and service sectors. They take jobs as office clerks, typists, telephone operators, salespersons in Chinese-owned stores, beauticians, or workers in the

tourist industry, thus entering occupations that are heavily feminized in both developed and developing societies. Recent moves toward privatization of much of the public sector, including the postal, telecommunications, and transportation services, will affect several of these jobs. If trends in other countries are any indication, women clerical and service workers are likely to experience falling wages and greater job insecurity.

At the same time, the mothers of these young women, while remaining in their rural environment, are drawn further into the petty-commodity production of rubber. The tapping of rubber by Malay smallholders began in the colonial era but in areas such as Negeri Sembilan has undergone an expansion during the post-colonial period, resulting in the entry of more women into this economic activity. While they still remain outside of the wage-work system, the participation of these women in small-scale rubber production ties their income more closely to international fluctuations in the demand for natural rubber and increases their vulnerability to downturns in the global capitalist economy. All of these women — whatever their form of employment — likewise find themselves increasingly dependent on mass-produced commodities, supplied through a competitive market framework, to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and housing as well as to provide new necessities such as televisions, running water, school uniforms, and motorbikes.

There are disagreements among both researchers and activists concerning the effect of these developments on women's status and on gender relations. Some argue that women's increasing participation in wage work and greater access to a cash income increases their personal autonomy and their decision-making power within households and families. Others focus on the relegation of young women, compared to their male counterparts, to low-paid and insecure jobs in the wage labor sector, and the increasing responsibility of more mature women for subsistence production and household work, while the men in their families become the primary providers of cash. There is also the question of ideology and values. Thus some argue that participation in the capitalist sector introduces young women to liberal democratic values, while others point to the role of factory regimes in strengthening patriarchal tendencies while undermining more positive aspects of traditional cultures.

The situation in Negeri Sembilan — where the traditional matrilineal system ensured women's access to productive resources, promoted their active participation in economic production and community life, and encouraged a high valuation of women's roles — allows a clear picture of the undermining of women's status as a result of capitalist development. While both younger and older Negeri Sembilan women continue their active participation in the changing economy, women's traditional economic roles are being devalued, and there is emerging a situation of unequal male and female access to important new resources. Perhaps the most positive aspect of these women's growing participation in the capitalist sector is their increasing interaction with women from other ethnic groups and from other regions of the country. This may help to break down longstanding prejudices and create a stronger basis for worker and female solidarity.

Deindustrialization and Women's Experiences in the Pittsburgh Region

While Malaysia is undergoing a process of rapid industrialization, the Pittsburgh region is experiencing the effects of a precipitous industrial decline.

Disinvestment in the American steel industry, and its virtual collapse in the Pittsburgh region in the early 1980s, has reshaped the whole picture of employment throughout the metropolitan area and in the small towns located along the nearby rivers. A recent report indicates that "between 1975 and 1987 Pittsburgh's manufacturing industries (primarily metals, electrical machinery, and transportation equipment) lost 128,000 jobs, a 49 percent decline. Over the same period, nonmanufacturing industries gained 87,500 jobs, a 13.6 percent increase."¹ The net loss of jobs from 1979 to 1986 was over 70,000 while the weight of the service sector in the local economy significantly increased.

The immediate impact of the shutdown of the steel mills in the early to mid-1980s was massive unemployment throughout the region, affecting not only steelworkers but those whose jobs depended on the revenues generated by the mills. A study of women in two former mill towns says:

When so many steel plants closed down, cut back, or relocated, most other sources of gainful employment faded away, too. Associated industries, banks, shops, positions in towns and boroughs, and many other possible places to turn for work, disappeared. To find new options twenty or thirty miles away was not possible; everyone in the area was in the same boat...

It was not just the skilled blue collar jobs, many of them held by male heads of households but some by women as well, for which the region was known, that were lost. The once skilled workers in the steel industry were out looking for jobs, any jobs, but work was not available. Many of the study women had once been clerical workers but such work also disappeared. It was an economic wasteland.

Even more indicative of the depth of the crisis was the continuing pattern of unemployment and underemployment throughout the 1980s:

...unemployment continues to haunt these households. At the time the interviewed were conducted [i.e., 1987-88] about one-third of the adult household figures who were in the labor market were unemployed: husbands, the women themselves, and adult children. Only among the husbands were a slight majority working full-time. Many employed members were working only part-time and some of them considered their work temporary. The majority of the unemployed are actively seeking work in spite of setbacks.

In the late 1980s there were reports of some economic recovery in the Pittsburgh region and even a decline in unemployment figures. However, the developments described above represent not just a temporary crisis of unemployment and job loss but rather a fundamental restructuring of the region's economy. Gone are the reasonably well-paying jobs in heavy industry and the other enterprises they helped to support. The majority of people who used to work in the mills and related industries — as well as their younger family members newly entering the labor force — now largely find themselves in lower-paid, insecure, often part-time or

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1. *Allegheny County Labor Market Analysis*, p. 37.

Letter to the “Rebel in a Chinese Girls’ School”

by Mary Hillery

*Mary Hillery, a former member of the Socialist Workers Party and currently an unaffiliated socialist activist living in Maine, wrote this reminiscence about Chen Pi-lan at the time of Pi-lan’s death in 1987. She has kindly given *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* permission to publish this valuable portrait of and tribute to a revolutionary feminist and Marxist, based in part on a diary Mary kept during her close association with Pi-lan.*

Chen Pi-lan and her husband, Peng Shu-tse, were leaders of the Chinese Communist Party in its early years during the mass strike movement and revolutionary upsurge of 1925–27, which ended in a bloodbath of suppression at the hands of Chiang Kai-shek, military leader of the Kuomintang.

Out of this experience, as Mary Hillery relates, Chen and Peng became Trotskyists and remained strong and inspiring figures in the Fourth Internationalist movement for the rest of their lives.

In this article we have retained the earlier Wade-Giles system for the spelling of Chinese names, rather than the Pinyin system officially adopted a few years ago.

Dearest Pi-lan,

When I was your secretary, your disciple, your friend in Los Angeles between 1976 and 1979, you shared with me many intimate thoughts as well as serious political teachings. You and Shu-tse both hoped I would become a China scholar as part of my work in the revolutionary movement. On several occasions you enjoined me to write something about your “character” after your death.

Now that you are gone I realize the task you set me is almost too enormous to comprehend. Your political writings have been widely circulated in English and Chinese. Your memoirs, which you diligently pursued throughout your life, are not yet published. Yet how can I begin to capture the greatness of your character within the limits of the English language and my own humble pen?

Alas, I have not become a China scholar; a Marxist, yes; a scholar, no. I only had the honor of knowing you in your waning years when you were plagued by many health problems. In those two years, however, your character revealed itself in all its complexity. You are my muse. Help me to communicate what is in my heart.

Do you remember the title of your article, “Rebel in a Chinese Girls’ School,” printed in the September 1976 *International Socialist Review (ISR)* when you were 74 years old? You recalled for your readers your days as a young student at the Hupeh Girls Normal School. It was 1919. Your principal was delighted to allow a young intellectual to speak to the student body on “Women’s Position in Society.” The speaker was a founder of the Chinese Communist Party. You said in your article, “[His] speech was like throwing a bomb against a feudal bulwark: the Girls Normal School.”

At first only yourself and one girlfriend understood the implications of the revolutionary ideas flooding the country as part of the May 4th Movement. You and your friend set up a Chinese Study Club. “Like a fresh breeze,” you said, “the new ideas were opening our minds — the equality of man and woman, open socialization between the sexes, coeducation, freedom in marriage, etc.”

Your principal was alarmed at the radicalization of his students and fired one of your leftist teachers. The “rebel” students organized a strike to protest the firing and, though you did not win your demands, you were learning the tactics of the class struggle.

By 1922 the student movement had blossomed nationwide, and you, at 20 years old, were a dedicated Marxist activist, a member of the Chinese Communist Party. Your life’s work was mapped out for you.

In 1924 you attended the University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow, expecting to complete a three-year course. Events in China dictated otherwise. You were recalled from Moscow by your party leadership and sent to Honan province, where you organized students and participated in the strikes and rallies of the May 30th Movement [1925]. The YMCA in the city of Chengchow became your base of operations after you gave a speech regarding women workers from its second-floor balcony. You spoke to crowds large and small and wrote articles for *Workers Daily*, a strike publication put out by the YMCA.

The battle cry espoused by you and your comrades was for an anti-imperialist united front of students, trade unionists, civic organizations, and prominent individuals. You were no longer an anonymous rebel but regarded as a dangerous element. That you could be a possible target for repression became clear when another CCP member was murdered outside your door.

You were transferred from Honan back to Shanghai in late 1925 and assigned to the Shanghai Regional Committee. You deferred the assignment, arguing that you were too young to be placed in such a responsible position and should have a chance to rise up from the ranks. You were then assigned to the women’s committee of the local branch of the party.

The May 30th Movement general strike abated but not without the politicization of large numbers of workers, students, peasants, and radical petty bourgeois. The CCP membership

swelled despite the fact that the majority of the CCP were erroneously following Stalin’s policy of joining the Kuomintang (KMT). You wrote in the October 1977 *ISR*, “Ideologically, except for a few opportunistic leaders such as Ch’u Ch’iu-pai and Mao Tse-tung..., the majority of the CCP and Youth League viewed membership in the KMT as a tactic that would serve as a cover for the CCP to expand its influence. They hoped not for a bourgeois national revolution but for an ‘October Revolution.’ That was my aspiration, and I believe it was shared by the most committed and devoted members.”

Before you ever heard the ideas Leon Trotsky was expounding in the Soviet Union, you yourself saw the need for the CCP to have its own public face. Your article, “The October Revolution and Women,” was refused by the KMT paper *China Daily*, so you successfully convinced the CCP Central Committee to publish a women’s magazine, which was called *Chinese Women*.

During our afternoon “Sanka break” in California, you once told me how much you learned from reading mystery novels, which you then applied to escaping from real-life dangerous situations. How many mystery novels had you time to read before the secret police followed you out of a political meeting in Shanghai in

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Photo by Greg Guckenburgh

The author (left) with Chen Pi-lan

In Memory of Charlie Curtiss

by Sarah and Frank Lovell

During the best years of American Trotskyism, in the 1930s and 1940s, everyone in the Trotskyist movement knew Charlie and looked to him as one of our leaders who had the most to offer in the way of Marxist education and personal example. We knew him both as a teacher and personal friend. Sarah knew him at a different time and under different circumstances than Frank, and she will recount her remembrance first.

The Way Sarah Knew Him

During World War II, I was friendly with Lillian [Curtiss] because we were working together in the SWP national office in New York, at 116 University Place. Her son David was then an infant, and sometimes I would walk with her as she strolled with David in Washington Square Park and through Greenwich Village. We talked about the war, and she spoke about Charlie and what he wrote from the European battlefield. So my introduction to Charlie was through Lillian.

When he returned from the war it seemed to me that he was different from the picture I had of him. He had been through the Italian campaign and had experienced the horrors of war. I thought of Charlie as a very sensitive and gentle person and remember his saying to me, in the matter-of-fact way he had of speaking, "Sarah, you cannot imagine the depravity that battle conditions bring out in personal behavior." He was appalled at the conduct of some GIs in Italy. It seemed to me then that some of his idealism was destroyed by his wartime experiences, but if that was true, it was never revealed in his own personal relations with his comrades in the Trotskyist movement.

Many years later, in the early 1980s before the Trotskyists were expelled from the SWP, Frank and I stayed overnight with Lillian and Charlie. She was then still active in the party and very critical of the leadership, both politically and as people without character or social vision. Charlie, who at the time had years before left the Trotskyist movement, did not participate in our exchange of opinions about the degeneration of the SWP. Instead he offered to take us on a drive along the Santa Monica coastline, where we enjoyed beautiful and peaceful views high above the Pacific. And Charlie talked about what a wonderful world this can be if it isn't destroyed by capitalist greed and atomic war.

It seemed to me during that very pleasant afternoon drive that the role of teacher was the most natural part of Charlie's personality. But as we have talked about our different experiences with Charlie, it seems to me that Frank probably knew this side of him better than I. So I will let him continue.

But before I'm finished I want to mention another side of Charlie's character. Frank and I saw him again shortly after Lillian died in 1985. We were in Los Angeles for a meeting of the

Emergency National Conference, which sought to revive the antiwar movement. Charlie and young members of the Socialist Party had a literature table at the conference, and when we met with Charlie it was to talk of Lillian. He was grieving her death and wanted some form of activity to recapture pleasant times with her. He invited us for lunch and took us for a long afternoon drive. As it turned out he retraced the drive we had taken with him and Lillian several years before, and we stopped at the same viewpoints to look out over the Pacific again. During the drive Charlie spoke about a trip he and Lillian had taken to England, during which they visited all the places where William Morris had lived and worked and that are associated with his poetry. This was a beautiful afternoon with Charlie, during which he revealed a shy sentimental side of his character that now seems to me what I remember most fondly about him.

Frank Remembers...

Charlie Curtiss once told a mutual friend that he had first heard of Frank Lovell as a student at the University of California who was an early subscriber to the Trotskyist magazine *New Internationalist*. And I can report that it was about this time that I first heard of Charlie Curtiss because it was not possible to know much about American Trotskyism in the 1930s without hearing about or coming in contact with Charlie, especially if you were on the West Coast.

I heard about Charlie long before meeting him. When I joined the Trotskyist movement in Oakland, California, in 1935, the factional struggle within the Workers Party over dissolving that party in order to enter the Socialist Party had just concluded. Charlie was one of the so-called Cannonites, maybe the only one in the West with one or two possible exceptions, and as such he was the leading advocate of entrisism into the SWP. Consequently, the name Charlie Curtiss was spoken often, usually with an odd mixture of respect and derision. The group I joined in Oakland had been opposed to entrisism, but many were beginning to revise their positions. They were turning to Charlie for clarification, knowing that he would be sympathetic as well as helpful in their new situation inside the SP.

I first came to know Charlie in 1937 when I was working in the San Pedro branch office of the Sailors Union of the Pacific. Charlie visited me in San Pedro and suggested that we start a study series on Marxist economics for sailors and longshoremen. He would organize and lead the classes. My part was to find a meeting place and enroll some students. The classes began, regular weekly meetings of a few students, maybe ten at most, in a rented room in Carpenters Hall in San Pedro. Charlie came punctually every week, well prepared to explain elementary economics and basic Marxist concepts. I don't recall how long the classes continued, and

I'm not sure what those who attended learned. None of them joined the Socialist Party so far as I know. But I'm sure nearly all of them remembered for a long time something about those classes — the teacher. What I remember from that experience is Charlie's explanation of the term "radical." What is a radical? Charlie said that linguistically "radical" and "radish" belong to the same family of words. And radicals are people who go to the root of things, who try to learn the causes of economic and social problems. That is what the classes were about.

Later, when I worked as a coastal sailor and was frequently in the San Pedro harbor, I occasionally visited Charlie in Los Angeles and sometimes stayed overnight at the Curtiss home. Charlie worked as a printer in those days at the start of World War II in Europe. He was an indefatigable socialist organizer and agitator. Whenever I stayed overnight at his and Lillian's house, he would drive me to the Red Car depot on 6th Street in downtown LA, but on the way there we always made a couple of stops where Charlie handed out the newspaper *Socialist Appeal* to factory workers clocking in for the day shift. He did this regularly, and many of the workers knew him. Some had joined the LA branch of the newly formed Socialist Workers Party. Of course, I helped pass out our Trotskyist paper and talked with some of the workers. Lurid stories in the capitalist press — especially the Hearst newspapers of the time — had led many people to believe that all waterfront jobs were controlled by "communist unions," and all workers there were some kind of communists.

When the news of Trotsky's assassination was flashed across the air waves and into the headlines, I happened to be aboard a small lumber carrier docked in San Pedro and took the day off to go to LA. That evening an emergency meeting of the Los Angeles branch of the SWP was called to hear a report by Charlie. He told us the Old Man was dead, and tried to explain the great loss our movement had suffered. He was also reassuring, explaining that the socialist movement had sustained great losses in the past, and the struggle for social justice and the new economic system of abundance for all would continue as long as capitalist exploitation of the working class prevails.

In retrospect I have often been reminded of that meeting and of Charlie's prophecy. He did not venture an opinion about how the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism would occur, except that it would come about only through the heroic efforts of an educated working class. In later years he lost confidence in the Leninist method of working-class organization and leadership. But he never lost his vision of a future society, ushered into history by the modern working class.

In keeping with Charlie's political evolution there can be no more fitting epitaph than the words of William Morris, whom he so greatly admired: "So let us forgive the mistakes others make, even if we make none ourselves, that we may better make war upon the monopolist." □

January 20, 1994

Leninist Organization and Revolutionary Leadership

by Roy Rollin

This is the second section of the article by the same title, begun in our previous issue. (References have not always been included in this section. Readers interested in the sources of quotations may contact the author through this magazine.)

Breaking with Social Democracy: From the "Logic" of Hegel to the Comintern

It was in backward tsarist Russia that Lenin created the vehicle for fighting the reformism that had become endemic to the workers movement in the West, a vanguard party made up solely of "the most advanced and resolute section of the working class." In *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, Lenin had already begun to go beyond the boundaries of the "one party—one proletariat" doctrine, when he wrote that "the party, as the vanguard of the working class, must not be confused, after all, with the entire class." Citing the objective situation of the proletariat under capitalism, rather than the specificities of tsarist Russia, Lenin pointed out:

Precisely because there are differences in degree of consciousness and degree of activity, a distinction must be made in degree of proximity to the party...it would be... "tailism" to think that the entire class, or almost the entire class, can ever rise, under capitalism, to the level of consciousness and activity of its vanguard, of its... party.

Yet Lenin still identified himself with the political and philosophical premises of orthodox Social Democracy and accepted the view that "a party can contain a whole gamut of opinions and shades of opinion, the extremes of which may be sharply contradictory." Exclusiveness was confined to the Bolshevik "section" of the party, and Lenin, for the most part, justified his tactics of building a programmatically homogeneous revolutionary vanguard by referring to the specific situation within Russia. Reformism in its Russian variant was likewise seen by Lenin as external to the working class, being "a bourgeois intellectualist trend."

It took the collapse of the Second International at the start of World War I for Lenin to locate the source of reformism within the workers movement as part of a complete methodological break with Social Democracy and its world view, which Michael Löwy has aptly described as "predialectical" and "vulgarly evolutionist materialism." Lenin's break is reflected as much in his *Philosophical Notebooks* as it is in works such as *The Collapse of the Second International*, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, and *The State and Revolution*, as well as in the "April Theses," which set the Bolsheviks on course for October. As Lukács points out, "the theory of imperialism... simultaneously became a theory

of the different currents within the working-class movement in the age of imperialism" (Lukács Lenin, p. 53). Thus it is between 1914 and 1917 that Leninism takes shape as a qualitative extension of Marxism, "start[ing] from an understanding of the character of the time... [in which] revolution is already on its agenda" (ibid., p. 12).

The Bolsheviks were thus able to "push forward all others" because they were not being held back themselves by the least advanced and resolute sections of the working class, which Lenin saw as "the bureaucracy of the labor movement and the aristocracy of labor." The later provided the "social mainstay" for the reformism that had come to dominate most of the Second International and thus the "channels of bourgeois influence over the proletariat." For Social Democracy's period of massive growth was intimately interlinked with the massive international expansion of capitalism that took place at the turn of century, "which, everywhere in the Second International... produced a certain type of traitor, opportunist, and social-chauvinist leader, who champion the interests of their own craft, their own section of the labor aristocracy..." and, he might have added, their own ruling class. Since "every imperialist 'Great Power can and does bribe smaller strata (than in England in Marx and Engels' day) of the 'labor aristocracy'... in all countries the bourgeoisie has... secured for itself 'bourgeois labor parties' of social chauvinists." Lenin's conclusion was that "the revolutionary proletariat cannot be victorious unless this evil is combated, unless the opportunist, social-traitor leaders are exposed, discredited and expelled." Not only is "a split with the opportunists... the prime duty of revolutionaries..." but a "Third International should be built up on that kind of revolutionary basis... The only question that exists... is whether this can be achieved on an international scale in the immediate future." (Quotations above are from several sources: Lenin, "Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International," and Lenin and Zinoviev, "Socialism and War," in *The Imperialist War* [New York: International Publishers, 1930], *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder* [Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960], and *Collected Works*, Vol. 23 [Moscow: Progress, 1962].)

Such an international was in fact built up on that kind of revolutionary basis. The Third International, founded in 1919 amidst the revolutionary wave sweeping Europe in the after-

math of World War I, was meant to be "the Bolshevik Party — Lenin's concept of the party — on a world scale" (Lukács, p. 59). Its second congress in 1920 generalized the Bolshevik experience and brought Marx and Engels' conceptions, as well as those that had been dominant in the Second International, on the relationship between party and class up to date. The "Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in Proletarian Revolution," drafted by Zinoviev, stated:

The communist party is a part of the working class, the most advanced, politically conscious and revolutionary part. The communist party is composed of the best, most politically conscious, most dedicated and far sighted workers. The communist party has no interests other than those of the working class. It differs from the general mass of workers in that it surveys the whole historical path of the working class in its totality, and tries at each stage of the struggle to defend the interests of the working class as a whole, rather than of individual groups or trades. The communist party is the organizational and political lever which assists the more advanced part of the working class to direct the masses of the proletariat and semi-proletariat onto the right path. (Grigory Zinoviev, "The Role of the Communist Party in Proletarian Revolution," in *Theses, Resolutions, and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, London: Ink Links, p. 71.)

As we have seen, the Bolsheviks could only do this by "not... shun[ning] mass workers' organizations which have a non-party character..." Their medium had been the united front tactic and an action program of transitional demands which linked revolution to the actual activity and organizations of the working class. The united front aims to mobilize workers to gain necessary objectives, and in the course of the struggle, break them from their reformist leaders by exposing the latter's inadequacy even in defending the most basic interests. In order to do so, "the communists [must] disdain to conceal their views and aims" as Marx put it in the Manifesto, since those views "are the only consistent expression of the defense of working class interests as a whole." Transitional demands are those whose realization becomes more and more incompatible with the bourgeois status quo. While starting from today's needs, they bring the masses through their own experiences to, in the words of Trotsky, "one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."

From Vanguard Organization to Vanguard Party

The "mass of the proletariat" only learns through its own actions; just as essential as organizing and maintaining a vanguard organization "united by... program" is rooting this organization in the workers movement which it aspires to "direct... onto the right path." This means being an active participant in as many of its struggles as circumstances permit, "carry[ing] out communist work within them at all costs." "The task devolving on Communists," wrote Lenin in *Left Wing Communism, An*

Infantile Disorder, “is to convince the backward elements, to work among them, and not to fence themselves off from them...through all the intermediate stations and all compromises...[to] clearly perceive and constantly pursue the final aim.”

As Lukács pointed out in his book on Lenin:

The vanguard party of the proletariat can only fulfil its destiny...if it is always a step in front of the struggling masses, to show them the way. But only one step in front so that it always remains leader of their struggle (p. 11).

For a vanguard organization to become a vanguard party it has to be recognized as such by the “more advanced part of the working class” and not just its own membership and be seen as an alternative to, rather than just a critic of, the mass reformist parties. What must take place is a fusion between the vanguard organization and the vanguard layer of the class; those elements who have come to make up that “advanced part” through their ongoing actions as the real leaders of the various sectors of the class struggle. The latter are driven to continuous organization and growing consciousness less by theory than by practical knowledge acquired in struggle. Ernest Mandel has summarized that “the building of the revolutionary class party is the process whereby the program of the socialist revolution is fused with the experience the majority of advanced workers have acquired in struggle” (Mandel, “The Leninist Theory of Organization,” in *Revolution and Class Struggle*, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978, pp. 89-90).

Success in Russia...

To grow as they did in 1917, it was necessary for the Bolsheviks to have made this kind of fusion in practice during the upsurges of mass struggle that took place in 1905–06 and 1912–14. The expansion that took place in the heat of the revolution in 1917 was only made possible by what Trotsky called “the importance of preparatory ideological selection and of political case hardening” of the party beforehand. Lenin had foreseen this when he pointed out in *What is to be Done?* “that it is precisely during the revolution that we shall stand in need of the results of or theoretical battles with [our] critics in order to be able resolutely to combat their practical positions.”

Analyzing the social composition of the membership of both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks on the basis of the available empirical data, David Lane concluded that “if judged by the bottom levels of the party and...by its popular support, it may be said that the Bolsheviks were a ‘workers’ party,” whereas “the Mensheviks had...more ‘petty-bourgeois’ members, and fewer working-class supporters at the lower levels.” Lane, echoing Trotsky, also notes that “the Bolsheviks were younger than the Mensheviks at the lowest levels of party organization and more so among the ‘activists’ than among the ordinary members...these young men may have provided more dynamic and vigorous leadership for the Bolshevik faction.”

It was precisely “this stratum of workers, decisively risen to their feet during the upward years of 1912–14,” says Trotsky, who, “in the February revolution...played the decisive role.” It was with the support of these worker-Bolsheviks that Lenin was able to get his “April Theses” so easily adopted; the latter expressed what the former had been clamoring for since the first days of the revolution. Finally, it was the destruction of most of this stratum during the civil war, rather than any preconceived (and, in reality, nonexistent) doctrine of a single-party state, that helped pave the road to power for the Stalinist bureaucracy.

... Failure in Germany

The pre-existence of an experienced and organized vanguard linked to the most advanced layer of militant workers was thus instrumental in securing victory for the working class in the Russian revolution. The German revolution of 1918–1919, on the other hand, failed precisely because of the lack of such a trained vanguard and refuted Rosa Luxemburg’s contention that “the proletarian army [can be] recruited and become aware of its objectives in the course of the struggle itself.” To be fair to Rosa, it should be pointed out that by the time of the founding of the German Communist Party at the end of 1918, she was talking about “replacing revolutionary moods with...revolutionary convictions, the spontaneous with the systematic” and that “the Spartacus League is only that part of the proletariat that is conscious of its goal...that part, which, at each step, points the...masses as a whole towards their historic task...” Thus she proclaimed that “the revolutionary shock troops of the German proletariat have joined together into an independent political party.”

The problem for the German revolution was that Rosa Luxemburg and other leaders of the left wing had previously failed to realize that the essence of Lenin’s organizational conception was not “overstress[ing]...organization” but that “that part of the proletariat that is conscious of its goal” must be organized separate and apart from that part which is not.

The revolutionary nuclei around Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were not assembled in any kind of formation and faced the necessity of putting one together during the course of World War I and struggle against it. Dispersed in a smattering of small groupings, “3,000 members at most by the end of the war,” according to the German communist Heinrich Brandler, “and a good half of them...moral pacifists not Marxists,” they only came together after the revolution had already started.

Karl Radek reported that at the beginning of the revolution the Spartacus League had less than fifty organized members in Berlin. Weak in numbers, in experience, and in programmatic and organizational cohesiveness they were hardly in a position to influence events. Rather, events influenced them. Brandler comments that “our tragedy was that we were unable to restrain the elemental forces of the revolution till the time when action was possible, unlike

the Bolsheviks...” It was only in 1921, at the Halle Congress, that the Communist Party of Germany (German initials, KPD) was finally able to win over the most advanced layer of militant workers, specifically the Revolutionary Shop Stewards and the left wing of the Independent Socialist Party of Germany (German initials, USPD). Needless to say, that was too late to prevent the reformist Social Democracy of Ebert, Scheidemann, and Noske from putting a decisive brake on the revolutionary process.

Luxemburg had long clung to the view that an upsurge of militant class struggle would seal the fate of reformism. In her polemics with Lenin she had counterposed ideological to organizational struggle, since “opportunism appears [as] a product and an inevitable phase of the historic development of the labor movement...[It] develops rapidly...in the stagnant waters of the movement; in a swift running stream it will die of itself.” Because she saw the party “as the very movement of the working class,” she would not hear of making an organizational break with it until the reformists made the break for her in 1917. For Lenin, on the other hand, “organization not based on principle is meaningless, and in practice it converts the workers into...[an] appendage of the bourgeoisie in power.” He added that “serious violations of principle...make the severance of all organizational relations imperative.” As opposed to Lenin, Luxemburg’s conception of the role of the party was therefore mainly a propagandistic one.

But far from lessening the differences between revolutionaries and reformists, revolution itself exacerbates them to the boiling point. Those whom Luxemburg had fought with the force of argument before the war now fought her with the argument of force. Nor does an upsurge of class struggle mean that the masses will gain a clear understanding of the goals of the struggle or find their way to the party best capable of achieving them. In Germany there was no equivalent of Lenin’s Bolshevik party, with an already acquired authority among the most advanced workers, that could appear as a credible alternative to the mass reformist party, the SPD. The Social Democratic labor bureaucracy, desperately trying to maintain its power and privileges within the framework of the capitalist status quo, was able to use the recently radicalized elements, the more backward layers of the working class, as a club against the van-



ROSA LUXEMBURG

guard. When a majority of these workers began to realize what was happening and were ready to move in the direction of a revolutionary alternative, it was to the centrist USPD that they went. Meanwhile the most revolutionary elements had already undergone debilitating blows, up to and including the murders of Luxemburg and Liebknecht at the hands of the Social Democratic "appendage of the bourgeoisie."

Reformism's Alternative: The Bourgeois Labor Party

Bringing together "a minority that represents the best-organized and most revolutionary workers showing the way to the entire proletariat," the Leninist organization realizes in practice Marx and Engels' desire that "the communists...[be] the most advanced and resolute section of the working class...which pushes forward all others." Historically, the only alternative to this model has been what Ernest Mandel has described as a "dues-paying electoral club," which can contain all workers regardless of their level of political understanding. Formations of this type, which include Labor and Social Democratic parties, as well as the social-democratized Stalinist parties, claim to represent the working class as a whole. However, they can make that claim only on the basis of the existing level of class consciousness. As we have seen, this consciousness is uneven at best and those with a revolutionary perspective are usually in a minority except in periods of heightened class conflict. These reformist parties, because of their all-inclusiveness, represent not the struggle and self-activity of the working class, but its passivity and inactivity. Their program and practice come to represent the least "advanced and resolute sections of the working class," "the bureaucracy of the labor movement and the aristocracy of labor," whose power and privileges are based upon the maintenance of the status quo.

For the Social Democrat, the party comes to represent the class as a whole and thus contains within it all the different trends within the class. With the collapse of the Second International in 1914, Lenin came to realize that "the old theory that opportunism is a 'legitimate shade' in a single party that knows no 'extremes' has now turned into a...deception of the workers and a...hindrance to the working class movement." For during periods of stability in which the majority of the class is reformist the party must be reformist as well. Such was the case "of the socialist parties of the epoch of the Second International...tolerat[ing] in its midst an opportunism built up in decades of the 'peaceful period'..." For Leninists, on the other hand, "the communists must not adapt themselves to these backward layers of the working class... they must raise the working class to the level of its communist vanguard." And they can only do that if, even in the most reformist of periods, they remain composed solely of revolutionaries for whom the overall interests of the class stand higher than any immediate interests of any one layer of it.

"In a developed capitalist society, during a 'democratic' regime," wrote Trotsky, "the bourgeoisie leans for support primarily upon the working classes, which are held in check by the reformists." Far from being vehicles through which to advance the class struggle, reformist organizations help to hold it back. They are "the party that leans upon the workers but serves the bourgeoisie." Their leaders, like Friedrich Ebert, "hate revolution like sin," and see parliamentary politics, where they can rub elbows with the representatives of the ruling rich minus the irritating interference of the mass of rank-and-file activists, as the be-all and end-all of their political existence.

Thus, in the quest for an ever elusive majority at the polls, they continually water down whatever advanced, proletarian content exists in their program in order to woo the more backward, middle class elements of the electorate. Whatever discussion and debate is internally tolerated in no way binds individuals to its outcome, since party leaders regularly ignore these decisions with impunity. Trotsky characterized the structure of reformist organizations as:

the hidden, masked but no less fatal dictatorship of the bourgeois "friends" of the proletariat, the careerist parliamentarians, the drawing room journalists, the whole parasitic coterie which permits the ranks of the party to speak "freely" and democratically but tenaciously holds on to the apparatus and in the final analysis does anything it pleases. This kind of "democracy" in the party is nothing but a replica of the bourgeois democratic state...

The purpose of this, Trotsky concludes, is to throw a monkey wrench into the "revolutionary education of the workers, to drown out their voices by the chorus of municipal councilors, parliamentarians, etc., who are imbued to the marrow of their bones with egotistic petty-bourgeois and reactionary prejudices." The mass of the apolitical and passive membership comes to provide this "chorus" with a steady supply of voting fodder to beat down any and every oppositional stirring.

Vanguard parties, on the other hand, involve a minority of selfless and dedicated activists, those who recognize the incompatibility of their aims with the status quo and hence the need to overthrow the existing state rather than reform it and become a part of it. High levels of internal debate are the rule rather than the exception because of the high level of agreement on general politics and a wide knowledge of the Marxist methodology.

Social Democracy: "Not a Revolution-Making Party"

"Political questions cannot be mechanically separated from organizational questions," said Lenin, "and anybody who accepts or rejects the Bolshevik party organization independent of whether or not we live at a time of proletarian revolution has completely misunderstood it." Forms of organization are intimately linked to the role they play in society; their character determines their aims and their priority of tasks. The broad

church of reformism bases its existence upon the impossibility or undesirability of revolution, whereas Lenin's concept of party organization presupposes "the actuality of the revolution" and "is conceived as an instrument of class struggle in a revolutionary period" (Lukács).

For the hard-core reformists of the Eduard Bernstein school, the movement is everything, the goal, nothing. Since the goal is predetermined by the timeless march of history, the evolution of humanity toward progress and the triumph of science and reason, questions of strategy and tactics have no place. That is, providing aberrations like wars and revolutions don't get in the way and upset everything. Likewise, the "passive radicalism" of Karl Kautsky, while admitting the possibility of revolution, is no less hostile to it since the "bronze laws [that] determine the necessary transformation of society" render socialism "as irresistible and inevitable as the unceasing development of capitalism." Small wonder that Lenin could exclaim, "They haven't at all understood the essential of Marxism...its revolutionary dialectic." According to Kautsky, "the socialist party is a revolutionary party, but not a revolution-making party. We know that it is just as little in our power to create this revolution as it is in the power of our opponents to prevent it. It is no part of our work to instigate a revolution or to prepare the way for it." Thus Bernstein and Kautsky could easily make their peace with each other over the grave of the German revolution in 1918-1919, which both agreed was an obstacle in the way of history's "bronze laws," and was thus "part of [their] work" to crush.

Leninism: Making History Instead of Reflecting It

"The Leninist form of organization," on the other hand, argues Lukács, "is inseparably connected with the ability to foresee the approaching revolution." Leninism is thus intimately interrelated to the question of the nature of the historical epoch in which we live. It sees the world revolution as a process and proceeds from the assumption that capitalism as a whole is in an epoch of structural crisis that must periodically lead to revolutionary upheavals. Thus, "the party...is conceived as an instrument of class struggle in a revolutionary period," and thus it focuses on the likelihood of revolutionary actions breaking out in the not-so-distant future, with the expectation that it will play a leading role in those actions. Therefore it is a democratically disciplined and centralized combat organization based on "unity of action, freedom of discussion and criticism." Centralization takes on a political content as well as organizational form; the revolutionary party must be prepared to lead all of the working class in struggle against the bosses' own instrument of centralization, the state.

Unlike Social Democracy, which aspires to do no more than passively reflect the working class as it is and await the working out of historical laws, the Leninist party aims to intervene in the shaping of history. "Through the

medium of a party," writes Trotsky, "the proletariat acquires an independent role... when from a social class in itself, it becomes a political class for itself."

The Actuality of the Revolution Today

Have the major battles of the class struggle spoken for or against the Leninist theory of organization? Was it, as many would contend, simply a product of specifically Russian conditions or Eastern peculiarities and restricted to them? Or was Trotsky accurate when he asserted in the Transitional Program in 1938, that "the historic crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership"? Have either of those crises been overcome? What does the historical record show? It, in fact, shows that these crises have grown deeper and more acute and that if the Leninist party was indispensable in Russia, where the workers faced a belated and bumbling bourgeoisie and reformism was an equally feeble social and political force, such a party was and is many times more necessary in the West, where the strongest, richest, and most ruthless of ruling classes reside.

Today in the aftermath of the collapse of Stalinism, there is no lack of skeptics on the left for whom Leninism is synonymous with Stalinism and who doubt that a vanguard party is either necessary or desirable. Having been carried off with the current to the right and having washed their hands of the classical Marxist tradition in the process, they echo the sentiments of bourgeois public opinion, belittling anything and everything that smacks of revolution in the slightest.

Some claim "that there has been a change of epoch," which requires "non-strategically defined parties" that "draw together all those who sincerely want to fight for the transformation of society without...having to agree on reform or revolution." Not surprisingly those who turn their backs to Leninism now find themselves face to face with...pre-1914 Social Democracy. By embracing Kautsky and rejecting Lenin, they think they can reverse the "great schism" that took place during World War I and the

Russian Revolution between communism and social democracy. In the process of doing so, they also wind up arm-in-arm with Kautsky's theory of "ultra-imperialism" which predicted "the joint exploitation of the world by internationally united finance capital in place of the mutual rivalries of national finance capitals..." In other words, a new lease on life for capitalism with all that that implies politically. Lenin's theory of imperialism, on the other hand, sees an intensification of those mutual rivalries, which in turn further intensify national and class struggles all across the board. For Lenin, imperialism marks the beginning of the end for capitalism and the opening of an era of "wars and revolutions" in which a revolutionary party becomes the key weapon in the hands of the working class.

For all the talk of how outdated and antiquated Leninism is, the so-called "New Thinking" is anything but new. It is the same old reformist garbage served up in cans barely distinguishable from those used by the reformists of Lenin's time. Today they not only make the same stale arguments as Lenin's opponents; they take advantage of the occasion to try to rehabilitate the Marxist credentials of Lenin's opponents. From Eric Hobsbawm to Robin Blackburn paeans of praise are poured forth for the wisdom of the Mensheviks and the insight of Kautsky. Let them go as they please; the tradition of revolutionary Marxism, of which the Leninist theory of organization remains a key component, will progress without them and over and against them as well.

For as Luxemburg pointed out at the time of the "revisionist controversy," they "mistake a particular moment in capitalist development for its whole history." Today, in both the East and the West, capitalism finds itself in a chronic crisis with no visible sign of an international recovery. Tensions are heating up, not cooling down, and workers are beginning to show signs of a fightback against the employers' offensive. The New World Order is a house built on sand as massive social unrest and turmoil arise in more and more places.

The actuality of the revolution continues to provide the keynote of the whole epoch. At the time of the founding of the Fourth International in 1938, Trotsky wrote:

The Fourth International is now the only international organization which takes clearly into account the driving forces of [this] epoch [and] is armed with a system of transitional demands which are capable of uniting the masses for a revolutionary struggle for power.

The "Statutes of the Fourth International," adopted at its founding congress, went on to declare:

In its platform, the Fourth International concentrate[s] the international experience of the revolutionary Marxist movement, and especially that which rises out of the...October...Revolution...It assimilates and bases itself upon all of humanity's progressive social experiences, which lead to the expropriation of the capitalist class and to the ultimate abolition of classes.

With the collapse of Stalinism and the continuing bankruptcy of Social Democracy, what was written in 1938 remains as true, if not more so, today. That is why Trotskyism is Leninism today, and that is why to build the Leninist party today means to build the Fourth International! □

October 14, 1993



Bill Clinton's State of the Union Address: Its Meaning for Working People

Continued from page 2

the workers in these countries through massive privatization would only embolden and renew the confidence of American capitalists and their government in their ongoing war against American working people.

The budget Clinton sent to Congress "draws the line against further cuts" in the massive U.S. military budget. The real reason for this is that U.S. victory in the Cold War presents both new opportunities and obligations for the U.S. to use its military might in the so-called Third World to ensure its domination over markets and raw materials against Europe and Japan. Despite Clinton's claim that "our forces are the finest military our nation has ever had" (certainly true

in terms of sheer massive firepower), he skipped lightly over the proposed U.S. withdrawal from Somalia, a nation of impoverished peasants that the U.S. has been unable to impose its direct rule over under the mask of "humanitarian aid." After U.S. forces massacred women and children in the streets, Clinton was compelled to begin to withdraw, despite the relatively small number of American casualties, because the U.S. ruling class continues to fear how large segments of the U.S. population would react to involvement of American ground troops in another Vietnam war. Here we see the "feet of clay" of U.S. imperialism. But the massive murderous air war waged against Iraq and Clinton's campaign against North Korea's "nuclear

arsenal" should serve as a reminder to all that the threat of massively destructive U.S. military intervention abroad remains quite real.

Clinton's State of the Union Address means that working people can expect some attempts at limited social reforms that will guarantee the profits of big business combined with a continuation of "business as usual" in the form of eroding civil liberties, increased government-sponsored repression, and further military aggression against the impoverished semi-colonial world and the politically collapsed workers' states. □

January 29, 1994

Does Leninism Equal Sectarianism?

by Mary Scully

The following is the first part of a two-part article replying to "Notes on Building a Revolutionary Party" by Paul Le Blanc, which appeared in the June and July-August issues of Bulletin in Defense of Marxism.

Leninism and the "Mass Left-Wing Workers' Subculture"

Paul Le Blanc, who has long advocated the Leninist — i.e., the revolutionary — form of organization, now challenges the possibility and the advisability of building such an organization, either nationally or internationally, in this historic period. He claims that there cannot be a Leninist party in this country without the prior existence of a "mass left-wing workers' subculture," which is "a minority numbering in the millions." Furthermore, he argues, any attempt to build such an organization now will inevitably lead to sectarianism.

According to Le Blanc, this "subculture" existed in the U.S. from 1860 through the 1930s but passed into oblivion during the 1940s and 1950s due to several factors: the effects of World War II, Stalinism, a class-collaborationist trade-union leadership, the Cold War, and economic prosperity. Because this "subculture" showed such intransigence by managing to survive for 80 years, including through World War I, anarcho-syndicalism, a class-collaborationist trade-union leadership, numerous Red Scares, prolonged economic depressions, and economic prosperity, we need to know exactly what factors led to its demise.

Le Blanc doesn't tell us much about the workers in this "subculture" except that there were a lot of them. Were they an organized group with undefined political sentiments or were they a conscious movement with a philosophical viewpoint? What was their political philosophy? Were they class conscious? Or only partly class conscious? Did they believe in class struggle? Did they believe in the need for socialist revolution? What were the theoretical disputes that engaged them? Was this "subculture" the "class-struggle left-wing" or was it even broader? Le Blanc leaves so much unexplained. Precisely, we need to know why the absence of this subculture invalidates the need for a Leninist party, its strategy, and its leadership? And what exactly is it that prohibits Leninists from functioning, even as a minority, to accelerate the formation of this "subculture"?

Le Blanc marshalled no evidence for his claim, when so much is riding on it. It would have been useful if he had described the formation and character of this "subculture," something of its history and activities, the process and dynamic of its development and decline. If the existence of a Leninist, i.e., a revolutionary, party is dependent upon its prior existence, then the revolutionary movement ought to study its formation concretely and in detail in much the same way as our movement has analyzed the phenomenon of soviets. This elaboration would necessarily become part of the theoretical arsenal of Marxism. Since we have not seen refer-

ence to this phenomenon anywhere else in the annals of the revolutionary movement, and because it might crop up in some other country, Le Blanc ought to explain whether this "subculture" is related to peculiarities in the development of the American class struggle or whether it has application to other countries.

The only logical conclusion of Le Blanc's argument — a conclusion he does not hesitate to draw — is that a revolutionary party be substituted by and subordinated to some undefined broader political milieu on the basis of no program until the "mass workers' subculture" reemerges in American politics. So we are not dealing here with a difference of opinion over which organizational form the revolutionary movement should take, as important as that is, but rather with matters of principled significance. His argument is reducible to: "the objective conditions do not exist; the relationship of forces is against us." The relationship of forces is usually to the disadvantage of the revolutionary movement, so what exactly is it about the current state of the American class struggle that prohibits the application of the Transitional Program and the application of the united front tactic? And how would substituting political vagabondage for Leninism affect the relationship of forces to our advantage?

To eliminate the need for a revolutionary party, Le Blanc has to deny in general the possibility for revolutionary action, i.e., the possibility of applying the Transitional Program. What he proposes, quite explicitly, is the cessation of conscious revolutionary work within the working class and the substitution of vaguely defined activity within some broader social context. His call for "doing good work" is certainly not the transitional approach of Marxism; it isn't even the discredited and impotent "minimum program" of social democracy. This formulation — "doing good work" — is so thoroughly bereft of class content and so suggestive of philanthropy, if not religious charity, that it is hard to distinguish from the bumper sticker sentiment "Practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty."

To accomplish this conceptual feat, i.e., to provide the rationalization for retreat from the class struggle, Le Blanc unfortunately resorts to the classic refuge of the reformists — historic and contemporary — in the labor movement: he unloads the responsibility onto the working class itself, on its alleged immaturity evidenced by the absence of this "subculture." But the overwhelming evidence from American politics today is that the conditions for revolutionary action are not premature; rather, they are, as Leon Trotsky put it 55 years ago, "overripe." It was also Trotsky's conviction that the existence of a revolutionary party was a "colossal factor"

in the maturity of the working class. Trotsky, of course, did not view this revolutionary party as a doctrinaire clique, nor as a small, exclusive circle of partisans without influence on events, but rather as a realistic political party of action, a fighting party, which was willing to pose before workers not only the necessity for socialism but which had something to say and do about the concrete problems facing the working class today.

Actually, Le Blanc's description of this "subculture" is so sufficiently vague that one could argue that it already exists, that it reemerged with the civil rights movement in the 1960s, the anti-Vietnam-war movement in the 1960s and 1970s, the women's liberation movement in the 1970s. In the past few years we've seen antiwar, prochoice, antiracist, homosexual rights, and environmental mobilizations numbering in the millions, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of workers who have been out on strike, the workers who gave millions of dollars to the Hormel strike in the late 1980s, or the Los Angeles rebellions which expressed the acute anger of an extremely important section of the American working class. How can a schematic formula like the need for a "subculture" substitute for an analysis of these dynamic and contradictory phenomena?

What these social, political, and economic struggles really show is that capitalism is in decline and that there are not the least grounds for expecting more favorable conditions for revolutionary action, particularly given the crisis of leadership in all of these struggles. The working class is being decimated, numerically and politically; the legions of the unemployed are growing. History has conclusively shown that mass unemployment, which exploits the divisions within the class — particularly the racial and sexual divisions — does not increase but rather diminishes the fighting capacities of the working class and has a negative effect upon its consciousness. To subtract the need for a revolutionary party from these considerations is in reality to substitute an abstraction, i.e., the need for a "subculture," for the class struggle itself.

The construct of such a "subculture," as a precondition for a Leninist party, is not an American historical novelty. Le Blanc is not elaborating here a new revolutionary paradigm replacing that of the Russian revolution; rather, he is unwittingly borrowing old errors from the archives of the revolutionary movement, namely fatalism, spontaneism, and empiricism. He is tripping up over the most fundamental questions in revolutionary politics: the nature of class consciousness, the contradictions and dynamics of the class struggle, the relationship of revolutionary leadership to the working class,

and the revolutionary potential of the American working class.

The "Mass Left-Wing Workers' Subculture": a Non-Historical Concept

We cannot here recapitulate the entire history of the American working-class movement or the history of the revolutionary movement which is such a part of it, but we must at least introduce the dialectic of the class struggle to that historical inquiry if we are to understand it and draw on it in order to advance the class struggle today in the interests of the working class.

Even a cursory examination, but certainly a Marxist analysis of the political workers' movement from 1860 through 1930, reveals a very different character than the linear development suggested by Le Blanc, who fails to take into account the development of capitalism or the nature of class conflict.

The political development of the working class does not show a steady growth during these 80 years, as Le Blanc indicates. Every phase of the development of American capitalism — the development of its industry and commerce — has had specific features and conditions which determine the economic and political possibilities of the working class. Le Blanc's "Golden Age" of the "subculture" includes the conflict between Northern and Southern industry leading to the Civil War and the emancipation of slave labor; the formation of the working class and the organization into labor unions primarily of its skilled workers; the genesis of American imperialism, leading to colonialism and wars of annexation; the great Western expansion, including the rise of whole new industries and the defeat and genocide of the indigenous population; World War I, indicating the growing predominance of American imperialism in the world; the huge waves of immigration, which in part introduced the advanced ideas of the European workers' movement to the American class struggle; severe economic depressions; the industrialization of American labor and its unionization, excluding the South because of its preponderance of Black workers and the racism of the union leadership. It should be evident that the working-class movement would be powerfully, but unevenly, affected by these different phases of capitalist development. It should also be evident that working-class consciousness could not be a mechanistic and one-sided aggregation of all this experience, because it was so adversely affected by racism (established with the very foundations of American capitalism), war, capitalist repression, and the profound processes of the class struggle.

There is simply no evidence of this unspecified social formation — is it political, economic, cultural? — called the "mass left-wing workers' subculture," spontaneously generating and numerically proliferating, but there is plenty of evidence for the class struggle, sometimes to the advantage of the workers' movement, sometimes to its disadvantage. We observe discontinuities, ruptures, leaps forward, steps backward. But isn't that the nature of class struggle?

We observe the political focus shifting to different layers in the working class — from the former slaves to immigrant and newly urbanized workers to migrant workers to the emerging industrial working class — depending on the development of capitalism and the exigencies of the class struggle. We also observe the working-class movement advanced, then divided, disoriented, betrayed, advancing anew, then misled again by sectarians, anarchists, syndicalists, bourgeois democrats, utopians, "sewer socialists," Christian socialists, middle-class do-gooders, racists, misogynists, and Stalinists.

Different ideological currents within the working class, which anyway represent different class forces, held political hegemony and influence at different times, depending very much on the development of capitalism and other factors, like the degree of capitalist repression: the period before World War I was the classic period of social democracy and the rise and expansion of syndicalism, which, Trotsky argued, based itself on the lack of development and the prejudices of the working class. Not only the capitalist persecution of radicals prior to World War I signaled the end of the influence of anarcho-syndicalism, but the war itself divided the political workers' movement between the social patriots and the revolutionists. The Russian revolution in 1917 divided the already weakened workers' movement, separating the syndicalists and utopians from the revolutionists, who were a minority. The realignment of class forces internationally now counterposed Soviet power to world imperialism, strengthening the revolutionary movement and its authority within the working class.

The degeneration of the Russian revolution, under the leadership of Stalin, was a blow struck at the world working class. That degeneration demonstrated conclusively that class consciousness is not a static process of accumulation, as Le Blanc suggests, but rather it is a dialectic and relative process. Just as the victory of the Russian revolution testified to the "maturity" of working-class consciousness, a few years later that very same working class, due to exhaustion, permitted the revolution to be strangled by a bureaucracy which arose from its ranks.

Jim Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism, poignantly describes how the early American Communist Party, inspired by the ideals and model of the Russian revolution, became disoriented and corrupted not just by the Stalinization of the Comintern but by their exhaustion and loss of conviction in the revolutionary potential of the American working class, due to the relative economic prosperity of the 1920s. Little could these class fighters foresee, he pointed out, either the impending Depression or the great class battles of the 1930s, which were just around the corner.

By the time those class battles erupted, the Communist Party was thoroughly Stalinized and permeated with petty-bourgeois political vices. Its degeneration and influence in the workers' movement deprived the revolutionary movement of the possibility of positively influencing the class struggle in the direction of socialist revolution. It could not, however, stop the class struggle, as the 1934 Minneapolis

Teamsters strike, led by the Trotskyists, makes clear. Only one question remains: where was the "mass left-wing workers' subculture" in all of this? Where did it stand on the Russian revolution and in the struggle between Stalinism and Marxism?

The influence of a Leninist organization is not measured only by its size but primarily by its support in the working class and its impact on the class struggle. In 1934 the American Trotskyist movement had only several hundred members and in Minneapolis less than a dozen members, but they led the nationally important Teamsters strike, and between 1934 and 1940 were crucial to the development of the Teamsters union in the U.S.

World War II misleadership by the class collaborationists (particularly the Stalinists) and the repressive Cold War (which was directed not only at socialist revolution internationally but against the influence of the revolutionary movement in the American labor movement) profoundly and negatively affected the workers' movement, but they also indicated the growing crisis of imperialism.

A concrete analysis of this period would require an anatomy of the pernicious role of Stalinism in support of the war, its betrayal of the labor movement, and its impact on the revolutionary movement, as well as an assessment of the impact of the war and of capitalist repression on those movements. Once again, where was the mass workers' "subculture" in all of this? Where did they stand? And how were they so decisively routed by the very same class forces which they had so intransigently withstood for 80 years?

Such an analysis would show that the formidable military and repressive resources of capitalism used against the revolutionary movement, i.e., against the working class, could not stop the class struggle from erupting, so unbearable were the contradictions. The antiwar movement that swept the armed forces at the end of the war coincided and interlinked with the great postwar strike wave. Internationally, not only the Korean war and the Cuban revolution, but the eruption of the anti-Vietnam-war movement showed that anti-Communist hysteria generated by the capitalist propaganda machine could not sufficiently restrain opposition to imperialist war, even against a revolution.

Such an analysis would also show that the American Trotskyist movement, although reduced by capitalist persecution to only a few hundred people, remained committed to its revolutionary organization and principles. Even as an insignificant minority, they opposed World War II, the Cold War, imperialist war in Korea, and defended the Cuban revolution. Their adherence to the Marxist program, against all odds and in such unfavorable political conditions, began to attract revolutionary-minded youth to the fight for socialism, putting the movement in a position to take advantage of the new openings in the class struggle just around the corner.

In the U.S., the spontaneous eruptions of the civil rights movement and the women's liberation movement during the 1960s were not outside or mere adjuncts to the class struggle but

reflected a shift in focus to those sections of the class who felt the most acute distress, namely women and oppressed nationalities. Just because the more privileged layers of the class, i.e., primarily the organized labor movement under class-collaborationist leadership, did not involve itself as a distinct force in these movements does not mean they remained unaffected. Despite the conservatizing effects of the witch-hunt in the unions they were unavoidably drawn into the vortex of social dissatisfaction.

The impact of the social movements on the broader working class, combined with and dialectically related to the developing economic crisis, ideologically undermined the racist and sexist divisions within the class as well as the anticommunist ideology from the Cold War. Overcoming the "Vietnam syndrome," i.e., mass

popular opposition to imperialist war, has prepossessed the capitalists' ideological arsenal and determined the conduct of its wars ever since, from Grenada to Panama to the Gulf war to Somalia. That opposition to war is an ideological gain of the antiwar movement and the direct consequence of the influence and leadership of the American Trotskyist movement within it.

Not only have the reformist leaderships of the antiracist movement and the women's movement restrained those movements from advancing further, but the crisis of American Trotskyism has made sustained revolutionary work within them impossible. The disintegration of the revolutionary movement has left the leadership of the antiwar movement in the hands of Stalinists, sectarians, and reformists who have divided it and disoriented it, so that

mass public antiwar opposition to the invasions of Grenada and Panama, to the war in Central America, and to the Gulf war was divided and inconsistent; there has been no public opposition to the U.S. invasion of Somalia.

That's the dialectic and the tempo of class struggle: years of capitalist growth and then stagnation; wars and revolution; crescendos in the working-class movement; repression by the capitalists; betrayal by the class-collaborationists; ebbs and flows leading to despair, oscillations, vacillations, opportunism, then confidence, all reflected not only in the working class but in the revolutionary movement, and underlying all, the class struggle itself.

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Letter to the "Rebel in a Chinese Girls' School"

Continued from page 20

early 1926? You couldn't lead them to your residence, which was the office of the Central Propaganda Bureau and the residence of several other comrades, including Peng Shu-tse. Through cleverness and presence of mind you successfully eluded the police that night and lived to tell me of many other episodes which required almost extrasensory perception to unmask an assassin or secret agent.

Yes, over our afternoon Sanka, your lifelong companion Shu-tse acknowledged that you saved his life many times — through talents beyond the grasp of most mortal beings. Yet since the first narrow escape from the KMT police, you were robbed of the ability to sleep peacefully for the rest of your life.

A revolutionary upheaval in America will enable many ordinary workers and cadres to rise to a high level of energy and valor never before known to us because never before required of us. I can only hope we will show a fraction of the leadership and courage that the 24-year-old Chen Pi-lan did at the head of a mass rally 200,000 strong, attempting to exit from an area barricaded by soldiers and police. The bayonets were pointed chest high at the lead-off women's contingent. On cue, you women lowered your heads and ducked out under the soldiers' guns. You called their bluff and avoided a bloodbath.

After Chiang Kai-shek successfully took the city of Canton in March 1926 he immediately suppressed the CCP there. The imperialists were assured by Chiang's actions that he would help to crush the revolution. This should have been the decisive condemnation of the Stalinist "Bloc of Four Classes."

History records in gruesome detail the rapid unfolding of events. The CCP, following the dictates of Moscow, refused to lead the workers independently of the KMT. Insurrections in city after city were followed by bloody repression at the hands of the KMT army, local police, and foreign soldiers.

You wrote in the November 1977 *ISR*, "Nobody was aware at that time of Trotsky's criticisms of the official line and nobody would have dared to break with the International." The lessons of the defeat of the 1925-27 revolution

made Trotskyists out of you and Peng Shu-tse and others even before you read Trotsky's arguments against Stalin. Your penalty for criticism was expulsion from the CCP and the label "Trotskyist," a label you proudly wore the rest of your life.

In fact, through your underground years after 1927 you helped found and nurture the Revolutionary Communist Party of China, the Chinese section of the Fourth International. Then in 1949, you and your companion Peng Shu-tse were forced to flee the persecution of the Maoist regime.

Exiled from your native country, following an odyssey through Southeast Asia, Europe, and then to the U.S., you fared better than some other Chinese Trotskyists, who were outright imprisoned or murdered under Maoist rule.

Since you and Peng Shu-tse never silenced your Trotskyist views and retained a leadership role in the Revolutionary Communist Party of China, you were not immune from Maoist intrigue even in exile. I shuddered when you recounted for me one afternoon how you outsmarted a Maoist assassin who came to your home in France.

You carried your first child during the Wuhan uprising of 1927. How did you manage leadership and pregnancy? Your three children were young under the harshest conditions of underground life. When we were together you gave me much advice about babies and children, and you always urged me to get a washing machine to ease the work of taking care of my young son. I don't think you could fathom how easy baby care is in modern America compared to what you underwent and overcame.

When you were in France life should have been easier for you, but it was not, only different.

Again, I shuddered when you told me of the heavy pieces of leather you had to carry home on the Metro. With your bare hands you made pocketbooks for piecework wages, never enough for the comforts you deserved.

You not only earned money for your family, you played a theoretical role in the Fourth International along with your companion Peng Shu-tse. The fight against Pabloism in the 1950s and the eventual reunification of the Fourth International in 1963 were a day-to-day involvement for you both.

You found time for your beloved Shakespeare, too, and worked on your memoirs. You were proud of having read all the great works of world literature, especially Shakespeare, and attributed your writing skill to your vast amount of reading. You were a modest woman but not humble. Your unique talents and moral strength were indeed known to you.

You spoke Chinese, French, and English and were often disappointed when your work was translated too literally. You were proud that your articles on the question of women had been published in China in three volumes and were regarded by Chinese as handbooks on health and education of women and children.

You told me you wrote your first poem to your much admired comrade James P. Cannon upon the death of his companion Rose Karsner. You also told me you wrote your second poem at the time of your son's death.

When American Trotskyists offered to settle you and Shu-tse in California so your old age could be lived in peace, you accepted the offer and crossed yet another ocean and another continent to reside in Los Angeles. It was there that I met you in 1976. You were 74 years old and Shu-tse 81. How kind you were to once again tell your story and teach a young person the lessons of a revolutionary life. We worked hard on articles and letters. We had many small joys such as our lunches in Chinatown and our afternoon Sanka and cookies. There were visits with American socialists and Chinese comrades who kept you in touch with the business of the Fourth International. Your grandson came for a visit; your daughter, too.

There were also the many small ailments which plagued you and further disturbed your sleep. Finishing your memoirs was a constant demand. Then the death of Shu-tse.

And now you are gone.

Thank you for allowing me into your life. Above all, thank you for leaving behind so much in writing for revolutionists to absorb. I hope I have told our readers what you wanted them to hear.

Rest in peace at last, Pi-lan.

Your devoted comrade,

Mary

A Comment on Mary Scully's Polemic

by Paul Le Blanc

Given the character of Mary Scully's polemic against my two-part article "Notes on Building a Revolutionary Party in the United States" (which appeared in the June and July-August 1993 issues of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*) I have asked to offer an immediate response to what she has written.

Mary's article contains some positive ideas, but these are combined with much that is quite simply factually wrong. She attributes to me certain ideas which — if one looks at what I have written (including the article she is criticizing) — I obviously do not hold.

One example of this is the utterly false, unsubstantiated assertion that I believe "democratic-centralism is at the root of the problem" of the degeneration from Leninism to Stalinism or sectarianism, a notion which is alien to all that I have written.

Another example: in part two of her polemic she suggests that I share "the theoretical foundation of revisionism" with Eduard Bernstein because I use the word "accumulation" — that is, I assert that an *accumulation* of struggles help to develop class-consciousness, and Bernstein believed that an *accumulation* of reforms would gradually eliminate the evils of capitalism. (The comrade seems unaware that there is a qualitative difference between an *accumulation* of class battles and an *accumulation* of class betrayals.)

Her false assertions regarding how I view the working class are particularly offensive.

The distortion of my views flows, I assume, not from intentional falsification but from a hostile reading of what I wrote. Such things greatly weaken her article.

At the same time, Comrade Scully's general outlook reflects the orientation of a number of revolutionary socialists, although not everyone who shares that orientation would necessarily agree with all of her unfortunate formulations. Nonetheless, the publication of her article can advance a discussion which is very much needed on the problems of building a revolutionary working-class party in the United States. It seems to me that the challenges she poses can have value in stimulating thought and discussion on extremely important questions. I am presently completing an article which, I hope, will adequately address the most important of these challenges.

Here I want to offer a clarification, and to throw down a challenge of my own to Comrade Scully.

First the clarification, having to do with Leninist organization. She asserts that I don't believe in the possibility and the advisability of building such an organization, either nationally or internationally, in this historic period. This is absolutely false. My views are the opposite of what she says. I believe in the possibility and the advisability of building Leninist organiza-

tions in the United States and throughout the world now, in this historic period.

However, I make a distinction between a Leninist *organization* and a Leninist *party*. For me, a Leninist organization could consist of a few people or a few hundred people, but that is not the case with a Leninist *party* (whose model, for me, is the Bolshevik party of Russia, a mass workers' party which — after a lengthy development — was organized in 1912 and took power in 1917). In the United States, the working class and revolutionary socialists will have to go through a profound development before it will be possible to bring into being a U.S. equivalent of the Bolshevik party.

Of course, there are serious differences in the views of Comrade Scully and myself on how to carry out a commitment to Leninist party-building. The challenge is this: Comrade Scully and I should each work very hard, consistently, positively (what I would call "good work") to carry out our counterposed lines on party-building. In a few years, let's compare the results and on this basis evaluate the counterposed lines.

With this in mind, I urge those who have read her article to read (or re-examine) mine and then — assuming that you share our revolutionary commitments — help to test the two lines.

As I've already said, I will offer a more substantial response to Mary Scully's critique in a future issue of this magazine. □

On the Ground Running: Workers Win First Step for Independent Political Power

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their capacities as ministers, who used to be willing to tour workplaces or investigate complaints of workers, now are more reluctant to do so.

Workers cannot rely on pure spontaneity or county commissioners to build an independent political movement, one that looks out for the interests of working people. And the political movement cannot strictly rely on the electoral arena to gain and wield political power. Community mass organizations, workplace organizations, advisory boards with significant worker and democratic participation, all can be used by the working class to take political stands and create a political climate.

In that light, community forces have moved to revitalize the Whitakers Community Club as an active, independent organization. We will be looking for ways to strengthen ties between more working-class political forces, electoral and mass organizations, independent of the two political parties and more accountable to working-class community organizations. The annual King Day program organized by the CDC workers' committee is an example of an activity that has been used to build political and community ties.

We are looking for new, creative organizational forms that circumvent and do not feed into those structures of the power structure that are designed to siphon workers' energy, attention, and power. For example, we can encourage extra-governmental bodies, i.e., a "Whitakers Area Advisory Board" that would include the community associations of Whitakers, Bricks, Village Heights, and Bloomer Hill.

The role that working-class organizations play must be expanded to include direct and indirect political action. The Fremont Fair Labor Support Committee and the Fremont Concerned Citizens held a vigil outside the meeting of the Fremont Board of Aldermen while they met in "executive session" until 2:30 a.m. This served to put the then-power structure on notice

that the Black community was watching, that the Black officials had "backup" for the demands of the Black working-class community.

We can also provide the mechanisms for bringing the class together to consider our common situations and problems and to propose solutions. A conference on political power and control could bring together the working class and independent organizations, elected officials, etc., from the small towns and counties across the Black Belt, like Whitakers, Lefrange, Enfield, Sharpsburg, and Fremont in North Carolina; Keyville in Georgia, etc. We have found that the most important issues are control of the police department, recreation for youth, control of monies for development, and fair representation of the entire population. □

Does Leninism Equal Sectarianism?

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Democratic Centralism and the Political Genesis of Sectarianism

Le Blanc makes the claim that the attempt to build a Leninist organization today would inevi-

tably lead to sectarianism. He is talking a different language here than the language of Marxism. This sarcasm is simply a new twist on the old slander that Leninism inevitably leads to Stalinism. Marxist refutations of this slander,

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Marxist Perspectives in the Soviet Union's Last Years

The USSR 1987–1991: Marxist Perspectives, edited by Marilyn Vogt-Downey. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993. 544 pages. \$60.00

Reviewed by Anne D'Orazio

Life is not an easy matter... You cannot live through it without falling into prostration and cynicism unless you have before you a great idea which raises you above personal misery, above weakness, above all kinds of perfidy and baseness.

Trotsky's words, written in 1935, reverberate today in a period of bad news and dismal prospects. It's easy to become discouraged and disheartened, and we reach for encouragement and hope in the books and journals of the socialist movement.

Humanities Press continues its important work of documenting the struggles of revolutionary Marxism in the 20th century with the publication of *The USSR 1987–1991: Marxist Perspectives*, edited by Marilyn Vogt-Downey. The articles in the collection are drawn mainly from *International Viewpoint*, the Paris-based journal of the Fourth International, and *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, with a lesser number taken from *International Marxist Review*, a semiannual publication of the Fourth International, *Marxist Monthly*, the British theoretical journal, *Novaya Gazeta*, an independent weekly newspaper in Moscow, originally part of the Komsomol, and *Socialist Organizer*, an English weekly newspaper. The contributors are Marxists from North America, Europe, and the Soviet Union, most of whom adopt the analysis of Trotsky. They draw extensively on their first-hand experiences in the Soviet Union and utilize interviews they have conducted personally with rank-and-file leaders, trade-union activists, democratic-rights activists, environmentalists, economists, sociologists, journalists, and schoolteachers. Covering the last four years of the Soviet state, the essays report on Gorbachev's attempts to restructure and open the system, the nationalist protest movements of the non-Russian people, the process of rehabilitation of revolutionaries condemned by Stalin, and popular discussion on political and social issues. A final section of the book includes comments on the meaning of the August 1991 coup.

The purpose of the volume, as set forth in the introduction, is to demonstrate the application of Marxist analysis to the collapse of the Soviet system. The first step in this process is to distinguish between the revolutionary Marxism of Lenin and Trotsky and the degenerated and stagnant party line of Stalin and his progeny. The second step is to estab-

lish the conditions under which this degeneration occurred.

The introduction proceeds to do just that as it itemizes the series of events from 1918 to 1921 which shaped the future of socialism in Russia — the Civil War and Western intervention, the defection of the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, the untimely deaths of Uritsky and Sverdlov, the physical destruction of the revolutionary proletariat and intellectuals, and the devastation in the country overall as it emerged from this period of revolution and war. From that point, the continuing struggle between Stalin and the Left Opposition, led by Trotsky and culminating in Trotsky's assassination in August 1940, is briefly traced.

The essays which follow focus on events and activities which never hit the pages of the Western press. They are designed not only to inform the reader about what is really happening in the Soviet Union between 1987 and 1991, but also to advance the struggle for revolutionary socialism. Each set of articles is preceded by introductory remarks of the editor.

In the first part on *perestroika*, *glasnost*, and the workers, David [Seppo] Mandel shows that the reform introduced by Gorbachev had as its base of support the intelligentsia, not either the bureaucracy or the workers. He stresses that the only permanent force for change lies with the working class and an independent mobilization of society. In his analysis of the miners' strike, Mandel reports that the traditionally collusive relations between workers and management were undermined by the strike, but that no healthy patterns of cooperation have yet been established between them. A hopeful sign was the continuation of the strike committees in the form of workers' committees to monitor implementation of the agreements which ended the strike. More importantly, according to Mandel, the working class emerged from its experience in struggle as an independent political force with increased consciousness. Mandel continues this theme in his essay, "The Soviet Economy: Difficult Birth of a Workers' Movement," which compares the miners' committees to similar collectives in a Moscow auto plant. David Mandel's attention to the lives and struggles of workers and the impact on them of the reforms of the Gorbachev years is of unparalleled richness and value for understanding the dynamic of the period.

Popular discontent with the reforms is cited in a detailed essay by Marilyn Vogt-Downey on Gorbachev's temporary retreat from "shock therapy." Written in the summer of 1990, the author saw optimistic signs of revolution from below in the widespread op-

position to the introduction of market measures. Boris Kagarlitsky, recently jailed and beaten by the Yeltsin government in its effort to maintain power, writes a prescient article, "Who Will Save Russia from Yeltsin?" in which he denounces this consummate opportunist and warns against the "totalitarian hypnosis of the old and new propaganda."

The section "Rebellion of the Non-Russians" deals primarily with Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Baltic States, and the Ukraine. In it, the reader is made thoroughly aware of the historical context of these national movements and the contemporary players in the tragic tug of war between central authority and national autonomy. Contrary to the characterization by Western journalists of these conflicts, particularly in the case of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as part of "centuries-old ethnic vendettas" and "religious strife," the authors trace the real origins to the disregard of the Stalinist bureaucracy for the national aspirations of the non-Russian people in spite of the historic support for self-determination given by Lenin at the time of the revolution. In fact, the enormous difficulties the Bolshevik Party and Lenin had living up to these pledges to non-Russians during the Civil War period are detailed in the article by Zbigniew Kowaleski. He shows that the situation was far from ideal.

In her essay on Armenia, Vogt-Downey adopts Lenin's position as applicable to the current situation and advocates support for the independence of these ethnic states. An interesting comment on the nationalist movements is made in the essay on the Baltic states by Gerry Foley, who writes of the need for these groups to define their ideology in a way which will unite all oppressed peoples to their cause.

Gerry Foley's contributions in this section of the book on Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia are especially significant because of his ability to read the Baltic languages and report what the principal forces are actually saying and doing.

Concurrent with these struggles is the political issue of rehabilitation for revolutionaries denounced and destroyed by Stalin in the three infamous Moscow trials. Although the trials have been repudiated juridically, complete rehabilitation of the victims has been delayed. Esteban Volkov, the grandson of Leon Trotsky, contributes an article on this subject, in which he challenges the Soviet regime (and now, presumably, Yeltsin's) to carry *perestroika* and *glasnost* to their fullest extent, to the road to authentic socialism, by revealing all the crimes of Stalinism.

In "History is Knocking at the Door," the authors examine and describe the progress that has been made (and not made) in resurrecting the history of the Revolution and the postrevolutionary period. Vogt-Downey's investigations of Stalin's falsification and vilification of his opponents' contributions to the revolution are helpful in understanding how

this created tremendous difficulties for the population in orienting itself. An alarming note is sounded in the article, "The New School of Falsification" by a young Russian historian Alexander Pantsov, who shows new lies and fabrications being erected by the present leadership, further complicating the process of reconstructing history.

Part IV, "Politics and the People," brings to life the discussions and reactions of the people of the former Soviet Union on a wide variety of issues. The writers recount visits they made and the individuals they talked to. We meet the Marxist-oriented club "Socialist Initiative" in Moscow and listen to workers comment on self-management. In another essay, Olga Alexandrovna Voronina, a philosopher at the Soviet Academy of Sciences, analyzes *perestroika* from a woman's point of view. There is also a grim account of the aftermath of Chernobyl, which further reveals some of the long-suppressed data. An interview with a Soviet ecologist describes the development of the Green movement in the Soviet Union.

Finally, the last few essays deal with the situation surrounding the August coup. Contrary to recent reports of Gorbachev's complicity in the coup, Kagarlitsky implicates Yeltsin as the co-conspirator who actually was able to outmaneuver his allies to his own gain. "A View from the Soviet Left" reveals the inability of the Left groups at the time of the coup to take substantial initiatives due to the lack of time and resources as well as the indifference of the majority of the population.

As a resource, this collection of essays is a tremendous achievement and an extremely useful one that will encourage serious activists to continue (or start) reading *International Viewpoint* and *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. It would have been good to have more introductory comments to link the essays together at the beginning of each section and perhaps even some concluding remarks. The section on the nationalities could have been expanded to include other major areas of conflict, primarily Georgia, with the struggle of the Abkhazians and Ossetians.

Questions could arise about the theoretical development of Trotsky's "great idea." As

brilliant as he was and as vital as his writings remain, he is still rooted in a particular time, as he, a Marxist, would readily acknowledge. The revolutionary socialist movement needs to continue to build on his insights and resist any tendency to rest its case on material which analyzes situations which, however analogous, cannot be exactly applicable sixty years later. A subsequent volume should spend more time analyzing as well as documenting the collapse of the Gorbachev regime.

These criticisms do not detract from the great importance of this work in disseminating information and identifying the points of hope. As David Mandel says in his article in the January 1993 *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, we are faced with a picture of the future which is not very bright as far as political revolution in the former Soviet Union is concerned. *The USSR 1987-1991: Marxist Perspectives* is remarkable in its hard investigative work and serves as an invaluable source of explanation and clarification for everyone committed to advancing revolutionary struggle. □

Does Leninism Equal Sectarianism?

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particularly that of Leon Trotsky, show the class approach, the scientific method of analyzing social and political phenomena. Marxism exposed not only the class basis of Stalinism but also the political bias of those who make such odorous imputations against Leninism, namely the bourgeois apologists who oppose and want to discredit socialist revolution.

Le Blanc, once again, does not describe the process of the degeneration from Leninism to sectarianism, but his articles suggest strongly that democratic centralism is at the root of the problem. This is puzzling, since as a simple organizational formula democratic centralism (which means a serious group bound together by its ideas using democratic debate to advance theory and determine its practice and with enough discipline to act as a united body) could be put to good purpose by any number of organizations, say, e.g., the Boy Scouts. It should be pointed out that Leninism has operated under many different forms depending on the historical and political conditions (underground, conditions of legality, as opposition tendencies, etc.)

Angeles, Lenin, Trotsky, Cannon, and numerous others have all discussed at length and in detail and with much chagrin the roots of sectarianism in American revolutionary politics; to the person they agreed that it was caused by estrangement from the working-class movement. We have the example of the first American Marxists, German immigrants who refused to learn English and met in beer halls to debate *Capital*; we have the example of the divisive tactics in the labor movement of the early Socialist Labor Party under Daniel DeLeon; we have the example of the

early Communists who attempted to form revolutionary unions outside of the existing labor movement and who in response to capitalist persecution in the 1920s went underground and despite the possibilities for legal political activity and the exhortations of Jim Cannon would only probe the new openings under the political direction of the Third International under Lenin and Trotsky.

Much more currently, we have today an entire smorgasbord of so-called Trotskyist sects, not one of which broke with or separated itself from the Fourth International over organizational matters but rather over political questions of the greatest importance, like the Cuban revolution, opposition to imperialist war, trade-union policy, and the fight against national and sexual oppression.

What distinguishes Leninism from sectarianism is not that sectarians declare the final goal of socialism and Leninists do not, but rather the sectarian refusal to fight for immediate demands (like wages and hours and health care) or for democratic demands (like women's rights and self-determination) in the course of the struggle for socialism. Leninists will fight on every one of these life-and-death issues. As Cannon put it, sectarians stand aloof from the struggle and demand "the unconditional surrender of the capitalist class" in place of organizing the working class to accomplish its own emancipation. Any scientific anatomy of sect politics — and there are plenty around for sociological and political evaluation — would confirm in spades the judgment of Cannon and other socialist leaders. The question emerges: what distinguishes this political orientation of sectarians from the proposals of Le Blanc?

When Angeles, Cannon, and the others castigated the American movement for its abstention from the working-class movement they did not place any preconditions on the class for that participation. They knew the relationship of forces was against the numerically small and dispersed revolutionary movement. Yet they did not hesitate for a moment to urge the movement to do systematic and sustained work in the workers movement. Now isn't this precisely what Le Blanc is opposing today? And won't his alternative perspectives lead directly to the sectarian obscurity which he so correctly abhors?

Le Blanc's proposals will not only lead the revolutionary movement into isolation and sectarianism, it will put us in the preposterous position of "waiting for the upsurge" in the class struggle, at which point we will improvise a Leninist party out of a bunch of amateurs and parvenus and ad-lib our way to the socialist revolution. You don't lead a revolution by the seat of your pants.

The revolutionary movement does not have time to kill. We live in a period of intensified class struggle involving one war after another, revolutions, deepgoing social changes, economic competition and instability. The equilibrium which Le Blanc observes in the working class simply does not exist. The Cold War did not represent stasis in the class struggle but rather repression against the labor movement, and that legacy is now beginning to weaken. Mass and spontaneous upsurges are not some distant prospect but present political reality. The absence of revolutionary leadership remains the most urgent political problem facing the working class.

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A Useful Book on South Africa

The Opening of the Apartheid Mind by Heribert Adam and Kogila Moodley; Berkeley, California: University of California Press; 277 pages; \$25.

Reviewed by Hayden Perry

As the edifice of apartheid crumbles South Africans of all races are being pushed along by forces that few are controlling. Naïve optimists who view the South African scene see Mandela persuading de Klerk to peaceably yield power to the great Black majority. To them, all things are now possible.

Pessimists see the implacable Afrikaners, in strange alliance with Zulus, preparing for all-out war to preserve their way of life. They hear the screams of the maimed and mutilated victims of communal warfare that is dragging the country down into hopeless chaos. Society is running out of control.

The husband and wife team of Adam and Moodley view the chaotic scene with the objectivity expected of academics. They both teach college in British Columbia; previously they taught in South Africa. As an Indian, born in Durban, Moodley has multi-generational roots in Africa. Politically they label themselves as social democrats.

Their book attempts to answer a key question. Is South Africa now a country of hope or one on the verge of disintegrating in mindless anarchy? Is the conflict between the ANC and Inkatha a forerunner of the kind of unnecessary wars that happened in Mozambique and Angola? Why has a seemingly inevitable Black-white racial conflict been replaced with much more widespread intra-Black violence?

The authors begin by demolishing a myth. The African National Congress (ANC) and Nelson Mandela did not pressure the whites to yield political power. The National Party (NP) and F. W. de Klerk long ago realized whites could no longer rule alone. The "power of the powerless" exerts a heavy price: too great for the South African economy to bear. International sanctions made a pariah of this proud nation, and cut vitally needed investment funds.

President de Klerk invited Mandela and the ANC to share power in administering the capitalist state. The whites are yielding no essential part of their control. Decisions are to be reached by consensus; which means a veto of any proposal that threatens the class interests of South African business.

Here, the authors say, the concentration on race relations obscures the class issue that is the overriding problem in South Africa. "Exploitation is color blind," an astute South African observed.

As in the United States, a top layer of Black South Africans is becoming bourgeoisified. The authors write, "It is now self-evident that

some of the former victims of racial discrimination have increasingly joined the realms of power in perpetuating class domination."

This contradicts ANC's long history as an outlawed movement, allied with the South African Communist Party (SACP). Confrontation, even with armed force, seemed the only possible road.

If they had looked at other African states, they would have seen settler regimes adjusting to Black administrations. The demise of Jim Crow in the United States could teach them lessons.

The ranks of the ANC do not understand that their leaders have been co-opted. They believe that Mandela's great prestige will translate into political power that will lift them out of poverty.

South Africa, the authors say, is essentially a poor country. Building a million homes, as Mandela has promised, will require a redistribution of wealth that the white ruling class will resist. When the dispossessed realize Mandela cannot deliver they will turn to other forces with greater promise, the writers say.

Adam and Moodley analyze these other forces and their role in the drama being played out in town and country. First they look at the Black worker on the assembly line.

Until today workers had no political rights, but since 1970 they have been allowed to join unions. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) is allied with the ANC, putting economic power behind Mandela. As representatives of the better-paid workers, COSATU leaders are an elite, subject to the temptations of national office.

On the other hand, the rank and file are more militant than American unionists. Sixty seven percent of shop stewards polled support the nationalization of industry, and socialism in general. The Pan-African Congress (PAC), formed mainly by students, gives political expression to that goal.

The problem with the socialist goal, the authors say, is not only the collapse of the Soviet Union, but the utter failure of the so-called socialist states in Southern Africa. Countries with deserted and decaying factories and abandoned railways can scarcely serve as role models for South African workers.

For the moment Adam and Moodley are less concerned with the distant socialist goal they espouse than with the rising tide of violence that threatens all progress. To find the cause, they cut through tribal animosities to the economic roots.

They start by stating, "A credible comprehensive account of the violence has yet to be produced, despite dozens of articles and books on the topic." They quote a journalist who lists the following factors: "Gangsterism, vendettas, banditry, protection rackets, individual and group psychosis, and competition for

turf and treasure..." The authors add, "Background conditions include the dislocation brought about by urbanization, the high levels of unemployment and dependency, the breakdown of the traditional family structure, and the erosion of normative restraints on murder."

Adam and Moodley do not accept the popular theory that Inkatha, abetted by intransigent whites, is solely responsible for the bloodshed. The line of cleavage, they say, is between the poor rural migrants, often housed in hostels, and the urbanized residents of the townships. Hostility between Zulus and Xhosas did not take a tribal form until the ANC attacked Zulu cultural symbolism and heritage.

The authors point out that the powerless usually depend on patronage, handed out by strong leaders and local power brokers in return for loyalty. Inkatha's ability to deliver is weakened as they are chased out of local offices by the ANC.

M. Gatsha Buthelezi, chief of Inkatha, is an autocrat, but he does not want to be ruler of a Bantustan, as the ANC claims. He wants Zulu interests represented in the new government. The authors believe Mandela is mistaken to think Inkatha is a small force that can be crushed in the townships.

They say he fails to recognize the "intensity" of Inkatha's cause, which drives its adherents to the most extreme acts of violence. Counterviolence by the ANC escalates until a critical point of intensity is reached where the young fighters are beyond anyone's control. The most horrifying atrocities result.

While the dispossessed are arming in the squatter camps, unreconstructed Afrikaners are preparing their weapons for a war that will make the country ungovernable. They represent only 7 percent, but many have seen combat in the military or security forces. Some believe an alliance with the Zulus would create a military force that would be unbeatable.

Industrial sabotage, such as in the gold mines, where many white miners support the right-wing Afrikaners, would bring havoc to the economy, they believe.

Actually the Afrikaners have no hope of recreating the racist regime of the past, and the Zulus cannot dictate terms to the rest of the nation. But a Mandela-de Klerk regime cannot repress all the dissatisfied millions and remain a democratic government.

In trying to predict the future of South Africa Adam and Moodley make comparisons with Yugoslavia, Zimbabwe, Ireland, and Israel. Hopeless communal warfare is tearing Yugoslavia apart. Is this to be the future of South Africa as fighting spreads from town to countryside?

The authors see a number of differences between ex-Yugoslavia and South Africa. In Yugoslavia, they say, Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians were nationalities that were forced together and are now separating. In South Africa people who were forced apart (whites, Blacks, Coloured, and Bantustans) are struggling to unite. No one can go it alone, and no

section of the country can form a viable nation alone.

Unlike Ireland, where no Catholic would vote for a Protestant, all factions in South Africa try to recruit each other's supporters. Ethnic cleansing, as in Yugoslavia, is not likely. Ethnic cleansing was carried out by the apartheid regimes. Only if fighting escalates far beyond the present stage could it occur again.

The men who knife and shoot each other have no revolutionary ideology to sustain

them. No one has to lose for the other to gain. Even the Afrikaners who encourage intra-Black violence, can be overwhelmed if it gets out of control.

Adam and Moodley believe the violence can be ended if it is accepted that all factions are equally responsible, that Zulu interests are recognized, even it should mean secession. Policing of the townships should be a joint operation of all factions, with the old security forces excluded.

Above all, they conclude, recognize that race is becoming a non-issue. The issues are poverty, unemployment, homelessness, exploitation, and all the ills of capitalist society.

Adam and Moodley have far more to say about the parties and factions that make up the mosaic of South African society. While we may not agree with all their conclusions we are bound to gain new insights through this valuable book. □

What NAFTA Means for U.S. and Mexican Workers

Continued from page 7

producing toxic chemicals banned in the United States, which are sprayed on fruits and vegetables brought into the United States.

Some of you probably read in the paper about the Caterpillar strike. Caterpillar is the state captain for Illinois. It broke the strike in 1992 by threatening to use permanent replacements and to move to Mexico.

In the last twelve years corporations have shifted 180,000 jobs out of the United States. Why? Low wages and lax environmental laws and enforcement in Third World countries, especially Mexico. The U.S. corporations in collaboration with the Mexican government have violated workers rights and stopped union organizing; they have black lists and they have death squads. They kill the union organizers. That's what they do. There have been hundreds of "desaparecidos" in the past few years. That means "disappeared persons."

American corporations in Mexico routinely violate health, safety, and environmental measures that protect workers. An example: AT&T (the state captain for seven U.S. states). In February 1993 SEDESOL, that is the Mexican EPA, shut down lines of the AT&T Matamoras plant. Chemical vapors were endangering workers' lives. AT&T had simply removed seals from faulty equipment and continued operating. It was fined a total of \$3,000! Eastman-Kodak in Mexico is allowed to empty arsenic into sewers in amounts *seven times* the United States standards. That's a lot.

Monsanto, state captain for Montana, produces Agent Orange. Any of you that know about Vietnam know about Agent Orange; it was a defoliant used there. It is banned in the United States, but Monsanto ships it out of their plants in Mexico throughout the world, to the rest of Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

Banks such as the Bank of America and Citicorp are taking over Mexico's financial system little by little. None of this helps the Mexican people, none of this helps the Canadian people or the people here, and it destroys the secure jobs that have existed for workers in the nationalized Bank of Mexico.

Now, how does it work, NAFTA? A friend of mine who has some money bought the

complete text of the Agreement — all 2,000 pages! I went through it. Not all of it, it's too big. This *treaty* (that's what it is!) was negotiated in secret, mostly by representatives of big business. NAFTA sets up a new economic and social constitution that will govern relationships between the United States, Mexico, and Canada in trade, patents, and so forth. Its decisions — now this is very important — will supersede those of nations, states, and municipalities. It will set up a permanent free-trade commission, selected not elected, with power to level fines and impose trade embargoes to punish. It is a super-state organization. And who runs it? The 2,300 corporations that are behind NAFTA. Actually they are the same ones who control the economics of the United States: banks, insurance companies, business associations, and the Republican and Democratic parties.

They are all part of an international chain of transnational corporations that are acquiring more and more power internationally to beat down workers' wages and conditions and for one reason only: to increase their profits.

Now we come to the question of how should labor fight back? Labor has just suffered a major defeat in the House of Representatives, and NAFTA will pass in the Senate also. The first thing is education on NAFTA. We have to know what NAFTA is. The ILWU has been doing that in the *Dispatch*, and collaborating with Mexican and Canadian workers to fight NAFTA. Some other unions also are beginning to do this.

The Teamsters, United Electrical Workers, Ford workers, and the ILWU have sent delegations to the Mexican workers. We must have more of this international solidarity.

Now here's where the AFL top leadership is weak: it is protectionist, it talks solely about jobs, it doesn't talk about what's really happening — that is, that countries and the workers therein are losing their national right to make decisions. Decisions will be made by undemocratic organizations which are set up above the ordinary legislative process of the various countries. That is what we need to educate about.

Also we should try our best to help raise Mexican wages and cancel the Mexican debt.

Most of all we should begin to fight back here! It's time that we start building a Labor Party in the U.S. — a party that represents us. The so-called partnership with the Democratic Party in my opinion is absolutely pointless. There is already an organization set up now, headed up by officials of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union. It is called Labor Party Advocates, and it's growing. Bob Wages, an official of that union, spoke in San Francisco a week ago. He spoke strongly for a Labor Party. Why? Because otherwise we'll go down, down, down, he said. Rather than Mexico coming up to United States standards — that's what he was talking about — American labor will go down closer and closer to Third World conditions, and that's what we must worry about.

American labor, unfortunately, has been in the clutches of the Democratic Party for these many years and it has to get out of there. It has lost its clout. The *New York Times*, just this last Sunday, said this: NAFTA is a *class issue* and big labor did not have the clout. There was an article in a magazine that I read just a couple of weeks ago in which a right-winger said, "We must scrape away the barnacle of big labor that impedes progress." They feel like they're on the way to complete domination of labor. The only thing that can stop them is the working class. We must organize.

I remember a story about Henry Ford and Walter Reuther. Henry Ford II took Walter Reuther to tour his new plant with all the robots and machines and so forth, enabling Ford to lay off workers. He said, "Look, Walter, those machines don't pay union dues." And Walter said, "Yes, and they don't buy Fords either." That's a good illustration of what's happening in this country. They're taking away jobs. They're firing workers. They're trying to destroy the labor movement. That's what they're about. And we must fight back, and I hope that this union — my union, of which I'm a very proud member — will take the lead in this. □

Global Economic Restructuring and Women's Experiences

Continued from page 19

temporary jobs. Most of these jobs are in the service and clerical sectors, or in light industries. These changes have a particular effect on African American families:

Black households had the worst time with unemployment in a situation where all households suffered. Black household members were virtually wiped out of the skilled blue collar jobs that had been the life blood of the river communities for so long. In these households, also, women were far more likely to bear the major burden of household financial support since so many were single parents.

Beginning in the early 1990s, yet another cycle of unemployment and job loss is affecting the Pittsburgh region, especially involving layoffs among white-collar workers, i.e., those in typically feminized clerical and service areas. A front-page article in the July 18, 1993, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* was headlined "Layoffs Pile Up Despite Recovery" and reported that at least 6,700 jobs had been lost in the region since the start of the year. Part of this new job loss results from "downsizing" in the health care industry, a significant area of local employment since the closing of the mills. The official unemployment rate for the Pittsburgh area currently fluctuates around 6.5–7.0 percent. Some analysts, however, argue that the real unemployment rate is probably double the official rate.

The jobless rate among African Americans in this region is more than three times that for whites, so unemployment in the Black community is at least 20 percent. While the local unemployment rate for women is reported to be lower than that for men, this is partly accounted for by the fact that women more readily accept part-time and temporary work. At the same time, the wage gap between women and men remains. A report published by the Pennsylvania Commission for Women (1991) indicates that the "1985 median income of full-time working women was approximately 63 percent of that of her male counterpart." According to a local City Planning Department report, for poor women who head households in Pittsburgh the gap is 45 cents to the dollar.

These developments have had particular, though complex, effects on women. The decline and dismantling of the steel industry in the early 1980s resulted in job loss for both women and men. For the modest numbers of women who had obtained jobs in the steel mills, they experienced the phenomenon of "last hired, first fired (or laid off)." These female steelworkers found it even harder than their male counterparts to obtain alternative employment using their acquired skills. A larger number of women suffered job loss because of the domino effect whereby the closing of the mills precipitated the shutdown or curtailment of other businesses and sources of employment.

At the same time, because of high rates of male unemployment, there was increased pressure on women to seek and take jobs — any sorts of jobs — in order to support their families. The shift to a service economy likewise favored

the hiring of women over men. There was a significant increase in the number of women engaged in paid employment in this region from 1975 through the early 1980s, although the absolute numbers had declined again by 1985. (This decline in absolute numbers of female workers is most likely due to the massive out-migration of families, estimated to be about 7.31 percent of the total population between 1980 and 1990.) Women's percentage of the overall labor force went from 28.5 percent of the total in 1975 to 32.9 percent in 1980 and then showed an even larger jump to 41.6 percent in 1985.

This change must be attributed in part to the growing social trend for women to work outside the home, but it is also related to the particular economic conditions in this region. These conditions simultaneously pushed women into the wage-labor force while offering them only low-paid service or clerical sector work and continuing job insecurity as well. Many wage-earning women in the Pittsburgh region, like their counterparts in Malaysia, also find themselves distanced from family and community support systems either through the necessity of long daily commutes or because they have had to relocate in order to obtain a job, housing, or other basic necessities.

As in the case of Malay women, there are ongoing debates about the meaning of these changes for women's role and status. Some argue that Pittsburgh women's growing participation in the wage labor force and their increased contributions to household income represent a positive change in their roles and a probable rise in their autonomy and decision-making power within the household. Others, however, point to the undesirable and often involuntary conditions under which many women in the Pittsburgh region are taking on these responsibilities. There is some indication that the crisis conditions under which recent shifts in gender roles have occurred lead both women and men to view these changes in a negative light. This in turn generates resistance to the ideological acceptance of the new work and family roles in which women and men are actually engaged.

While women's responsibility for income provision increases when their families face economic crisis, so, too, does their responsibility for emotional support of family members and for stretching scarce family resources. The result is an increased work load within the home and the reinforcement rather than transformation of this traditional female role. Added to this is the dramatic physical deterioration and weakening of the social fabric of many of the communities in which these women live. In many cases, this deterioration has reached the point where street violence — including drive-by shootings, drug trafficking, and gang killings — has become a significant factor in everyday life. This crisis of local community life is a side effect of the rise in unemployment, out-migration of local residents, and the decline of basic infrastructure and services. It serves to further

constrain and limit women's autonomy and degree of social support.

These contradictory dynamics have continued and even been exacerbated during the recent recession. The situation for women in the wage-labor force has also deteriorated. For example, there is a growing tendency to hire workers on a temporary basis without health care or other social benefits, one aspect of the casualization of the workforce we are seeing throughout the U.S. Thus most of the major corporate employers in the Pittsburgh region now acquire their clerical staff through temporary agencies. The kinds of jobs presently available and those projected for growth in this region over the next few years are generally in the low-paying category. This is particularly true for traditionally female occupations. The most promising area of work in the Pittsburgh region in recent years has been in the field of health care. However, there is a real concern that the restructuring of the medical industry noted above will eliminate many of the middle-level professional positions — e.g., nursing and technical roles — while leaving unchanged the low-paying jobs of aides, housekeepers, and kitchen help. In many cases, the income from available jobs is not enough to compensate for the loss of Aid to Families with Dependent Children benefits when a family moves from dependence on welfare to reliance on wage work.

Conclusion

The political implications that can be derived from these case studies of Negeri Sembilan and Pittsburgh are many. Only two will be mentioned here. First, there is the obvious need for recognition of the greatly expanded role of women in the capitalist workforce and thus in emerging struggles of the working class in both dependent and imperialist countries. This awareness of women's centrality in class struggle must be combined with an understanding of the particular conditions under which they both labor and resist — i.e., extreme insecurity of employment, continued responsibility for family survival and support, and confusion about changing gender roles given the confounding ways in which capitalist restructuring has exploited the work of both women and men.

It follows from this that there is a need to give increased attention to the way in which women's experiences and thus political demands frequently combine issues of gender, race or ethnicity, and class. Second, it should be obvious from these two case studies that any attempt to engage women in organized political struggles must be based on an internationally informed analysis of the situations they face as well as a consistent effort to develop international solidarity based on recognition of common problems while also respecting cultural differences and indigenous perspectives. Only through such an approach can the international recomposition of the working class driven by the needs of capital be transformed into a revival of international class solidarity and struggle to meet the needs and visions of workers themselves. □

Letters

Black Liberation

Evelyn Sell's article "Testing Concepts about the African American Struggle: Theory and Reality" (no. 110) was a fitting conclusion to the recent discussion of Black liberation in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. I appreciated many of the points she made and also that she brought the discussion back from theory to practice, including her own as a Trotskyist and militant teacher in the Detroit public schools in the latter 1960s.

I particularly agree with the following points, which were also in Roy Rollin's and my *BIDOM* articles on Black liberation:

1. Trotskyists should "support the *right* of an oppressed grouping to form a national state but...not advocate or promote...the demand" (original emphasis). This applies not only to Blacks but also to Latinos, Asians, Arabs, Jews, and, in principle, any other oppressed grouping that finds life in the oppressor state intolerable and organizes on a mass basis for separation and secession.

2. Even at the height of the Black power movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, very few Black activists sought a separate Black nation-state. "The overwhelming majority of African American activists, however, pursued quite different goals: achieving equality under the law; eliminating all forms of legal, semilegal, and informal segregation; and gaining recognition as first-class US citizens with all the rights and opportunities of the white majority."

3. When the Socialist Workers Party, the Communist Party, most "New Leftists," and many Black activists used the term "self-determination," it was "not meant to convey the classical Leninist concept regarding the right of oppressed nations to establish their own states." Rather it was meant to convey "Black control of the Black community."

4. Most, but not all, community control demands are supportable, both as basic democratic rights and as "demands to change the decision-makers." "Efforts to gain community control of schools prompted people into the kinds of actions that expanded their goals and raised their consciousness about the possibilities for changing decision-makers in other spheres, such as government and the workplace."

5. "Experience had convinced Blacks [I would say, 'many Blacks'—PJ] that it was necessary for them to organize independently in all-Black or Black-dominated formations. There were both negative and positive reasons for reaching such a conclusion."

6. "Projections for establishing a viable multiracial revolutionary party in this country must take into account the history of political relations between different races, ethnic groups, and nationalities. It is a mistake to view independent Black organizations as competitors or barriers to creating a revolutionary socialist party encompassing people of color."

7. Trotskyists should promote the concept of the "dual nature" of the Black liberation struggle — "a unique combination of the struggle for democracy by an oppressed minority with the working-class struggle for socialism" — and "with this basic concept in mind," they should seek "to play leadership roles in Black liberation groups and activities."

8. "Rather than denying the need for Trotskyist or revolutionary socialist leadership," Trotskyists should seek a "significant expansion of the party through a greatly enlarged Black membership and [look] forward to becoming a more potent revolutionary force than the CP and social-democratic organizations." In other words, Trotskyists should seek to lead the struggle for Black liberation, just as they should the workers' struggle — including the Black workers' struggle — for socialism.

I am leaving aside two important historical questions: the possible discrepancy between Sell's views in the latter 1960s and those of the emerging post-Cannon SWP leadership; and how the SWP intervened when concerns of class and race seemed counterposed, as in the 1968 New York school dispute.

At some point soon, *BIDOM* should have another round of discussion of Black liberation, which, in my view, should focus on a transitional program for Black liberation. Such a program should recognize and express both the goal of Black liberation through socialist revolution and the need to build a bridge from the present, rather conservative consciousness of most Black and working-class activists to that revolutionary understanding.

Unfortunately, the rightward shift in bourgeois, working-class and socialist politics means that few Black activists today have much hope of "achieving equality under the law; eliminating all forms of legal, semilegal, and informal segregation; and gaining recognition as first-class U.S. citizens with all the rights and opportunities of the white majority," let alone achieving full Black liberation. They hope at best to defend the small but important gains Blacks have made in legal equality, desegregation of jobs, public accommodations and government, and community control.

This creates a situation in which Trotskyists must start pedagogically and in action from defense of these gains. A transitional program for Black liberation today must build a bridge from such a defense to the struggle for Black liberation through socialist revolution.

The continuation of the Black liberation discussion in the letters section of *BIDOM* has been much less satisfactory.

Steve Bloom's letter (*BIDOM* no. 110) evades the central question: should Trotskyists seek to lead the struggle for Black liberation, as well as the struggle for socialist

revolution? He argues: "There will still be *two separate* struggles [working-class and Black] with *separate* dynamics and *separate* (even if overlapping) leaderships which will need to forge an alliance with each other" (original emphasis).

Yes, but are these struggles *inseparable*, as well as separate? And do they both need Trotskyist leadership? If so, the alliance between them will be forged in action by the multiracial Trotskyist party and the shared self-interest of the working class and its specially oppressed Black sector, carrying with them sections of the Black and white middle class.

Rollin's and my differences with Bloom are much bigger than the question of Black liberation, important as that is. Rollin and I affirm that Trotskyists, to the best of their ability, should try to lead *everywhere*, in every struggle—initially, if they can do no more, by putting forward their revolutionary program, but subsequently, as they gain mass influence, by providing direct political leadership.

Bloom seems to think that, for now at least, Trotskyists should try to lead nowhere: "We say instead that we must follow *if we are to have any hope of leading*" (original emphasis).

I agree strongly that Trotskyists should participate in the mass movements of the workers and the oppressed and learn from their participation. But they begin with an invaluable asset: the uniquely revolutionary Trotskyist program. Without this program and a leadership based on it, the workers and the oppressed will fail. This is the main debate in the Fourth International today.

Jim Miles's letter (*BIDOM* no. 112) begins and ends with the demagogic charge that I employ a "similar method" to that of "Stalin's hacks" in the 1920s and "attempt to force [Lenin's and Trotsky's] understanding of the national question] into a Stalinist straightjacket," because I dare to point out that Lenin and Trotsky, as Marxists, agreed with Stalin, the Bolshevik Commissar for Nationalities, on the need for "counterposing the historico-materialist definition of nation to the abstracto-psychological" (Trotsky's words).

Since I dealt with Lenin's and Trotsky's historical-materialist approach to the national question amply in my two articles, I want to reply to Miles's second false charge and let it stand — and fall — for all the rest. Miles accuses me of "apparently think[ing] that one can only be for either the *forcible* integration of oppressed nationalities by the oppressor or their *exclusion*" (original emphasis).

Nowhere did I say anything remotely like this. In fact, I repeatedly said the opposite. Only socialist revolution can win Black people in the U.S. the right and power to choose, but then the choice to integrate into a multiracial society with complete equality, to separate in all-Black communities, or to secede and form an independent Black nation-state is up to Blacks, collectively and individually.

I appreciate both Sell's more comradely method of argument and her straightforward acknowledgement that the term "self-determination," as she uses it, is "not meant to convey the classical Leninist concept regarding the right of oppressed nations to establish their own states," but rather "Black control of the Black community." This eliminates a false argument and allows us to move the discussion forward.

Peter Johnson, Detroit

Likes Our Three Books on the SWP

I have read all of the books and pamphlets you sent to me last April. During the past year and a half I have also studied many books published by Pathfinder and bound volumes of *The Militant*.

Your literature has enabled me to develop a clearer understanding of political developments in Central America and Cuba. Your three books on the Socialist Workers Party made a deep impression on me. The story of how obviously dedicated socialists were expelled from the SWP as "disloyal enemies of the party" was disturbing and made me very angry.

I like the way Tom Kerry handled Jack Barnes in his speech you reprinted. Last year I read [Kerry's] book *Workers, Bosses, and Bureaucrats*. It seems that early on Kerry sensed problems, at least on the organizational level, with the Barnes group. It's un-

fortunate he died. I'm sure he would have helped open the eyes of more SWP members.

From reading your literature it appears that in the 1970s the SWP was a viable political party with enormous potential to become a real force and factor in the labor movement as it began relating to the working class and the unions. The Barnes group screwed up big time. From my reading of *The Militant*, the SWP seems to have become a rather odd and sterile political sect isolated from the real lives, struggles, and problems of working class people.

The Barnes group were really the ones who succumbed to outside pressures bearing down on the SWP. The fact that Jack Barnes and his closest collaborators were apparently from a non-working class background and had no practical experience in working class organizations didn't help them any in "leading the turn" to industry. They have shown no leadership whatsoever.

It appears the Barnesites honestly believed that Cuba's socialist revolution had in fact been extended to Nicaragua [and] Grenada and was about to sweep all of Central America and the Caribbean. They wanted to be a part of this revolutionary process and were convinced that in order to end their "semi-sectarian" existence and gain political acceptance by these "revolutionists of action," they had to abandon the historical program and perspective of the

SWP and the Fourth International on a whole number of important questions.

Perhaps Jack Barnes hoped for "official" recognition as the "American leader" of this mythical new communist international. That's pretty heady stuff. Hobnobbing with Castro, Ortega, Bishop, and others. That didn't happen. But it appears that Barnes couldn't let go of this pipe dream. I'm sure that fantasy can prove to be highly intoxicating to a personally ambitious person.

I need to read much more Pathfinder, FIT, and other books in order to develop comprehensive understanding of what socialists, including those who were expelled from the SWP, need to do today.

After I have time to study this literature, I'd like to discuss and share my thoughts with members of your organization on what can be done to rebuild an effective and viable socialist party of workers.

I can't conceive of any scenario in which our class can assume real power without such a party. Such a party must be disciplined in action and democratic internally.

I believe the most thoughtful, intelligent, and class-conscious workers will want that kind of party.

David Carney, San Bernardino, California

Readers may order the three-volume series "In Defense of American Trotskyism" from *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, P.O. Box 943 Village Station, New York, NY 10014

Meeting the Challenge II — Fighting Back

Continued from page 16

Kids Theater presentation of "What They Don't Teach Us in School," an educational and energetic rendition of labor history, produced and performed by more than a dozen children of union members, ranging in age from two through the teens. Carrying wonderful picket signs that they designed and made, giving testimony to heroes and hero-

ines like Rosa Parks, Joe Hill, Mother Jones, César Chávez, A. Philip Randolph, and rank-and-file strikers, they read, sang, and danced into the hearts of the audience members, who honored them with wild applause and a standing ovation. The finale "Never Gonna Quit" brought the adults and children together in a promise to continue the fight for unions today and in the future.

Does Leninism Equal Sectarianism?

Continued from page 31

The crisis of imperialism and the related crisis of Stalinism have sent not only the Stalinist movement but the revolutionary movement into a tailspin. It is certainly true that the rebellion against Stalinism in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe has discredited what millions of workers may have mistakenly viewed as the socialist alternative. But the blows struck at the working class by the deepening economic decline is creating a new political consciousness which will inevitably propel them to seek radical solutions. The class consciousness of American workers is as yet underdeveloped; they have not yet, as a class, risen to the point of undertaking independent political action. But the capitalist crisis of leadership has led thousands of workers to an understanding of the need for a party of their own, a party which represents working-class interests.

Why precisely at this moment does Le Blanc

argue that our efforts are premature, fruitless, and the inevitable overture to sectarian degeneration? Why would it be better for us to disperse and become political vagabonds or parasites in some broader movement? What can be so objectionable about an active minority held together by its ideas functioning in the working class?

Does Le Blanc not realize that class politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum? Does he not see that as the revolutionary movement has gone into a tailspin another political current, a compromising reformist current, has prospered and stepped into the breach — namely the social democrats? Unreconstructed Stalinists, vagrant and disoriented Trotskyists, sectarians, confusionists are all ending up refugees in the camp of social democracy. Climbing over each other in jockeying for formal posts within the trade unions, they are reassuming their historic position in the working class in order to more effectively mislead and betray it. □

One of the picket signs quoted a teenage striker in the textile industry in 1903 responding to a question: "Where is the union, at the strike's end?" "Inside my heart, friend."

Organizing the Unorganized and the Organized

Speakers on the final panel gave concrete examples from their successful experience with organizing. From the hotels to the railroads, from the universities to the newspapers, creative and innovative strategies are forging solidarity among and between workers in various industries and at various work sites. These stories give hope, direction, and a sense of optimism.

"Organizing is not spontaneous; it takes a lot of planning. But it builds confidence and brings out the best in ordinary people making change," explained Gladys McKenzie, business representative for AFSCME Local 3800, who helped lead the campaign that successfully organized 4500 workers at the University of Minnesota, with another 2600 pending. "There's an astounding energy," she added, and if that is tapped, "we can do anything we want to."

"You have no idea how fast change can come," said Amy Newell's father, age 86. "But it takes pioneers stumping the country, preaching the gospel of industrial unionism, planting seeds..."

Audio and video tapes of the conference are available from Peter Rachleff's office by calling 612-696-6371. □

Announcement of Bulletin in Defense of Marxism Active Supporters Conference

The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* proposes to hold a conference of its active supporters on Memorial Day weekend in 1994 at Chatham College, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The purpose of the conference will be to assess the work of the magazine since it was reorganized on a new basis in September 1992, to lay out perspectives for the further work of the magazine, and to raise funds and involve more supporters, so that the magazine can continue to meet the need for the kind of revolutionary Marxist, Fourth Internationalist journal that *BIDOM* has been since it began publication in 1984, carrying on the best traditions of the American Trotskyist movement.

The conference will also elect a new Editorial Board on the basis of a preconference discussion period that begins this month (February 1994) and that is open to all active supporters of the magazine. Active supporters are those who have a full one-year subscription to *BIDOM* (\$24), have made an additional supporter's contribution (minimum, \$20), and are committed to the aims expressed in *BIDOM*'s "Who We Are" statement of purposes. Active supporters have the right to participate in the preconference discussion and in the election of the new Editorial Board. The last day by which one can be registered as an active supporter for purposes of participation in the conference and preconference discussion is April 15, 1994.

For more information write to *BIDOM* at P.O. Box 943, Village Station, New York, NY 10014.

- 1 year — \$24** Plus, your choice of one of the following:
- American Elections and Issues Facing Working People*
 - The Transitional Program — Forging a Revolutionary Agenda for the U.S.*
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BULLETIN BUILDERS FUND

P.O. Box 1317, New York NY 10009

Dear *Bulletin IDOM* reader:

One of our loyal subscribers sent us his customary \$1,000 annual contribution at the beginning of this year, suggesting that we use the money wisely. On January 27 the editorial committee voted to put this money aside to start a Bulletin Builders Fund, designating Frank Lovell, a founding editor of *BIDOM*, to manage the fund.

The specific purpose of this fund is to encourage more contributions from our readers, the expectation being that we will get broader participation. We badly need financial help to keep *BIDOM* going, and without the active participation of dedicated readers in the production, promotion, and circulation of the magazine, it will not be able to keep doing what is required of it.

Under present political conditions *BIDOM* has a unique place.

A new generation of American working class radicals is being molded today, and part of their education must come from an understanding of working class history in this century. This is where *BIDOM* has tried to make its mark: to tell the truth about what is happening and what has happened, to explain why world events have taken a disastrous turn of late in spite of the great possibilities presented by the liberating social forces of the October 1917 Russian revolution and other liberation struggles.

We now appeal to our readers because we know that within your ranks is a vast body of experience and knowledge that will be useful in helping to educate the new generation. Our editors and writers are keenly aware of this. It shows in the constant recruitment of new writers who speak with the authority of first-hand experience and careful attention to fact. Besides our growing roster of writers we are fortunate to have frequent contributions over the years from union veterans and current activists. Others of earlier generations are now coming forth with their contributions. None of this happens without the attention and encouragement of our editors.

So we urge all readers at this crucial juncture in the history of American radicalism to identify more closely with *BIDOM* and give an extra push along the road to the new egalitarian society. Help us financially with regular monthly pledges to the Bulletin Builders Fund. Help by contributing your experience and suggestions as well, and order bundles of two or more at special rates for sale or distribution to friends and others at your place of work. And by all means attend our Active Supporters Conference in Pittsburgh on Memorial Day weekend, when *BIDOM*, with your help, will take a new lease on life.

(Please make out checks to Bulletin Builders Fund, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009.)

Support the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional!

¡Viva la Lucha Mexicana!

ALL OUT TO THE MEXICAN CONSULATES!

On January 1, 1994, as the Tratado de Libre Comercio (NAFTA) was coming into effect, the **Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional** rose up in arms to challenge the decades-old dictatorship of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). Hundreds of indigenous Mexicanos issued a declaration of war against the Mexican government/state and captured seven cities within the state of Chiapas, along the southern border of Mexico and Guatemala.

The **Ejercito** declared that it was fighting the Mexican government to oppose the centuries-old discrimination against the indigenous populations of Mexico and to carry forward the Revolution that the Mexican people began in 1910 against the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz. The **Ejercito** has declared that its goals are to obtain land and liberty for all landless peasants and to establish socialism in Mexico. The **Ejercito** is one of several armed guerrilla organizations such as the Partido Revolucionario Obrero Clandestino, Union del Pueblo, and the Partido de los Pobres, in Mexico that is seeking to create a truly new Mexican social order, with equality, land, justice, and liberty for all Mexicanos. Armed struggle has been constant in Mexico since the revolution of 1910.

The U.S. government has already sent a special mission to assist the Mexican government in defeating this latest outbreak of revolutionary struggle. The U.S. interest is of course to support its allies in the Mexican government and to protect its interests in the Mexican economy and to make Mexico "safe for investment."

Despite the selling out of Mexico to U.S. economic interests by the PRI and Carlos Salinas, who solely serve to represent the interests of the rich and ruling class in Mexico, the **Mexican Revolution** continues. As Mexicanos living under colonialism in the occupied territories, we must support national liberation and the just struggle of Mexicano people; we just oppose the torture, disappearances, and repressive actions of the PRI government.

JOIN US IN NATIONALLY COORDINATED ACTIONS AGAINST THE PRI!

Organized by: Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Mexicano.

Endorsed/Supported by: Grupo Regeneración, San Francisco, CA; Foro Democrático Mexicano, San José, CA; Lucha Mexicana, Los Angeles, CA; Los Angeles Chicano Moratorium Committee, National Chicano Human Rights Council, Phoenix, AZ; Lucha para la Autodeterminación Mexicana, Albuquerque, NM; Comité en Defensa del Pueblo Mexicano, Tierra Amarilla, NM; Congreso Chicano, El Paso, TX; Movimiento Nacional de la Raza, Houston, TX; Politically United Mexican Activists, Denver, CO; Tierra Amarilla Youth Brigades, Frente Estudiantil de Liberación Nacional, Chicago, IL; Fuerzas Revolucionarias Mexicanas, Champaign, IL; Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueño; National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War; Prairie Fire; New African People's Organization.

WE DEMAND:

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| <i>¡Tierra y Libertad para todos los Mexicanos!</i> | Free all Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War! |
| Stop Mexican Governmental Repression in Chiapas! | Present all of the Disappeared in Mexico! |
| Mexican Military Out of Chiapas! | Social Justice and True Democracy in Mexico! |
| Amnesty for all captured combatants! | <i>¡Abajo con el Tratado de Libre Comercio!</i> |

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LA TIERRA ES

