

# In Defense of Marxism

\$3.00

## Class Struggle Traditions in the United States



Jennie Jones, 1840-1882, editor of the Bloomer, Wisconsin, socialist newspaper the *Workman*, great grandmother of author David Riehle

*The Appeal to Reason* and the Mass Socialist Movement Before World War I  
by David Riehle

Also: Tribute to a Socialist Pioneer  
by James P. Cannon

Culture, Consciousness, and Class Struggle  
by Paul Le Blanc

Review: Mankiller, A Chief and Her People  
by Tom Bias

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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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# Bosnia, NATO, and the New World Order

by George Saunders

After threatening for a year, the UN/U.S./NATO forces took token military action against the Bosnian Serbs; at the same time they “even-handedly” imposed more restrictions on the already restricted Bosnian Muslim forces, who were being pressured to accept a federation with Croatia and, in effect, cantonization in another form. After a Serb bombardment killed 68 people in a Sarajevo marketplace, NATO pressure was put on so that the nearly 2-year siege of Sarajevo was eased temporarily, though it was not lifted. The media played up the destruction of 4 Serbian warplanes as the first battle engagement of NATO forces in its nearly 50-year history. Meanwhile a cruel Serb bombardment of the besieged Muslim town of Maglaj continued unhindered.

Reportedly to forestall NATO air strikes against Serb gun emplacements around Sarajevo, the Russian government stepped in, sending Russian troops to police a cease-fire on the Serb side. (This in passing assured continued Serb control of part of Sarajevo.) Spokesmen for the Western capitalist powers, such as Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, suddenly revived cold war talk about “the Russian bear.” At the same time the media drums began to pound on a theme from the past — “Russian spies” — featuring the case of a “mole” in the CIA (who the authorities had actually known about for some time). The U.S. and Russian governments took turns expelling intelligence officials. And the Western media suddenly noticed the danger of the Russian government championing the interests of ethnic Russians in former Soviet republics.

What is going on? Are the “new entrepreneurs” in Russia and Serbia coming into conflict with their mentors from the Western part of the “free enterprise” system? Not necessarily.

Important sections of the former ruling bureaucracy in both Russia and Serbia (and Croatia as well) are now aspiring capitalists. They wish to expand and build their fortunes by any means necessary — in alliance with world imperialism, if that will work, or at the expense of weaker groups in their own or neighboring societies, if necessary, and even if that causes conflict with Western capitalists.

This reality behind the headlines can be illustrated in the case of the Greater Serb expansionists, who refuse to stop their murderous operations despite the virtually unanimous outcry of world public opinion. Considerable ambivalence about stopping the Serb chauvinists is displayed by the Western capitalist governments and their military representatives. This ambivalence has its source in the interconnectedness of capitalist interests all over “the global marketplace,” even in war. Remember how U.S. bombing raids spared I.G. Farben plants in World War II?

What motivates the intransigence, brutality, rapacity, and aggressiveness of the leading layer of national chauvinists now dominant among the Serbs?

Radovan Karadzic, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, made their aspirations quite plain: “We would rather drive Mercedeses than tanks,” he was quoted as saying (*Newsweek*, March 7). The tanks, then, are the means to a certain lifestyle. Likewise, the Serbian chauvinist mayor of Zvornik indicated to a *New York Times* reporter (March 7) that the forces he leads have no intention of giving back the land and other property they seized from their former Muslim neighbors. The prosperity they look forward to is a convenient by-product of ethnic cleansing. (In a similar way, many a prosperous business in Israel, “making the desert bloom,” was built up on the corpses and/or stolen property of the former residents. There the dispossessed were Palestinians; here the Bosnian Muslims.)

Incidentally, the good mayor of Zvornik urged Serbs in the United States to — send money! (Just like one of those TV evangelists.) He needs it to build a Christian church, don’t you see, because his forces represent the supposedly long-awaited victory of “Christian civilization” over Islam. In fact, more than a century has passed since Muslim Turks dominated the area.

A mass working-class international could provide organized solidarity from the grass roots for the people of Bosnia against the neo-capitalist Serbian expansionists and their neo-Stalinist allies in the Milosevic regime in Belgrade, not to mention the Croatian expansionists (who have drawn back for the time being). In the absence of effective grassroots aid, many Bosnians and others see Western

military intervention as the only hope. They seem to overlook the fact that the Western powers, through the UN arms embargo and the UN “peacekeeping” presence, have prevented the Bosnian people from obtaining the means to defend themselves — thereby forcing them to rely on the imperialist “savior.”

## Workers Aid and Self-Reliance vs. “Humanitarian” Imperialism

The Bosnian people do have an alternative, however difficult: to keep organizing themselves to fight for their own interests and to seek international working-class solidarity like that shown in the recent Workers Aid campaign from Western Europe, which brought some moral and material relief to the Bosnian miners in Tuzla last November and is organizing another aid convoy this year. (For more about Workers Aid, see “Tuzla: A Workers Town,” in *International Viewpoint*, February 1994, and the last several months’ issues of *Socialist Action*.)

Some lessons for the Bosnian people can be read in the Somali experience with U.S./UN “humanitarian” intervention. Whatever its weaknesses and for whatever reasons, the movement around the Somali National Alliance and Gen. Mohammed Farah Aidid, declined to place reliance on the U.S./UN “savior.” Instead their forces fought back against foreign domination in its “humanitarian” disguise, and for now they have forced imperialism to retreat.

Likewise, the Zapatista fighters in southern Mexico have shown that an organized fightback can win allies and get results. In Mexico, as in Somalia, the New World Order has been on the march. Of course it is really the same old order

*Continued on page 31*

## Editor’s Note

The experience and spirit of earlier struggles are vitally important for our own fight today. Hence the focus of this issue on “Class Struggle Traditions in the United States.” Dave Riehle’s essay on the mass-circulation weekly paper of the old Socialist Party, *Appeal to Reason*, relates to this, as does the reprinted piece by James P. Cannon, a pioneer of U.S. Communism and Trotskyism, about his own father, who had been active in struggles of the Knights of Labor and the mass party led by Eugene V. Debs. Paul Le Blanc’s discussion piece on working-class culture provides additional material on this theme. Le Blanc’s article and the second installment of Mary Scully’s polemic also continue our ongoing discussion and debate around perspectives for building a revolutionary workers party in this country.

Problems of building a revolutionary workers party are also taken up in Barry Weisleder’s

provocative look at the New Democratic Party of Canada and in the interview with Lula, head of the Brazilian Workers Party. Contributions by Marilyn Vogt-Downey touch on such problems as they apply to the Russian working class today; Phil Gasper’s review of recently republished works by Victor Serge provides an opportunity to relate these current events to the revolutionary class-struggle traditions associated with Lenin and Trotsky. In the Chiapas rebellion and related developments in Mexico (discussed in our previous two issues), we see another fighting tradition, that of Zapata, infusing the struggles of today. For important material on Mexico, including the new Zapatistas’ “Revolutionary Law on Women,” readers are referred to the February issue of *International Viewpoint*. More firsthand reports from Mexico are scheduled for our next issue.



# Aftermath of Massacre Gives Lie to Israeli Government's Intentions

by Tom Garvey

On February 27, in the town of Hebron on the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Dr. Baruch Goldstein, a Brooklyn-born immigrant to the Israeli Qiryat Arba settlement, entered the nearby Cave of the Patriarchs, a shrine sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Goldstein was a disciple of the ragingly anti-Arab leader Meir Kahane. He was dressed in his army reserve uniform and carrying an assault rifle. He passed unchallenged by several Israeli soldiers who were supposed to be guarding the shrine, and then, despite the presence of soldiers in the next room, spent 2 minutes firing 111 rounds into a crowd of Palestinian worshippers, who were kneeling in prayer. Survivors finally rushed Goldstein and beat him to death. Estimates of the number of dead range from 30 to 50 and of the wounded from 90 to 150.

Since then, Palestinians throughout the Occupied Territories and even in Israel have taken to the streets in protest. The Israeli Defense Forces have fired live ammunition into crowds of unarmed protesters and have killed at least two dozen. There have even been reports of Israeli Defense Forces snipers shooting unarmed Palestinians (National Public Radio News, March 3, 1994). Protests have defied army-imposed 24-hour curfews in which Palestinians are not even allowed to seek food or medical care. A Palestinian surgeon told reporters of people being unable to come in for needed operations. "People could be dying, but there is nothing I can do," said one pharmacist who could not supply the sick with medication. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin stated that the curfews would continue indefinitely (*New York Times*, March 3, 1994).

Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), issued a condemnation of the massacre and demanded that the Israeli settlers in the West Bank and Gaza be disarmed. Faisal Husseini, head negotiator for the PLO, stated that previous agreements with the Israeli government could not stand in light of the new situation, and they would have to be renegotiated. The Israeli government has offered to free about 1,000 Palestinian political prisoners and said that it would disarm or detain those settlers considered a threat to Palestinians. It also announced plans to arrest 5 settlers, disarm 20, and restrict the movements of 15. In later announcements, Police Minister Moshe Shahal said that "less than 100" potentially violent settlers would be disarmed or detained. There are over 100,000 Israeli settlers in the Occupied Territories, and most have govern-

ment-issued guns (Gilbert, Martin: *Atlas of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, p. 36, and *New York Times*, February 28, 1994). The government has told them to carry their weapons at all times in case of Palestinian reprisals (National Public Radio News, March 2, 1994).

Although there may well have been army collusion on some level with Goldstein's massacre, the Israeli government is in an uncomfortable position. The indignation of the Palestinian masses against the massacre and the government's subsequent response against the Palestinian people will make negotiations with the PLO more difficult than before. The issue of the settlements has been brought out into the open, where it cannot be ignored.

The government cannot afford to alienate the settlers. They are a useful force of repression and intimidation against the Palestinian people, and the Israeli government is not about to give up all control over the Occupied Territories. Many settlers, like Baruch Goldstein, are highly committed to the vision of a Greater Israel, in which all Arabs would be expelled from the territory of Biblical Israel. In his eulogy to Goldstein, Rabbi Yaacov Perin said, "One million Arabs are not worth one Jewish fingernail" (*New York Times*, February 28, 1994). Israel has reserved the right to send troops into "Palestinian-controlled" territories to defend settlers, and so the settlements will be an excuse for the Israeli government to continue to wield direct power in the area, and that is what makes these agreements palatable to the government (*The Progressive*, December 1993).

At the same time, more massacres by even a few individuals such as Goldstein would make the position of moderate Palestinians such as Arafat totally untenable, and the talks would be scuttled. There would be no significant base of support for a political leadership that would subordinate itself so completely to the Israeli government.

The Israeli government almost certainly intends to keep some settlements inside the Occupied Territories, but it does not want to have to confront the Palestinians with these intentions until the Palestinians have committed to the first stage of the peace process. Although the accords say that the issue of the settlements should be taken up within two years, Rabin is now saying that "it is not supposed to be an issue for another two years" — an important distinction (*New York Times*, March 3, 1994).

The leaders of the PLO are also in an awkward position. They have been trying to sell the peace accords to the Palestinian masses, over whom they have had less and less influence in recent years. Throwing in their lot with Israel and the West was a last desperate bid for leadership of any fragment of Palestine they could get. Now, clearly embarrassed by the situation, they must strike an angry pose. But as distasteful as they may find it, they will have to come back to the negotiating table. The Israel government will probably make a few more concessions to placate the Arab masses, but it is very unlikely that either side will let this deal fall through.

The peace talks represent an alliance between Israeli and Palestinian capital to exploit jointly the people and natural resources of the Occupied Territories (*The Progressive*, December 1993). Their mutual fear of the mass militancy of the Intifadeh keeps them from rejecting each other. However, Israel is definitely the senior partner, as underlined by the charitable manner with which the Israeli government treats violent settlers and the brazen manner with which it represses the Palestinian people even as they protest the massacre against them. Whether it wanted this to happen or not, the Israeli government is using the massacre to flex its muscle in the Occupied Territories and show the Palestinian masses what will happen to them if they do not accept the accords.

Meanwhile, on the ground, the mass demonstrations protesting the massacre have been on a scale not seen since the high days of the Intifadeh, and some have taken place in Jericho, a key area because it is slated for PLO rule. This may well be a rekindling of the Intifadeh and a rejection of PLO misleadership by the Palestinian masses.

As the Palestinian masses search for an understanding of these events, those who sympathize with the Palestinian cause must be entirely clear. The Israeli government's intention is not to let go of the Occupied Territories — but only to adjust its grip. The Arafat leadership of the PLO and their allies among the Palestinian bourgeoisie are complicit in this whole affair for trying to demobilize the Palestinian masses and become a conduit for Israeli rule. The only conditions that will give justice to the Palestinians and to the region are the return of the stolen land on which the settlements rest, the right of return and reparations for those Palestinians expelled in 1948, and the establishment of secular democracy in the Middle East. More generally, the insidious influence of capital must be defeated, so that all of the region's people can be free. Anything less may appear more "feasible" in the short term, but as the events of this week have shown, anything less is just a new version of the occupation. □

March 5, 1994



# New Teamsters Battle on Two Fronts: UPS and Strikebreakers

by Charles Walker

The courage of Teamster members won this agreement. No corporation has the right to break workers' backs just to make another buck.

— Ron Carey

## The Unfinished Democratic Reform

On February 7, 1994, the Teamsters union experienced one of the most outrageous and ironic days in American labor history, when the international union called a nationwide strike against its largest single employer, United Parcel Service (UPS). Despite the strike call, a majority of rank and filers were forced to work by local and area officials embittered by their stunning loss to General President Ron Carey's slate in 1991's first-ever rank-and-file election of international union officers.

Before Carey's election, it was not uncommon for local Teamster unions to call strikes that the international worked to curb and sometimes smash and defeat. The names of early international presidents Dan Tobin and Dave Beck are synonymous with the business unionism that has dominated the international union for generations. Beck proudly proclaimed, "Unions are big business. Why should truck drivers and bottle washers be allowed to make big decisions affecting union policy? Would any corporation allow it?"

Now the tables are turned, and the new Teamsters international leadership can't fight off the boss's attacks without simultaneously fighting the Beck disciples entrenched in the joint councils and area conferences.

## Why Strike Now?

The strike had a modest aim: simply to force UPS, a *Fortune* 500 corporation, which handles 11.5 million packages a day, to sit down and negotiate in good faith the corporation's decision to unilaterally impose a package weight increase from a maximum of 70 pounds to 150 pounds. The Teamsters did not object to the new weight limit, but they did insist on safety protections for their members.

Prestrike meetings with UPS gained nothing. The corporation even refused to acknowledge that they were negotiating, insisting that it was merely listening to the union's concerns. Finally, the union offered a last-ditch compromise: would UPS temporarily stay implementation of the 150-pound weight limit pending an accelerated processing of the union's grievance?

The corporation rejected the Teamsters' offer, obtained a federal court injunction blocking a strike for 5 days, and stated, "A job action would be a violation of the law and [the company] assumes the Teamsters will honor the restraining order."

That assumption was only partly right. Seventy thousand UPS Teamsters honored, not the restraining order, but the international's call to strike and defy the injunction. Another 95,000 worked but wanted to strike. (In Maryland, rank and filers wildcatted in defiance of their local officials.) Within a few hours UPS met with the Teamsters to negotiate an end to the strike, and the victorious strikers returned to work the next day.

## The Settlement

The back-to-work agreement provided mainly that

the parties enter into immediate good-faith bargaining over the terms, design, and implementation of the handling of over 70-pound packages...[Until] a negotiated settlement is reached, UPS agrees that no bargaining unit member will be required to handle any package over 70 pounds in weight (up to a maximum of 150 pounds) without the assistance of another bargaining unit employee. Such employees will also be provided appropriate lifting devices.

Further, no union member

shall be the subject of discipline for participating in the work stoppage...UPS waives any and all claims for contempt, damages, liability, or fines against the IBT [International Brotherhood of Teamsters]...However, UPS preserves its claim, if any, against the IBT for damages arising from or related to the work stoppage of February 7, 1994, for a violation of the parties' collective bargaining agreement.

UPS immediately sued the international union for \$50 million in civil damages and is chiseling on its commitment to always provide more help when the heavier packages are shipped.

It's a sad commentary on the diminishing strength of American unions that it takes more than the threat of a strike merely to get an employer to negotiate a single work rule, even one of such personal importance to each UPS loader and driver. However, no employer now is likely to dismiss a strike threat from Ron Carey as routine bluffing and posturing, meaning new Teamster power at the bargaining table and expanded credibility with the Teamster membership.

## Old Guard vs. New Teamsters

Carey's credibility will be indispensable as he is forced to abandon his attempt to win over area and local officers to his reforms as mostly a lost and futile cause. The organized strikebreaking by his Old Guard opponents constitutes an irreparable break in the working relations that prevailed prior to the strike. One cannot imagine

Carey now sitting peacefully beside the strikebreakers, even should "protocol" seem to require it.

The Old Guard accuses Carey of irresponsibly defying the federal court's injunction, of needlessly striking over a matter that should have been referred to the contract's slow-moving grievance procedure, and of sloppily negotiating the contract in the first place. Their charges mirror some of the company's propaganda.

## Old Guard Like a Junkyard Dog

The Old Guard charges that Carey called the strike to aid his effort to increase the per capita dues paid to the international. Not so, says Carey, who has eliminated wasteful expenditures at the international level but needs more income to fund a new \$200-a-week strike benefit and ensure the continuation of new organizing initiatives and normal overhead for member services. Therefore, Carey has prepared a first-ever membership referendum to increase basic dues from 2 hours to 2½ hours pay per month. The Old Guard hopes to defeat the increase, in part to force Carey to give up his reforms.

Some of Carey's reforms have hit the Old Guard in the pocketbook. For example, an extra special pension fund for international officers was shut down and some officers were dropped from the international's payroll, where they were drawing a salary in addition to their full-time local union pay.

Now insulated from the membership (and Carey, too) in their joint councils and area conferences, which function as political machines with millions of dollars to distribute as patronage, and where they control grievance panels and all-important jurisdiction decisions, what the Old Guard doesn't buy it extorts through fear of retribution against reluctant officers or their members. From these centers they fight against Carey's reforms, organized the UPS strikebreaking, and logically, they battle his proposed dues increase to strengthen the strike fund—in part, for the simple reason that strikebreakers and scabs don't need a credible strike fund!

## Moving Forward

The conventional wisdom is that Carey will not win the dues increase referendum. Ironically, he may lose the vote for one of the reasons he was elected general president: that is, members will be voting on the basis of their experience with local officials, most of whom are Old Guard bureaucrats who lost the members' confidence and respect long ago. After years of concessions to employers, many local union officials are seen as just another hand in members' pockets,

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# The Struggle for Human Rights in Russia

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

*The following is based on a presentation by Marilyn Vogt-Downey as part of a panel on "Repression of Democratic and Human Rights in Russia," sponsored by the U.S. Committee for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia (USCDHRR) and the New York Marxist School in New York City on March 4, 1994.*

*Other participants in the panel were Boris Kagarlitsky, a founding member of the Party of Labor initiative in Moscow; Bertell Ollman of the Political Science Department of New York University; Cheryl Lehman, a member of the Steering Committee of the Network of East-West Women, recently returned from Moscow, where she met with a number of women political activists; and Elizabeth Bowman, co-chair of the USCDHRR, who observed the December 12 elections in Russia on behalf of USCDHRR.*

The U.S. Committee for Democratic Rights in Russia is based on the two demands: "Human rights and freedom of press, assembly, and political organization for all in Russia" and "No repression of trade unionists and democratic activists." In other words, we are concerned to defend basic democratic freedoms.

Of course, there are many ways to suppress freedoms. For example, if the price of paper increases so that it is out of the reach of most people — the price of paper in Russia went up again recently, this time by 500 percent — for ordinary workers to produce a newspaper becomes nearly impossible. If space for meetings is not available, freedom of assembly becomes problematic. If you can't afford a phone, as one of the worker organizations we have contact with in the Urals can't, it is very difficult to contact supporters on short notice. Without newspapers, leaflets, phones, and meeting halls, political organization becomes very difficult. This is not police repression, but democracy suffers all the same. Such is the case today throughout the former USSR.

Recently — in fact, throughout the entire year of 1993 — the U.S. Soviet Workers Information Committees has received very little material from Russia. Not only does the cost of paper limit what small groups of workers and youth can print, the cost of postage has skyrocketed. What used to cost kopecks now costs hundreds of rubles to send abroad. If you are a worker who has not been paid for say 3 or 4 months — like many workers in Russia today — it is obvious that the momentum of your political activity will suffer.

Let's look at some recent data from the Russian government's State Committee on Statistics: The death rate in Russia was up 20 percent in 1993 over the death rate in 1992! The infant mortality rate jumped from 17.4 to 19.2 (of every thousand babies who die before reaching their first birthday). The average longevity of a Russian man is only 59 years — less than that of an average man in such Third World countries as Indonesia or the Philippines. The Russian population is declining as a result of the hardships caused by the government's attempts to restore capitalism.

There is rampant corruption and organized crime throughout Russia and all the former republics. According to information issued by officials of the Russian Central Bank and Ministry of Internal Affairs just a few days ago, 94

"entrepreneurs" were assassinated in 1993, 10 of them bankers. Some three-quarters of the new enterprises are "protected" by various of the estimated 150 organized crime gangs, which also control some 40,000 newly privatized firms, including most of the banks. This is a kind of reign of terror. How could such savage gangs be expected to deal with workers who want to form unions in these or any other enterprises or who just stand up for their rights? In fact, how are they dealing with them now? This is not state-sponsored repression — not directly, at least, but it is repression all the same.

The market reforms have caused a sharp decline in the living standards of the working population. Basic food items needed for a nutritious diet are too expensive for most people to afford. There is a rise in malnutrition, diseases of all kinds, poverty.

To meet foreign creditors' demands to balance the budget in 1993, the Russian government simply stopped paying Russian enterprises for products it bought — that is, it stopped paying its debts inside Russia. The factories and industries that did not get paid did not, therefore, have the funds to pay workers wages or continue to function.

Thus, millions of workers in Russia were not paid for 3 months or more!! How do the workers take care themselves and their families when they don't get paid for months at a time? What suffering and sacrifice this must be causing!

Workers began rebelling in the late spring and into the summer and early fall of 1993. One journalist reported that the strike wave last summer was the biggest Russia has seen since 1917, the year of the Russian revolution. This article is in the new issue of the *USSWIC Bulletin*, along with many other reports of worker resistance in the months just prior to Yeltsin's dissolution of parliament and declaration of presidential rule on September 21, 1993.

In the aftermath of that September 21 decree, not only was the parliament surrounded by troops; so was the headquarters of the huge Russian trade union federation, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FITUR).

FITUR is the descendant of the giant trade union federation of the Stalin and post-Stalin eras, the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (AUCCTU), which dissolved in October 1990. A new layer of functionaries has control of the FITUR's structures and the AUCCTU's property, which the FITUR inherited.

The FITUR's material resources give it the possibility of organizing powerful protests. But it has not done so. The FITUR officials' approach to union work has been to accommodate to the market and privatization measures, adopting the stance of a loyal opposition and "labor statesmen," much like the AFL-CIO officials in the U.S. It has not tried to develop into a militant fighting force to advance workers' rights and interests. At least in part because it has been so docile, its numbers have declined from 70 million in early 1992 to only 50 million or so in early December 1993. (See *USSWIC Bulletin*, No. 4.)

Nevertheless, the Yeltsin government evidently decided to use threats to try to ensure that the FITUR would not even attempt to mobilize its ranks against government policies. In late September, the government threatened to ban FITUR and take its property away if it didn't get a new president and continue to stay out of politics. The FITUR officials did as they were told and did not try to mobilize the workers in any significant way.

But the workers have moved into action all the same.

On Tuesday, March 1, worker militancy erupted among coal miners who had not been paid since November. 239 of 299 coal pits joined in a one-day strike involving 550,000 miners. They were joined by other industry workers — at ore-separating factories, mine equipment manufacturers, and mine construction enterprises. The strike stretched from Sakhalin in the east to Chelyabinsk in the Urals to Rostov in the southwest and the Leningrad region in the northwest. In Vorkuta, in the far north of European Russia, all 13 pits were shut down. Despite the decision of local officials in the Kuznetsk Basin in western Siberia not to join the strike, two-thirds of the coal pits in that area (55 out of 76) were closed.

The miners were demanding that the government pay for its coal purchases and double the subsidies to the mines to \$7 billion, which — incidentally — is about the same amount that coal consumers owe the coal industry for coal already purchased but never paid for. The fact that the debts had not been paid has meant that there was no money to pay wages or even buy timber and metal to reinforce the mine shafts. So the mines have become even more hazardous than usual.



After the massive coal strike in 1989, many miners broke with the old union structures and formed a new union, which backed Yeltsin and his reforms. They believed his promises that he would get them what they needed. The pro-Yeltsin position of the leadership of this Independent Miners Union is now obviously eroding because conditions under Yeltsin have only worsened for miners, and drastically at that.

The Vorkuta miners were even calling for Yeltsin's resignation and early presidential elections.

Some miners from the Independent Miners Union have had considerable contact with the United Mine Workers Union in the U.S., and miners from Russia and Ukraine apparently make regular visits to mining regions here. One of our contacts in West Virginia tells us that when he goes to church on Sundays, he is often surprised to see two or three coal miners from Ukraine or Russia in the back of the church during the services. It would appear that there is considerable potential for international campaigns in support of the coal miners in Russia if they were to ask for it, not only from the supporters of our Committee but from the trade union movement in the U.S. as a whole.

Thus, despite all the forces and conditions against them, some workers in Russia are again beginning to mobilize.

### What About the Other Republics?

There is considerable information about hardship and deteriorating living standards among the Russian workers, but there has not been much information in recent months about their organizations and actions.

However, the state of affairs is infinitely worse among the workers in the other republics of the former USSR, now nominally independent countries. But they deserve attention too.

It is important to learn what is going on in these regions. One reason is that events there show the fallacy of the line of thinking often heard that the old "hard-line" former Communist Party (CP) officials in Russia and elsewhere are qualitatively different from the darlings of the International Monetary Fund, like the Yegor Gaidars and Boris Fyodorovs of Russia.

Let us take a brief look at some developments in Central Asia for a few examples.

Who could be more "hard line" than Islam Karimov, president of Uzbekistan? He is the former party chief who rules the impoverished republic of 22 million with an iron hand. In November of last year, he made a trip to England laden with "sizable Uzbek gold reserves." He was even received by the queen. He left the gold in a London bank, just as he has left several tons of Uzbek gold in banks all across Europe, "as a guarantee against investors losing money in Uzbekistan in the event of political and social instability" — that is, as a kind of prearranged insurance for them.

On January 22, his government announced its new economic program: "state-owned trade and service enterprises will be auctioned off to anyone with the money to buy," whether Uzbek or foreign. There will be a 5-year holiday on all taxes for joint ventures more than 50 percent foreign-owned, and all import duties will be ended July 1995.

The IMF and other foreign capitalist lenders, whose interest in Russia is cooling since Yeltsin's policies were rejected by voters in December, are considerably warmer toward Karimov's Uzbekistan. In January, the IMF offered Uzbekistan a credit line of \$140-160 million. This may not sound like a lot, but it is more than Russia is getting.

Yet it is in Uzbekistan that the deepgoing poverty and male chauvinist culture are so imposing that thousands of rural women have burned themselves to death in protest and despair.

A similar policy of prostration before foreign investors was announced by the government of Kazakhstan under former CP chief Nursultan Nazarbayev. This republic of 17 million is also in a deep economic crisis. Many factories — and the republic has considerable heavy industry — are idle, and living standards have dropped sharply. Besides the much-publicized deal allowing the U.S. oil company Chevron to take oil from the vastly rich Tengiz fields, the Nazarbayev government has also allowed Phillip Morris to buy its cigarette factory in the capital (Alma-Ata) and its tobacco plantations. It is offering state-owned factories for 100 percent ownership to foreigners and generous deals for those foreign corporations who want to mine its rich deposits of silver, lead, zinc, copper, and gold.

The former CP chief of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niyazov, fresh from his 99.9 percent approval rating in a referendum on his rule in January, stated: "[Of] great importance is speeding up the process of privatization, which must become the basis of our economic system." He wants to turn his republic of 4.2 million into a second Kuwait — with himself as the monarch, of course — and has already begun to create a cult of his own leadership, erecting portraits and statues of himself in public buildings and elsewhere.

The terrible living conditions in Turkmenistan are reflected in the fact that all children in Turkmenistan suffer from malnutrition. There is no democracy in this republic. However, there are a few individuals who have dared to stand up against Niyazov. Although the vote for him was 1,950,000, there were 215 individuals brave enough to vote against him!

Although there have been upsurges of protest against these totalitarian leaders in recent years, we receive no literature from the workers and student movements or the organizations on which they have been based. Hundreds of students were arrested for protesting against Karimov's attempts to lift price controls in

Uzbekistan in 1992, but there have been no international campaigns on their behalf. What happened to these students?

Two final and quick examples: Geidar Aliyev, former KGB head and longtime party chief of oil-rich Azerbaijan, is back in power there as a result of a coup by a mercenary army in June 1993. He has taken over the process of selling oil concessions to foreign corporations that was started by his predecessors of the Popular Front government, making lucrative deals for himself with British Petroleum, French Agip, Royal Dutch Shell, and others. Meanwhile, this repressive and hated tyrant, while presiding over an economy in shambles and still trying to crush the Armenian movement for democracy in Nagorno-Karabagh, has been going after suspected opponents. Accusing the Popular Front of plotting a coup against him, since February 27 he has launched a sweep of the republic, arresting over 100 people.

In Lithuania, where the "reformed" former CP chief Brazauskas was actually elected president last year, three young anarchists who were involved in a public protest against his pro-capitalist and pro-market policies were arrested just days ago. They were imprisoned in a psychiatric hospital, according to information received by an USSWIC member — the same repressive measure used against opponents in the Brezhnev period.

We hope to have more information about these cases within a few days.

### Not a Moral, But a Practical Issue

Although the U.S. Committee for Democratic Rights in Russia is now focused on Russia, it is obvious that it, like the US-Soviet Workers Information Committee, needs to be there for workers and their allies in all the former republics of the USSR. Enormous crimes are being committed against the people of these regions that have almost no publicity.

Supporting civil rights struggles in these regions is not a moral issue but a practical one. The workers movements are even weaker in Central Asia and the Caucasus, for example, than they are in Russia or the U.S. The foreign corporations are beginning to move in to exploit the vast wealth there, while the workers live in dire poverty. If the capitalists can find even cheaper sources of labor in these former republics of the USSR, this will drive down wages everywhere unless working people can organize to defend themselves and take over the resources themselves.

It is in our interest, and in the interests of Russian workers and their allies, to begin to make links with these isolated millions and help them in their struggles, just as we hope to be able to help those struggling in Russia.

It is not a question of mere solidarity. It is a question of our collective survival. □



# What's "Left" of the CPSU?

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

Some observers, when assessing the political spectrum in Russia, characterize the descendants of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, banned in Russia by Boris Yeltsin following the failed coup attempt in August 1991, as part of the "left." One of these descendants, the **Communist Party of the Russian Federation** (CPRF), actually decided to participate in the government-staged election campaign for the December 1993 "elections." It managed to get on the ballot and came in third after Zhirinovskiy's Liberal-Democrats and Gaidar's Russia's Choice garnering some 13.23 percent of the vote.

The CPRF, also known as "Zyuganov's party" after its central leader Gennady Zyuganov, is the largest of the CPSU's five main descendants and claims to have more than 600,000 members. It was founded in February 1993. While the CPRF claims loyalty to "Marxism-Leninism," what it advocates is a re-establishment of the prereform bureaucratic centralization with a "state based on soviets," or local councils. There are no worker-controlled democratic councils as yet. The councils that exist are still under the control of local apparatchiks. The CPRF calls for a "multi-system market economy combining various forms of property, with the state and collective property playing the leading role." This is much like Gorbachev's early reform proposals, which failed.

Its main political orientation initially was toward a "bloc of left and patriotic forces," the basis for what is often referred to as the "red-brown alliance" (red for Communist — the Stalinist bureaucratic version, that is — and brown for fascist). A key force in this "bloc" sought by the CPRF was the Front for National Salvation (FNS), a reactionary, Russian-patriotic organization — banned following the showdown in Moscow in early October — which included rabid anti-Semites. Zyuganov, in fact, was the co-chairperson of the FNS. The CPRF's political program could coincide with that of the FNS because of the CPRF's commitment to "state patriotism." This state patriotism has its roots in the deep Russian chauvinism fostered by the Stalin regime against non-Russians, beginning in the 1920s but particularly intensified during World War II, the "Great Patriotic War." The CPRF sees "the Russian people as unifiers of the nations and peoples linked to them by a single historic destiny," similar to the line promoted by Gorbachev; it complements some of the premises advanced by Zhirinovskiy and his supporters to justify Russian expansionism.

This type of chauvinism is a logical consequence or by-product of the Stalinist project of allegedly building "socialism in one country," with conservative Russian chauvinism replac-

ing the proletarian internationalism that inspired the revolutionary period. In fact, this chauvinism runs directly counter to the principles of proletarian internationalism advanced and advocated by Marx and carried further by Lenin and the Bolshevik party at the time of the October 1917 revolution.

The CPRF's patriotic stance and its support for maintaining Russia's territorial integrity and an "all-union market" put it at odds not only with those founders of communism but also, more immediately, with non-Russians inside Russia who want to separate. The CPRF's alleged concern over the fate of Russians in the non-Russian former republics also lines it up with the Russian chauvinist forces in those areas against the local movements for national rights, for example, in the former Baltic republics, Moldova, and Tajikistan.

It is this patriotism of the CPRF that willy-nilly led it into an open alliance with anti-Semitic reactionaries in the FNS. The CPRF has also worked closely with the All-Union Communist Party—Bolsheviks (AUCPB), often associated with its key spokesperson, Nina Andreyeva, a fervent admirer of Joseph Stalin and his ferocious methods of rule. The CPRF has the largest number of local organizations across Russia of any of the CPSU's descendants. Zyuganov had been elected to the Central Committee of the CPSU in 1989.

CPRF founding members include leaders of the failed coup attempt in August 1991, Vladimir Kruchkov, Anatoly Lukyanov, and Vasily Starodubtsev. The last two were actually elected to the new parliament on the CPRF slate in December.

Also found in alliance with patriotic forces largely because of its Russian chauvinist positions is the **Russian Communist Workers Party** (RCWP). The RCWP, whose principal leader Viktor Anpilov was imprisoned as a result of the October 1993 events, is also loyal to the pre-Gorbachev CPSU policies and considers Gorbachev and his reform policies oppor-

tunistic. The RCWP was a fervent defender of the parliament during the September-October 1993 standoff because of resistance from the parliament to aspects of the Yeltsin government's economic reforms. Within the parliament, the interests of deputies representing unreconstructed apparatchiks of the old order and the factory directors of Civic Union have often coincided. They both stand to lose a great deal if the IMF's shock therapy/marketization measures cause factories to close. But neither the former nor the latter represents the interests of the mass of the workers, whose independent organizations and voices they have long helped suppress.

The RCWP has organized rallies in Leningrad/St. Petersburg with monarchist organizations and even with Zhirinovskiy's Liberal-Democratic Party.

The **Socialist Party of Toilers** is a centrist CPSU offspring. It is often known as "Medvedev's party" after one of its founders, historian Roy Medvedev. Medvedev is best known for his unofficial history documenting the crimes of Stalin, *Let History Judge*, written during the Brezhnev period and denied publication before Gorbachev. Medvedev, however, is not the leader of the party and is not active in the party's day-to-day work. The SPT has taken a greater public distance from Stalin and his methods than have the other former CPSU groups. However, its "anti-Stalinism" has led it into an alliance with Christian Democrats, the new "entrepreneurs" and factory directors of Civic Union (a "pink-beige" bloc) and not toward revolutionary Marxism and efforts to build an alliance with the workers. The fear of foreign domination and usurpation that is felt in the social circles where the SPT seeks its alliances has led the SPT to adopt a Russian patriotic stance. The SPT's founding program was the social democratic program approved by the last CPSU plenum in July 1991, i.e., Gorbachev's reform program. The SPT, the first party to be formed after the CPSU was banned, had also been the largest until the CPRF was formed in February 1993. Since then, its membership has dropped sharply from some 100,000 (its peak at the end of 1991) to 20,000. Many of its members left it to join the CPRF.

*Continued on page 36*

## Russia: The Working Class, the Trade Unions, the Left What the Capitalist Media Won't Say

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# Randy Shilts: Chronicler of Injustice

by Mike McCallister

After a seven-year battle with AIDS, mostly hidden from the public, Randy Shilts died in February.

Shilts was among the first openly gay reporters in the mainstream media, first for public television in San Francisco and then at the San Francisco *Chronicle*. His 1987 book, *And the Band Played On*, awakened many to the criminal AIDS policies of the Reagan administration, which sentenced millions to die for the crimes of being gay or poor and/or using drugs.

His final project, *Conduct Unbecoming*, showed how the U.S. military used its formal ban against gays and lesbians as a weapon against dissenters in uniform and to enforce sexual harassment against women GIs.

## Growing Up Out of the Closet

Shilts grew up in the heart of "Wayne's World," Aurora, Illinois, the middle child of six boys. He came to terms with his sexuality while a student at Portland Community College in Oregon. In a 1991 interview with Laurie Udesky in *The Progressive*, he described his coming-out as "very political. I had gay sexual experiences, as we all did, from Boy Scouts on. For me there came a moment when I had to understand on a political basis. And it just hit one day."

After participating in gay contingents at anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, in May 1972, he recounted, "I told every friend, everybody in my family, that I was gay. And I swore that I'd never live another day of my life in which people didn't know I was gay."

Despite top grades as a journalism student, his decision did not improve his job prospects. After graduation he went to work for the gay magazine *The Advocate*.

In the mid-1970s the gay movement in San Francisco was beginning to exercise power at the ballot box. In 1977, gay liberal Harvey Milk was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and Shilts covered the campaign for KQED, the public television station.

Two years later, Milk and Mayor George Moscone were assassinated by another Super-

visor, Dan White. White was convicted of manslaughter after claiming that too much junk food impaired his judgment. The verdict in the "Twinkie defense" case sparked a brief rebellion in the gay community.

Shortly thereafter, KQED canceled its nightly news program, and Shilts was unemployed again. While on unemployment, he wrote a biography of Milk, *The Mayor of Castro Street*. "It was my last stab at being a journalist," he told *The Progressive*. The "last stab" succeeded. Upon finishing the book, he was hired by the daily *Chronicle*.

## The Gay Epidemic

At about the same time Shilts started at the *Chronicle*, gay men in San Francisco, New York, and a few other places began suffering from rare and fatal illnesses. Diseases with names like *pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia and Kaposi's sarcoma. Doctors working in clinics serving the gay community were wondering what was going on, and alerted Shilts.

As doctors began discovering the disabled immune systems of those dying of the "opportunistic infections," the overarching disease gained a name, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Later the human immunodeficiency virus was discovered, and the race to find a vaccine began.

Shilts was the first reporter on the AIDS beat, and he covered it thoroughly as the deadly virus cut a broad swath through San Francisco and the rest of the planet. Within a couple of years, it was a full-time job keeping up with both the dying and the struggle against it. Shilts claimed that he interviewed over 900 people about AIDS from 1981 to 1987, when *And the Band Played On* was published. About a third of those interview subjects were quoted in the book.

*And the Band Played On* is a powerful and disturbing account. Readers follow the process of the medical establishment uncovering the disease, the gay movement reaction, and the U.S. government's inaction. Key figures in both the Reagan administration and Congress were reluctant to spend money fighting a disease which mainly affected gays and IV drug users. The book closes with the October 1985 death of Rock Hudson, movie star of the 1950s and '60s and the first celebrity with AIDS. When Hudson went public with AIDS, the epidemic finally reached mass consciousness. Shilts noted: "On the day the world learned Rock Hudson was stricken, some 12,000 Americans were already dead or dying of AIDS and hundreds of thousands more were infected with the virus...but few had paid any attention to this; nobody, it seemed, had cared about them."

The book is a solid indictment of all the institutions that contributed, willingly or

blindly, to the spread of HIV over the first five years of the epidemic. In addition to the traditional government bureaucrats who serve as villains, Shilts noted the indifference of the media to the problem. In the 18 months following the first mention of AIDS in the medical journals, the *New York Times* published exactly 6 stories on the spreading epidemic, none on Page One.

Shilts compared the *Times*'s reaction to AIDS to its coverage of the cyanide-laced Tylenol scare of the same period, which killed 7 people but rated daily coverage for a month and another 23 stories in the 2 months after that. Despite the fact that half of the AIDS cases in the U.S. were living in New York City "one could have lived in New York...and not even have been aware from the daily newspapers that an epidemic was happening, even while government doctors themselves were predicting that the scourge would wipe out the lives of tens of thousands."

Even the gay movement itself came in for scrutiny. Shilts showed gay activists with a reluctance to admit that AIDS would decimate the community if bathhouses where men met to have anonymous sex weren't shut down.

## Journalist as AIDS Celebrity

*And the Band Played On* made Shilts a celebrity. The book was reviewed everywhere from medical journals to *People* magazine. It hit the bestseller lists, was made into a highly acclaimed movie for pay television, and won numerous awards. But Shilts had hoped to change the world, and he remained haunted by the continuing death around him.

In 1994, thirteen years into the epidemic, there is still only one drug, AZT, on the market which treats the symptoms of AIDS. The scientists have promised new, more effective treatments for years, but have not produced. In 1988, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the closest thing the federal government had to an AIDS czar at the time, testified before Congress that new drugs were delayed because he couldn't hire enough people to conduct the clinical trials. Fauci said he'd asked for 127 jobs to be created to handle the trials, but all he got were 11.

In an article in the March 1989 *Esquire* Shilts describes his frustrations with his fellow reporters (along with his illusions in the system). At an international AIDS conference, he advised those journalists who congratulated him on his success ("the AIDS pack") to follow up on the staffing woes at the National Institutes of Health. "The lives of 1.5 million HIV-infected Americans hung in the balance, and the only way you could get a straight answer out of an AIDS official was to put him under oath and make him

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Randy Shilts



# Canadian New Democratic Party in Crisis

## Time for a New Party?

by Barry Weisleder

Barry Weisleder is an Executive Board member of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union and a delegate to the Ontario NDP Provincial Council.

Would the formation of a new labor or socialist party threaten to fracture workers "into competing labor parties linked to contending factions within the union bureaucracy"?

Furthermore, wouldn't a new party inevitably reproduce the reformist politics of the New Democratic Party (NDP)?

And if the crisis of working-class leadership is primarily a question of program, exemplified by the need for an international workers' united front to fight for jobs, isn't the struggle against the current NDP leadership a tragic diversion?

Nothing better demonstrates the depth of the crisis of working-class leadership than the fact that such questions are being hotly debated on the broadest scale seen in this country since the 1930s.

### Just a Prelude

No wonder. NDP provincial governments, with Ontario Premier Bob Rae's regime in the lead, have joined in a widespread state and business class assault on social services, welfare, public sector institutions, and free collective bargaining.

The year 1993 ended with Rae saying that the Social Contract was but a "prelude," warning of further wage cuts and reductions in the size of government. And 1994 began with NDP Ontario Treasurer Floyd Laughren bemoaning an anticipated \$1.6 billion revenue shortfall and a "bleak" employment outlook. All this from a government that last year imposed over \$4 billion in expenditure cuts (adding to the jobless rolls) and a \$2 billion hike in taxes on workers, virtually exempting the rich from the tax grab.

As the NDP government in the richest, largest, most populous province in Canada toys with such arcane concepts as "workfare" for social benefits, abolition of school boards, privatization of Ontario Hydro, and imposing more Rae-days (compulsory unpaid leave), the questioning deepens. Is the NDP being transformed into a capitalist party just like the others?

Programmatically procapitalist from its inception, this trend had a permanent head start in the NDP. But will the widening *physical* alienation of the party from its working-class base and the growing integration of NDP officials in the state apparatus result either in the NDP's class transformation or even its disappearance from the political map? (See sidebar: "NDP Beyond Repair?")

And should socialists be the *last* to leave the sinking ship, justifying their continued presence by repetition of classical Marxist slogans such as "special application of the united front" and "critical support"?

There could be a terrible price to pay for an unwisely prolonged "business as usual" approach to a collapsing NDP. For instance, *where* would the disappearance, *and nonreplacement*, of the hitherto only labor party in North America politically leave the working class in English Canada? We don't have to look very far to the south to discover the answer.

The formation of the NDP in 1961, by a marriage at the top of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and the Canadian

Labour Congress (CLC), was an important, though limited, step forward for independent working-class political action.

But nothing is permanent except change. The NDP wouldn't exist today if the CCF hadn't recognized that truth in the late 1950s.

The fact that we are at a crossroads is undeniable. Capital is restructuring globally and attempting to raise profitability by lowering the wages, benefits, and working conditions of labor everywhere. But Rae's misguided fiscal neoconservatism dovetails perfectly (if uncon-

## NDP Beyond Repair?

In 1993, the Ontario NDP lost over 8,000 members; that's well over one-quarter of the total membership! One of the most active, traditional large-membership downtown Toronto riding associations, Fort York, went from 814 to 366 members.

Thirteen local unions have disaffiliated from the federal NDP. Many still affiliated unions have drastically reduced the number of members for which they are paying party dues.

The Ontario party ended revenue sharing (including direct mail income) with riding associations and stopped the Ontario section's 15 percent contribution to the federal party.

*The Democrat* newsmagazine has been suspended. Four organizers and four to five support staff were laid off.

In the federal election, the NDP received 6 percent of the vote. Social Contract critics Stephen Langdon (Windsor-Essex) and Winnie Ng (Trinity/Spadina in Toronto) were among the very few NDP federal candidates in Ontario who recovered their deposits, while the party elected no MPs east of Manitoba.

In an Ontario provincial by-election held in December in Essex South (near Windsor, a seat nearly won by the NDP in 1990), the NDP candidate attracted only 6 percent of the vote, barely surpassing the evangelical anti-choice Family Coalition Party for third place. *Both* NDP candidates in two earlier provincial by-elections, including one

in the heart of Toronto's gay/lesbian community, lost their deposits.

According to the latest Environics poll, the NDP in Ontario is at 13 percent, a distant third place. Most of its traditional 28 percent support base (setting aside the exceptional peak of 38 percent on election day, September 6, 1990) is going to the Liberal Party or opting to abstain. Clearly, more than half of the NDP's traditional electoral base is up for grabs, potentially available to a left political alternative.

The December 4-5 Ontario NDP Provincial Council meeting turned down, for a second council meeting in a row, a motion to hold the provincial party convention *earlier*. The motion received about 20 percent support, twice as much as at the Gananoque meeting, even though there were even fewer (barely a handful) of public sector unionists in attendance, and CAW delegates were under Labour Caucus discipline to vote against. Again, the council was heavily stacked with employees of MPPs and Cabinet Ministers and elected officials themselves, using borrowed credentials.

Delegates treated Bob Rae to several standing ovations, which was hardly surprising. After all, party hacks had gone to a lot of trouble to come up with two hundred people who would stand up for Premier Bob without a noose in one hand and a pitchfork in the other.

— B.W.



sciously?) with the continental big business goal of a lower, level playing field in *politics*.

To organizationally co-opt, or eliminate, the NDP is an aim that is the political expression of the NAFTA deal. That is, to reduce the workers of North America to a level of *equal* political powerlessness, ripe for more social and economic concessions to the ruling rich.

### No Bureaucrat Patronage

But does that mean that a section of the labor bureaucracy is ready to meet the new challenge by forming a new party? To the contrary, no top leader of any large union has expressed support for the idea. No "faction" of the union bureaucracy is really contending against the status quo. Instead, the top labor leadership divides into roughly two currents: those who continue to *defend* the NDP governments and those who counsel *abstention* from political action.

Neither group is prepared to challenge the present NDP leadership, internally or externally. Why? Precisely because the bureaucracy as a whole has no programmatic alternatives to the capitalist policies of the governments they criticize with so much sound and fury, but so little action on the ground. Capitalist rule and the irrational private market economy for them are sacrosanct.

The Ontario Federation of Labour hasn't even set in motion the adopted plan to electorally challenge incumbent NDP MPPs who voted for Bill 48 (the Social Contract Act), despite the unprecedented rift with the NDP at the November OFL Convention. (See *BIDOM*, February 1994.) Instead, the support for a new party, and to a much lesser extent for a leadership challenge within the NDP, comes from the rank-and-file level. It comes from local union presidents, stewards, and activists, from social protest movement activists, from unaffiliated progressives and ex-NDPers, and from a diminishing pool of NDP riding leftists. And just below this activist layer is a groundswell of popular sentiment. But this potentially significant social base can expect absolutely no leadership from labor officialdom, which is content to sit out the anticipated "disaster" of the next Ontario provincial election and then fight for control of the party ruins.

This, unfortunately, could be a recipe for "permanent disaster": that is, either total collapse or the reconstruction of the same treacherous leadership from the top down, piously promising to "do better next time," but being no more accountable than their predecessors. So, if there is to be a superior outcome, it will come only as a result of the efforts of rank-and-file activists.

### The Danger of Repeating the Error

And herein lies the key to the danger of "reproducing" the reformist politics of the NDP (or more accurately, the NDP's program of capitulation to business interests) in any new party. Such a result is far from given.

First of all, where is it preordained that a new party must and shall have a procapitalist program? It has seldom been more apparent than now, in this depression/jobless recovery, that such a program is in violent conflict with the vital interests of workers, farmers, and the overwhelming majority of the population. Surely socialists, feminists, ecologists, and oppressed minorities who rebel against NDP government treachery and abuse, and who go to the trouble of creating political alternatives, will be determined to challenge, rather than submit to, the socio-economic status quo through a new party structure.

Besides, if die-hard right-wing social democrats and pink neoconservatives go down with the NDP ship, wouldn't progressive and leftist forces who regroup in a new political formation be relatively freer from bureaucratic domination to develop a platform and a program that would better reflect our genuine class interests?

The question is: are there enough rebels, and can they move swiftly enough to outflank cynicism and despair to create a viable *mass* base? In New Zealand they did, creating the NewLabour Party, which subsequently formed an Alliance with Greens, Maoris, and other forces.

And shouldn't those who believe in a better world, based on cooperation, democratic planning, and production for human needs rather than private gain, play a leading role in that process? Aren't we confident that we can win the argument for socialist policies within the framework of a full, patient, democratic discussion?

The fight for a program to meet the needs of working people is indispensable. Labor parties, generally speaking, remain a crucial arena for that programmatic fight. But when labor parties lose their labor (class) content, socialists, unionists, and other social movement activists face a challenge: how can we help to steer justified popular discontent with the system in a progressive direction? How can we work to minimize political losses to the populist right-wing (Reform Party), to left Liberalism, and to passivity — and begin to rebuild working-class political independence? That's the starting point of the new party discussion.

Former NDP voters in Ontario, public sector workers, and a growing legion of their private sector sisters and brothers, say they will never again support the NDP. This is not just a minor "electoral" blip on the chart; it is a matter of the overall relationship of class forces in society.

### A Diversion?

And far from being a "diversion," this discussion takes us right to the center of the urgent fight for a new working-class leadership. Why? Because the old leadership, in order to preserve its privileges, blocks discussion and clings to present structures. It is wedded to the status quo. Only pressure from below will bring about a realignment and a relationship of forces more favorable to workers. But pressure can take many forms, not just economic ones (strikes, mass pickets, boycotts, etc.).

We are living in the midst of the biggest, most massive *political* regroupment in decades. The referendum defeat of the 1992 Charlottetown Accord, along with the unprecedented results of the 1993 federal election, are proof of that. The NDP and labor bureaucracies miscalculated very badly, and they are paying dearly for their undying loyalty to the system and the bosses' state.

Anti-establishment sentiment across the country is very strong, though fragmented; faith in the system is weak. But labor and other progressive social movements lack a strategy (which must include an electoral component), to take advantage of the opening afforded by the new social ferment. Yet the gulf between the level of consciousness of existing popular discontent and that required to build a revolutionary socialist party is too great for the latter to be a real alternative — except for a very tiny, though indispensable, minority.

Still, the international crisis of capitalism is radicalizing the discontented. A space has opened up for radical alternatives to social democratic parties that have adopted and implemented neoliberal policies. Who — or what — will fill that space?

By generating a formal, public discussion of political alternatives it may be possible to discover whether there is a viable basis for an effective fight *either* to "take the party back" *or* to form a new party.

Perhaps neither will materialize. But the exploratory discussion, to take place at a conference now being organized by a broad committee of Toronto-based activists for this spring, is clearly necessary. Within that framework, socialists will pose the need for mass action to defend public services, to win jobs through a shorter work week without loss of pay or benefits, and other demands.

A broad gathering of activists can begin to envision and to present alternatives, programmatically and organizationally, that break out of the dead end into which the NDP has led the working class. Because breaking out and assembling a mass base for a progressive alternative is the key task of the moment. □

February 9, 1994



# Interview with Lula, Presidential Candidate of the Brazilian Workers Party

The following interview with Luis ("Lula") Inacio da Silva was translated from the Portuguese by Dan La Botz, who also provided most of the notes. It was published on August 29, 1993, under the headline "Lula Wants Coalitions — But He Thinks the Growth of the Radicals Is 'Good'" in *Folha de São Paulo*, one of several daily newspapers in Brazil's chief industrial city, São Paulo. *Folha* is considered one of the best commercial papers in Brazil.

We are reprinting the interview (done by a local reporter, Clovis Rossi) because we believe it will give our readers further useful background on the Brazilian Workers Party (PT) and the coming elections in Brazil, scheduled for October 1995. The elections in Brazil, as in South Africa and Mexico, will have major political importance for the working class worldwide.

Of course much has happened in Brazil since last August, particularly new scandals about the corrupt financial dealings of many representatives of the leading capitalist parties in the Brazilian parliament. As a result of these scandals voters are looking more than ever toward the PT — which was already seen as the most likely alternative after the resignation of Brazil's President Collor, the result of earlier scandals. With the likelihood of an election victory by the Workers Party comes increased danger of a preventive coup attempt by the military, or some other resort to violence by the ruling classes, similar to the pattern seen in Haiti or Chile.

Readers will find much information about the parliamentary scandals of fall 1993 and the increased chances for a PT victory in a special "dossier" on Brazil in *International Viewpoint* (IV), No. 251, December 1993, including an article coauthored by Beti Berigo. (Her account of the PT's history may be found in *BIDOM*, No. 113, February 1994, and the January 1994 issue of *BIDOM* carries the Political Program of the PT, "Our Socialism.") IV, No. 247, July 1993, also ran two important articles about the growing strength of leftwing positions in the PT shown at that party's national conference in June 1993.

The interview is preceded by some comments by Clovis Rossi.

The PT [*Partido dos Trabalhadores* — Workers Party] candidate tries to satisfy the "left" wing of the party; however, he hopes to arrive in April of next year at a program for governing that breaks his isolation and attracts allies from inside and outside the PT.

Luis Inacio "Lula" da Silva, the potential candidate of the PT for the Presidency of the Republic, goes into the presidential debate with the slogan, "We don't have the right to fail." It's an easy slogan to understand when Lula completes the sentence: "On the one hand, you're going to have the conservative sectors trying to blame the age-old problems of Brazil on the 5 months of our government, and on the other hand, you are going to have the starving masses wanting people in 3 months to take care of what hasn't been taken care of in 30 years."

Last week at the Labor Union School of Belo Horizonte, Lula spoke to *Folha* about his ideas about not failing, about the growth of radical tendencies in the party, about his plans for alliances and for a program of government. The principal passages of the interview follow.

**Q.: Do you feel like you're now in your second round?**

**A.:** No. There are still 14 months until the election. What I can tell you is that I feel that we have the conditions to enter the second round and to win the elections.

**Q.: Alone or by means of coalitions?**

**A.:** We will be able to arrive at the second round alone. But I believe that both in order to win as well as to govern we need allies.

**Q.: More in order to win or more in order to govern?**

**A.:** Both. But I believe that it is more important to lay the foundations for governing rather than for winning, because you can win and not be able to govern. We have to win and carry out a program that is going to be the reason for our election. Therefore, I'm convinced that the two things must be related in practice.

**Q.: All three of the most recent presidents did not have a majority in Congress or had difficulties in forming a majority. The PT has been characterized by sometimes extraordinary votes in the at-large elections and by invariably low votes for legislative elections.<sup>1</sup>**

**A.:** Sarney became president of the republic in 1985 and, in 1986, his party had 302 members [in Congress]. Therefore, Sarney governed with an ample majority in the National Congress. Sarney's problem was not having a minority in Congress, but his lack of competence in his political dealing with the Congress. Collor was elected in 1989 and, in 1990, he had a broad base of ideological support in Congress.<sup>2</sup> Itamar Franco [the current president], same thing. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to combine the need for

a majority with the ability to engage in political negotiation.

It is important to recall that we are going to have a unique event in Brazilian politics in the last 40 or 50 years: that is, for the first time we are going to have general elections. I believe that the moment has arrived for the people to work on the question of the linked vote. Therefore, it is quite possible that the alliance which ends up winning the elections can also win a majority in the National Congress.

**Q.: When you say work on the question of the linked vote, do you mean to legislate the linked vote?**

**A.:** No. It has to do with working politically on the necessity of the voters combining their vote for the president of the Republic with the vote for the governors and the federal and state congressional representatives. Obviously, this is not the way that the people vote. They vote for individuals, but it is up to us as the party that has the most regular vote to try to work on this idea.

**Q.: Don't you think that the PT is looking like the other parties? Formerly, you never had to consult with Lula or the big leaders of the party in order to know, in general, what the position of the PT was on a particular issue. Nowadays, you have an enormous difference of opinions. Just to take one example: the position of the party is against a revision of the Constitution, but there are PT congressmen who say**

1. Lula won 31 million votes, about 47 percent in the national presidential election in 1989. PT candidate Luiza Brundina was elected mayor of São Paulo in 1989, and the PT's Olivio Dutra, mayor of Porto Alegre in 1989. Bandita da Silva nearly won the mayoralty of Rio de Janeiro in 1993. However, the PT has only a very small number of elected representatives in Congress.

2. Collor formed his own party to run for president, the National Reconstruction Party (PRN). The PRN won few seats in the legislature, but Collor was politically supported by the largest capitalist parties in the Congress.



that the party must prepare for that. This is the same for a whole series of other questions, which we see reflected in the recent [PT] National Conference as ideological confrontations of some importance....

A.: There was a time when it was easy to know what our proposals were, because only a few people were against them. That was easy. In fact, we decided that we are going to carry out demonstrations against constitutional revision, but we need to be alert, because if it is approved, we will have to deal with revision. Therefore, I believe the behavior not only of the congressional representatives but also of the party leadership is correct.

In the second place, the party grew, and it is, I believe, richer for this diversity of opinions. But it's necessary for the people to learn to act more politically; it is necessary that the people have greater ability.

For example, I have never had problems in working with the party in congressional sessions. In this last National Conference, for the first time I was forced to have meetings with all of the groups making proposals. There was a climate of war hovering in the air, and we resolved to show that we had the ability to carry out a great conference. And a debate took place at a high level, with different ideological positions. I thought it was fantastic.

**Q.: But isn't there a risk that if you, who are at the balance point of the party, were to leave the scene, the PT would break in half?**

A.: It isn't going to break. I believe that what you need in a party that has various currents that quarrel among themselves is to have one or two leaders that don't enter into these arguments, that deal with all on an equal basis.

**Q.: If the PT were in the government, couldn't this dispute be paralyzing?**

A.: This discussion will take place before the elections. I hope in April or May of the coming year to have a program that our people will be able to present to Brazilian society, a program that preferably will not be just the PT's program but also the program of the PT's allies. Those of us in the PT are now learning to make a separation between governing and between leading a political party. In a program you can establish principle, a ton of things, but to govern you do that which is possible.

**Q.: Some so-called radical currents have assumed important positions in the party. In general, they are currents that are old-style apparatchiks, that is, people who want to take charge of the apparatus of the party as a means of getting to the masses.**

**Don't you ever fear that these apparatchiks will end up wrecking the party?**

A.: Contrary to what many people have insinuated, with the suggestion that the party would come out of the National Conference weaker as a result of the more leftist positions that it took, I, who have traveled throughout the country, can attest that the conference was a fantastic shot in the arm for the party.

The party took more left-wing positions, but at the same time it never failed to say so. The party was trying to believe that everything was the same, that everything was just as it had been, that there were no differences between us and the PSDB.<sup>3</sup> Our people had to show that there were differences, that they weren't the same thing. I think that was good for the party.

**Q.: How would you define this new party [the PT] in classical, universal terms: as social-democratic, socialist, liberal?**

A.: It is a socialist party which is aware that it cannot confuse a program for governing with the creation of socialism. Or, that it cannot confuse its strategic project of a socialist society with a program for governing for 5 years. This is a very clear-cut matter. It is a party which doesn't have to be ashamed of defending socialism. Just because Eastern Europe fell, people don't have to be ashamed of defending socialism.

**Q.: What socialism?**

A.: If someone were so daring as to say what kind of socialism is ideal, that would become a bestseller, because everyone in the world wants to know what kind of socialism that is. Possibly I have the best, in my head. I believe in a pluralist society, a society in which rights will not be trimmed back at some moment, a society in which there will be labor union autonomy and freedom, and what is more, a society in which wealth will be distributed in a fair way.

**Q.: Is this the strategic project or is it a priority for the 5-year term?**

A.: This is a project for the 5 years of governing. Let me mention some things that people are going to demand. We are going to want to improve health and education. It may not be possible to do that within a 5-year term. But it is necessary to begin to do all of this yesterday, so that 10 years from now we have a country at another level.

Or, to put it another way, we are going to begin to build a structure for creating a new generation, thinking that 10 or 15 years from now we are going to have a new generation of young people with a different ethical, moral sense, with a different level of scholastic achievement, with a different kind of health care. In truth, we are going to make a bet that

we can lay new foundations for the new generations.

**Q.: This smells suspiciously like Che Guevara and the "new man" of Cuba, which collapsed there even before Cuba went into crisis. Is it a little like that?**

A.: No. First, because the choices which the Cubans made were very particular to their culture. I wouldn't choose that. I would not make the choice for a single party, without rights, and without labor union autonomy, or for a state that had to manage bars and taxi stands, and things like that. I defend historically the idea that the state cannot be the tutor of society. The state has to be as democratic as possible, and even more important, I defend the idea that the state just keeps to the strategic sectors. And therefore we are going to define what the strategic sectors are. And for that we are going to define what is strategic for Brazil. We expect, up until December, to make these decisions.

**Q.: You have been severely criticized internally for meetings with businessmen....**

A.: If there were some who might have had criticisms, they have not had the courage to make them, because I continue to have meetings with businessmen.

**Q.: And what is the difference that you see between the campaign of 1989, in which there were strictly no meetings with businessmen, and now, when you talk with multinationals and the nation's great entrepreneurs?**

A.: Under no circumstances will the people allow what happened in 1989 to be repeated. Businessmen, many of them in bad faith, carried out an ideological war against the PT. At the same time, I took the initiative to begin to look for businessmen to talk to in order to explain what the PT is, in order to show what our idea is for the elaboration of a program, in order to hear from them what they want, what they think of politics and political parties.

I call them ice-breaking meetings. The people are becoming better informed. I want those individuals to understand that the people are going to carry out an agrarian reform in this country. They have to know that we are going to carry out a political program of income distribution. The other day we went to the bankers and we showed that they are earning a lot of money and that only one sector of them will survive with inflation at 15 percent. So it is not possible.

**Q.: With regard to this question of the distribution of income, since incomes are small today in Brazil, one supposes that in**

3. The PSDB is the Brazilian Social Democratic Party, a left split from the PMDB, the Brazilian Party Movement for Democracy, which was the "official" opposition party created by the former military dictators.



order to distribute incomes, you will have to carry out a kind of "Robin Hood" politics, taking from the rich in order to give to the poor....

A.: There are two things that I think that businessmen well understand. First, I don't know any businessmen, only 2 of the 200 with whom I have met, who don't understand that it is necessary to carry out a politics of income distribution, that the workers earn little, that it is necessary to restore the minimum wage and other things.

Second, it is true that we have to make the economy grow, and it is also true that the people cannot wait another 10 years to begin an income distribution. The difference between those who can do more and those who can do less is very great. There are many people who are aware of that.

**Q.: With regard to the politics of coalition, what party, beyond the little ones which are the traditional allies of the PT, will be the apple of your eye?**

A.: I believe that we should try to get into a serious flirtation with the PSDB. With all of the differences that exist, we should begin a political conversation with the PSDB.

**Q.: One that involves PSDB support for the presidential race of Lula and PT support for Covas for governor of São Paulo?<sup>4</sup>**

A.: When people begin to talk, many things can happen. From time to time, Ciro Gomes has made some silly remarks and I have not answered, because my mother said that two people can't fight when one refuses. I don't want to fight with them, so then I'm not going to answer them. I, for my part, would go as far as the PDT, but it seems that Brizola does not want to talk...<sup>5</sup> But if he doesn't want to flirt, we are not going to be left crying over a lost love.

**Q.: Are you thinking of such a coalition for the first round or for the second round?<sup>6</sup>**

A.: I am going to try to convince the *companheiros* of the PSDB and of the two other political parties that, if we form a coalition, we run the grave danger of winning the elections on the first round.

**Q.: There is a study of the National Committee of the PT by Professor Leonicio Martins Rodrigues, in which it appears that the majority are either public workers or members of the liberal professions and only three are industrial workers. Doesn't the PT run the risk of having to change its name to the Public Workers and Professionals Party?**

A.: We carried out a study in the 1991 party congress, and it has already revealed a small participation from persons involved in production. At that point we began a debate, which still has not ended, over how to change the participation in PT conferences.

I discovered that a farmhand can't participate in a 4-day congress because he runs the risk of losing his job. Some peasants don't have money to go to a PT conference.

**Q.: Doesn't this run the risk of distorting representation?**

A.: I think we do run such a risk, and it is a thing that people are going to begin to correct from this point forward. This year, obviously, there is not going to be a chance for people to discuss this, but I believe that it is necessary to change.

**Q.: Where does the panorama of possible alliances go, beyond the PSDB?**

A.: We are establishing an ideological limit. We are going up to the PSDB. Certain persons in the PMDB have been cultivated, from the progressive wing, or from the PDT. If they want to talk, we are not going to refuse.<sup>7</sup>

**Q.: Will you include businessmen in the discussion of the program?**

A.: I include them.

**Q.: Big businessmen?**

A.: I believe we should have a limit. Logically for us, it is interesting to hear what people think, since we're not the owners of truth.

**Q.: Aren't you afraid that the rising expectations that the electoral campaign will produce, considering the grave problems the country has, run the risk of a very**

**strong disillusionment that could eventually even lead to an institutional breakdown?**

A.: We expect to carry out our campaign without sowing illusions. We want people to have hope, since it's hard to be a human being and live without hope. Beyond that we want to show that there are no miraculous solutions within 3 or 4 months. There will be a program to be fulfilled with what can be done in a year, and other things in 2 years, and so on from that point forward.

It's also important to begin to prepare the people so that they judge us not in 6 months of government but rather for what we do over 5 years. Therefore, I want to draw up a program of government, so that people, after taking office, can collect on every page. I want to carry out a campaign a little more seriously than is normally done in Brazil.

**Q.: What key word do you believe will define the election of '94?**

A.: I believe in people being convinced to vote for individuals in whom they can believe.

**Q.: Don't you believe that there is a lack of credibility in the Brazilian state, independent today of who's the leader?**

A.: I beg God that I'm given a chance to show that this state can be a thousand times better than what it is today. Besides, it already was better. The Brazilian state already had a good health system, already had a good education system. It has broken with the 30 years of silence to which this society was subjected, in which the swindles took place without the people having a possibility of denouncing them.

**Q.: The payment of some of your expenses by friends resembles, in essence, the same thing as Collor, or rather, friends paying expenses....<sup>8</sup>**

A.: I don't have any friends paying expenses. I was very clear: I live in a house for five years, and any time you want you can demand usucaption of it.<sup>9</sup> I am the owner of the house, and my *compadre* doesn't need the house. A driver of his also lives in another

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4. Mario Covas was the PSDB presidential candidate in 1989, who finished fourth in the first round, with 10 percent of the vote.

5. Leonel Brizola is the leader of the PDT, the Democratic Labor Party. The PDT is a populist party that claims the mantle of the old populist or labor party established by Getulio Vargas, the former dictator of Brazil. Brizola's base of support is Rio de Janeiro and Rio Grande do Sul. He was the governor of Rio Grande do Sul in 1964, and one of only two governors who called out the state militia to oppose the military coup. He was in exile for 15 years and returned to Brazil with the declaration of amnesty in 1979. He attempted to get the name of the old Vargas party, the PTB, or Brazilian Labor Party, but failing that took the name PDT.

6. Because there are many small parties and because usually no single party wins a simple majority in the first round, Brazilian national presidential elections have been conducted in two rounds. In the second round, new coalitions may be formed to support the leading candidates of the first round. This is precisely what happened in 1989. In the first round, Collor won 28 percent, Lula 16.5 percent, and Brizola, 16 percent. The runoff candidates then were Collor and Lula. In the second round the PT and PSDB formed a coalition. In the second round Lula won 31 million votes and Collor 38 million and the presidency.

7. The PMDB, or Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, was the "official" opposition party created by the dictatorship. It caught up most of the opposition forces, with the exception of those who formed the PT or PDT. The Communists, Maoists, Guevarists, etc., mostly participated in the PMDB, arguing that a broad democratic opposition to the dictatorship was necessary. The PMDB gave rise to the left-wing split of the PSDB.

8. Fernando Collor de Mello, the former president of Brazil, was impeached and removed from office because of corruption, including taking money for political favors.

9. Usucaption is a legal term, the same in Portuguese (*usucapiencia*, *usucapir*) as in English (*usucapt*, *usucaption*) which, following Roman law, means to claim title or deed to land and property on the basis of continuous occupancy.



## Indiana Prison Lockdown

# Rehabilitate People — Don't Warehouse Them

by Kevin A. Conner #881980 and Charles E. Roche, Jr. #902303

*The authors are inmates on death row at Indiana State Prison, Michigan City, Indiana. On September 3, 1992, the courts ruled in favor of the death row prisoners in a class action suit they had filed in 1983, declaring that death row prisoners were a separate unit from the general prison population, which meant that prison lockdowns were not to extend to them.*

*The prison officials retaliated against the prisoners on death row by instituting severe measures specifically against them — extensive lockdowns, searches, confiscation of papers and literature, imposition of terms in isolation cells, and other measures described below.*

*In the meantime, while the prisoners await the results of appeals of their sentences, some of them are deeply involved in independent political study, reading and sharing literature from the Marxist movements. Such literature periodically gets confiscated by prison officials. "We have here a prison library, but it serves more to distract than to educate. When not studying politics I lean my recreational reading toward history and philosophy," one prisoner wrote to us in December 1993. "I am currently studying Leon Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* and I'm preparing to start Marx's *Grundrisse and Capital*. What we do here is circulate our books among those of us who are politically inclined. This makes it relatively easy on us financially, and since our objective is to raise our political consciousness, this also serves a more important function."*

*On one occasion, the prison officials returned as "disapproved" a packet of letters and political literature which BIDOM had sent and which the prison officials had opened and examined. The material was finally allowed through after the prison officials were notified that the American Civil Liberties Union and the Center For Constitutional Rights had been informed of the matter.*

*In the meantime, the prisoner to whom the material was addressed had received a slip informing him that a packet had been turned back, and he wrote: "Some weeks back a package (?) arrived here which was returned to you. Due to the problem that I was only notified of this by a slip through the institutional mail, I am unaware of the contents of said package. I have since attempted to find out through the unit counselor, but to no avail. These people are extremely funny about mail. Once a pamphlet — Leon Trotsky's *Fascism: What It Is and How To Fight It*... wasn't allowed in because they considered it 'gang material.' I filed a grievance in which I elaborated on the history and the political concept of fascism to show them their error," but to no avail.*

*We hope to print additional materials from these prisoners in future issues. — Marilyn Vogt-Downey*

The prison administration has previously stated to the effect that the reason behind the lockdown at the Indiana State Prison which was instituted on July 10, 1992, was to quell a recent surge of drugs, weapons, and violence within the prison. The prison administration, through Barry Northstine, has gone to great lengths to mislead the public with false statements regarding the alleged need for tighter safety and security measures.

However, drugs, weapons, violence, and a need for tighter safety and security measures is far from the reason.

The reason for the lockdown was to institute behavioral modification units here at the State Prison similar to the M.C.C. unit in Westville. Such units are already in existence on the east side of death row and NSB, north, and D cell house is now in a moderate form of such units. Movement throughout the prison has been greatly restricted.

A major problem is that the public allows itself to be misled and believes that the prison population is the cause of every problem arising inside the walls. We have seen various articles calling for harsher repressive measures to be implemented against prisoners. The politics of crime and prisons are extensive, but the growing crime rate, basically, is a direct result of the growing economic crisis from which this country's economy is suffering. Capitalism is the root cause of the state of rising crime that plagues our society, and it will not decline until the government shoulders responsibility and more social programs are incorporated. Neither

does it help that the courts are handing down longer and harsher sentences.

However this may be, prisons are supposedly designed for rehabilitative purposes, but the prisons in Indiana are now in a transitional mode that will delete virtually all forms of rehabilitation by the early years of the 21st century. Educational and rehabilitational programs here at the State Prison and at the State Reformatory have been extensively discontinued. Repressive measures are replacing our educational programs. The prison ideology is to keep us stupid and subjected. They are not interested in providing for rehabilitation in any way whatsoever. Drugs, weapons, and violence are no more populous today than they were ten or twenty years ago.

Society always wants to place blame on prisoners for turmoil in prison, but it doesn't realize that we alone are not ultimately to blame. The prison administration refuses to shoulder any form of responsibility for its actions. Our rights are being blatantly denied, privileges and rehabilitative programs are restricted, and the population is being repressed. Our complaints and grievances go ignored. Then, because we can't get anyone to listen, when we take the only course available, violence, we have done something wrong. But violence is all the prison administration understands. It's a shame that it takes a violent outbreak simply to be heard.

On January 8, 1993, death row prisoners were shaken down and personal property, legal materials, family photos, etc., were destroyed, confiscated, stolen, and thrown away by the guards conducting the shakedown on orders

from the administrative heads. We waged a letter-writing campaign over this and protested the conditions we were being subjected to, plus we were placed on continual lockdown and denied showers for weeks at a time. Indiana Department of Corrections finally, after a month of continual protest, sent a representative, Walt Moore, to tour death row, only to say that there was no problem in existence.

Society needs to wake up to reality and realize that it is these pompous bureaucratic prison-crats who are causing the problems which exist in prison today. One prisoner is even being told that because he's on disciplinary segregation he cannot correspond through the mail with his own father, who is in the prison's general population.

In March [1993], three death row prisoners housed in the NSB disciplinary isolation unit went on a hunger strike to protest the unfair, biased, and prejudicial conditions to which they were being subjected. When this failed to draw attention to prisoner complaints — our grievances were also being ignored — one prisoner attempted to sever his own finger in protest. After death row prisoners were told that no changes were forthcoming, prisoners then filed a petition on April 5, 1993, and forwarded copies to the D.O.C. commissioner, the governor's office, and the prison administration detailing the condition changes they were seeking. Still, to this date, no reply has been extended to remedy the conditions. (See C.F.F. for a copy of the petition). All peaceful avenues have virtually been exhausted.

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# Culture, Consciousness, and Class Struggle: Further Notes on the Relevance of Leninism

by Paul Le Blanc

One of the greatest responsibilities for revolutionary socialists is to discuss what we should do to advance the struggle of the working class, and how to organize ourselves most effectively to carry out this work. My two-part article "Notes on Building a Revolutionary Party in the United States" was written in order to stimulate such discussion, and it has generated several written responses which merit some comment. One of the most important criticisms — Tom Barrett's basic argument that greater attention than I gave must be devoted to questions of racism and the struggle for African American liberation — should be accepted. I find more problematical certain points made by Peter Johnson and Steve Bloom, although I want to reserve critical comments on them for the concluding section of this article. (At the same time, much of what leads up to that conclusion addresses issues they raise.)

This fundamental misunderstanding arises, in my opinion, from a stilted conception of what Leninism is — so that my application of Leninist perspectives to the realities we face is misperceived as an abandonment of Leninist perspectives. Connected to this is a serious confusion over such questions as (1) the tasks facing revolutionary Marxists in the United States today, (2) the actual history of the U.S. working class, (3) the meaning and importance of *culture* for historical materialists and revolutionary activists, and (4) the nature of working-class consciousness. In what follows I will give sustained attention — in reverse order — to these four questions, elaborating on points made in my earlier contribution, but here offering more substantial quotations from a variety of sources in order to suggest the origins of some of my ideas and to achieve a more substantial (hopefully also more understandable) expression of my views. This may be more fruitful than a point-by-point defensive response to what strikes me as a tangle of misperceptions.

### Class Consciousness

There are many Marxists who have discussed class consciousness, but among the clearest and most profound was V.I. Lenin, who explained:

The workers' class-consciousness means the workers' understanding that the only way to improve their conditions and to achieve their emancipation is to conduct a struggle against the capitalist and factory-owner class created by the big factories. Further, the workers' class-consciousness means their understanding that the

interests of all the workers of any particular country are identical, that they constitute one class, separate from all the other classes in society. Finally, the class-consciousness of the workers means the workers' understanding that to achieve their aims they have to work to influence the affairs of the state, just as the landlords and capitalists did, and are continuing to do now.<sup>1</sup>

This is obviously not the last word on class-consciousness, but it is a good beginning. One point that Lenin went on to make in later years was that this "workers' class consciousness" is not something that automatically arises in the mind of every worker. One of the purposes of a revolutionary party is to organize "conscious workers" (the vanguard) for the purpose of advancing such consciousness throughout the working class as a whole.

It is not possible to comprehend or influence the development of such class consciousness, or any other form of human consciousness, without reference to dynamic cultural realities through which our consciousness takes form. The expression of confusion about the meaning of those realities by readers such as Mary Scully suggests the need for an explanation that is more basic and at the same time more thoroughgoing than what was offered previously.

### Culture and Class

The confusion is by no means surprising. The term *culture* has been identified by the late Marxist social and cultural critic Raymond Williams as "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language." There is the agricultural use of the word, as well as the "loftier" reference to "works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity" — music, literature, painting and sculpture, theater and film, etc. The conception that I have in mind, however, is more akin to that developed by North American anthropologists, as indicated in the following quotes.<sup>2</sup>

"Culture embraces all the manifestations of social habits in a community," Franz Boas asserted in 1930, "the reactions of the individual as affected by the habits of the group in which he lives, and the products of human activities as determined by these habits." What really binds people together, according to Ruth Benedict, "is their culture — the ideas and standards they have in common." She added that it is "learned behavior, behavior which in man is not given at birth, which is not determined by his germ cells

as is the behavior of wasps or the social ants, but must be learned anew from grown people by each new generation." Melville Herskovits described culture as "a [conceptual] construct that describes the total body of belief, behavior, sanctions, values, and goals that mark the way of life of any people," adding that "in the final analysis it comprises the things that people have, the things they do, and what they think." In 1945 Clyde Kluckhohn and W.H. Kelly elaborated that "culture in general as a descriptive concept means the accumulated treasury of human creation: books, paintings, buildings, and the like; the knowledge of ways of adjusting to our surroundings, both human and physical; language, customs, and systems of etiquette, ethics, religion, and morals that have been built up through the ages."

Some of these formulations are a bit problematical. If we see culture as something "built up through the ages," like some immense geological formation, then we lose the sense of culture as something created by people to deal with the (often changing) realities around them. In fact, in the face of social and economic transformations, new meanings are often given to "traditional" customs, and sometimes dramatic innovations are embraced. More than this, the way many anthropologists describe culture implies a consensus within society in which there are seemingly no tensions and conflicts between social groups or classes. In spite of these pitfalls, the concept of culture is indispensable for those who wish to understand how human beings and societies function, evolve, and are transformed.

In 1982, Eleanor Leacock indicated how this concept fits into the perspectives of historical materialism: "Analysis that rejects static ahistorical views of culture, and transforms the concept into a tool for examining the role of ideology and consciousness in social process, is most important." It is worth pondering her summary of some Marxist anthropology of the late 1970s and early '80s:

In an attempt to explain a lack of class consciousness among Newfoundland fisherfolk, [Gerald] Sider treated culture as generated by "the way people conceptualize and express their relations to one another...based on the actual ties people develop with one another in the course of organizing both the labor of production and daily life, and the social appropriation of the product." Other studies that have dealt with culture in terms of political economy



are [Jane] Schneider's analysis of the symbolism surrounding black cloth in Medieval Europe, [June] Nash's study of new functions for old gods among Bolivian tin miners, and [Charles] Keil's research on some patterns among the Tiv of Nigeria. Keil made the point that Tiv songs must be understood not as "in the classic case of [French structuralist-anthropologist Claude] Levi-Strauss, dangling in the cultural superstructure and 'explainable' only in terms of themselves, or in terms of some higher abstractions," but as "grounded in material conditions and social relations."<sup>3</sup>

For revolutionary Marxists, the conception of *class* is essential for making sense of culture. Lenin noted in 1913 that "there are two nations in every modern nation," and that "there are two national cultures in every national culture" — capitalist and working-class. The dominant element in any modern national culture, he argued, was "the national culture of the bourgeoisie," which often intertwined with the even more reactionary orientations of the aristocratic landed proprietors and conservative clergy. "Aggressive bourgeois nationalism," he warned, "which drugs the minds of the workers, stultifies and disunites them in order that the bourgeoisie may lead them by the halter — such is the fundamental fact of the times." Against this capitalist-reactionary culture, Lenin counterposed "the international culture of democracy and of the world working-class movement," which in turn is grounded in the specific life experience of workers in all countries. "The *elements* of democratic and socialist culture are present, if only in rudimentary form, in every national culture, since in every nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism."<sup>4</sup>

The complexity of the question is even greater than Lenin suggests in this passage. "The proletariat is a powerful social unity which manifests its strength fully during the periods of intense revolutionary struggle for the gains of the whole class," commented Leon Trotsky in 1923. "But within this unity we observe a great variety of types. Between the obtuse illiterate village shepherd and the highly qualified engine driver there lie a great many different states of culture and habits of life." Nor was this simply a problem of "backward Russia," in Trotsky's opinion. "One might say that the richer the history of a country, and at the same time of its working class, the greater within it the accumulation of memories, traditions, habits, the larger the number of old groupings — the harder it is to achieve a revolutionary unity of the working class."<sup>5</sup> This is one of the problems necessitating the creation of a revolutionary party — to help forge the unity in struggle of a multicultural proletariat.

## Labor History

How does all of this manifest itself in the actual history of the working class? E.P. Thompson, the great British labor historian who died only a few months ago, has traced the counterposition of class cultures of capitalists and workers

in England at least back to the eighteenth century social-cultural tensions of "the gentry" and the "laboring poor." Much of this class divide, he tells us, opened wide in reaction against a "modernizing" capitalism: "We can read much eighteenth-century social history as a succession of confrontations between an innovative market economy and the customary moral economy of the plebs... In one sense the plebeian culture is the people's own: it is a defense against the intrusions of gentry or clergy; it consolidates those customs which serve their interests; the taverns are their own, the fairs are their own, rough music is among their own means of self-regulation."<sup>6</sup> This harmonizes with Lenin's view, as does Thompson's 1963 generalization which has become a classic statement among Marxist labor historians:

Class happens when some men [and women], as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which... [people] are born — or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms.

Following in Thompson's footsteps (and also concerning himself with the sort of issues Trotsky pointed to), the late U.S. labor historian Herbert Gutman observed: "Men and women who sell their labor to an employer bring more to a new or changing work situation than their physical presence. What they bring to a factory depends, in good part, on their culture of origin, and how they behave is shaped by the interaction between that culture and the particular society into which they enter." Surveying the U.S. working class from 1815 to 1919, he noted that it "was constantly altered in its composition by infusions, from within and without the nation, of peasants, farmers, skilled artisans, and casual day laborers who brought into industrial society ways of work and other habits and values not associated with industrial necessities and the industrial ethos." The response to capitalist exploitation and oppression varied: "Some shed these older ways to conform to new imperatives. Others fell victim or fled, moving from place to place. Some sought to extend and adapt older patterns of work and life to a new society. Others challenged the social system through varieties of collective associations."<sup>8</sup>

Among the first contingents of industrial workers were girls from New England's farms and villages who found employment in the new textile mills of the 1830s and '40s. Influenced by the republican ethos of the American Revolution, many of these young women sought self-improvement and self-expression through such means as their own magazine, *The Lowell Offering*, and many were also curious about and responsive to orators who presented ideas on equal rights for women, as well as agitators who called for the abolition of slavery in the South.

And some also sang such songs as the following, which strikingly expresses an elemental sense of class:

Oh, do you know her or do you not,  
This new doffing mistress that we have got?  
Elsie Thompson, it is her name,  
And she helps her doffers with every frame.  
Fal-dee-ral-da-ra, Fal-dee-ral-da-ree.

Well, every morning when she comes in,  
She hangs her coat on the highest pin,  
Turns around just to greet her friends,  
Crying, "Hi you doffers, tie up your ends!"  
Fal-dee-ral-da-ra, Fal-dee-ral-da-ree.

Sometimes the boss will come through the door.  
"Tie your ends up, doffers!" he'll loudly roar.  
Tie our ends up, we surely do,  
For Elsie Thompson, but not for you!  
Fal-dee-ral-da-ra, Fal-dee-ral-da-ree.

These young working women went further in criticizing their employers by forming unions to protect what they saw as their democratic-republican rights, and proclaiming: "We will show these driveling cotton lords, this mushroom aristocracy of New England, who so arrogantly aspire to lord it over God's heritage, that our rights cannot be trampled upon with impunity; that we will no longer submit to that arbitrary power which has for the last ten years been so abundantly exercised over us."<sup>9</sup>

Gutman has argued that by the middle of the nineteenth century a proletarian recasting of democratic-republican ideology had become an essential element in U.S. working-class culture, adding: "Their beliefs went beyond the redefinition of eighteenth-century republicanism, and sparked and sustained recurrent collective efforts — in the form of trade unions, strikes, cooperatives, a tart labor press, and local politics — to check the increasing power of the industrial capitalist." At the same time, he has emphasized that — because of periodic and dramatic transformations of the American capitalist economy and the regular influx of new elements into the American working class — the culture and ideology of U.S. workers has been complex, fluid, multifaceted, and at times prone to fragmentation. As Lenin warned, disunity of workers along the lines of culture and consciousness means "that the bourgeoisie may lead them by the halter." One can find brutal ethnic hostility, especially a poisonous racism against nonwhite peoples, permeating white working-class life throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (as documented in studies by Alexander Saxton, David Roediger, David Brody, and others). One or another racial or ethnic group might be found unworthy of membership in one's union, and would be excluded from one's workplace — and consequently could be used as a source of scabs during a strike, generating deepened hatred among workers toward each other.<sup>10</sup> And yet, Gutman shares a vision — grounded in historical research — of something better:

The ways in which class and cultural solidarities came together between 1840 and 1890 can be illustrated by the activities of the hard-rock silver miners on the Comstock Lode in frontier



Nevada, then the largest mining enterprise in the world. Towns such as Virginia City and Gold Hill grew rapidly and were filled with immigrant miners. The calendar of the social life of Virginia City miners in 1875 reveals their rich cultural diversity. It began New Year's Day with Germans singing and dancing at their Athletic Hall and the French and Italians joining together at Gregoire's Saloon. It continued through that day with a sixteen-piece Cornish orchestra and the English choral society. During the first part of February, the town's Chinese celebrated their New Year and the Italian and Irish benevolent societies had their annual meetings, so that Emmet's Irish guard mixed with Oriental celebrants on the town's streets. A similar conjoining of nationalities could be found at most any time of the year. In August, the Scots celebrated Robert Burns's birthday with a gathering of the clans, and bagpipe music mixed with fortnightly public concerts given by Professor Varney's German band, the players of Emmet's guard, the Cornish orchestra, and the Italian opera company. By month's end, the Miner's Union Hall was converted into a Polish synagogue for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Mexicans celebrated their national independence, and a Canadian relief society met. Yet this whirlwind review of the cultural calendar of Virginia City remains incomplete because it does not mention the powerful industrial union established by the diverse and heterogeneous laboring population. The union they formed in 1863 served as a model for workers over the entire Far West, and the introduction of its constitution was sworn to and signed by new members over the entire mining region.

"In view of the existing evils which the Miners have to endure from the tyrannical oppressive power of Capital, it has become necessary to protest, and to elevate our social condition and maintain a position in society.... We should cultivate an acquaintance with our fellows in order that we may be the better enabled to form an undivided opposition to acts of 'tyranny,' ... We... have to form an association...., for without Union we are powerless, with it we are powerful; — and there is no power that can be wielded by Capital or position but which we may boldly defy, — For united we possess strength; let us act justly and fear not."

Cultural diversity and even conflict did not prevent the formation of their union, which remained powerful in the region.<sup>11</sup>

## Continuity and Change

Such developments in the post-Civil War era, Gutman claims, fed into the emergence of "diverse cooperative movements, including the Knights of Labor, the constituent unions that formed the American Federation of Labor, the small but influential socialist and anarchist movements, and dozens of local labor political parties." If we trace the lives of "Mother" Mary Jones, Eugene V. Debs, Lucy Parsons, William D. Haywood, James P. Cannon, Vincent Raymond Dunne, and many others, we can find all of these threads interwoven into the tapestries of their experience and consciousness, and reflected in the ideas and sensibilities which they conveyed to tens of thousands of others as they labored to build organizations and advance struggles that brought clearer historical and social consciousness, a sense of dignity, and genu-

ine material gains to many who were part of the American working class.<sup>12</sup>

The development of class consciousness involves more than the gradual accumulation of experience. Periodically there are dramatic leaps, as momentous events bring to the fore profoundly radical insights that are latent in the consciousness of the oppressed. The combined impact of World War I and the Russian revolution helped to create a class-struggle tidal wave that swept the world in 1919–1920. In the pages of *The Crisis* in 1920, W.E.B. DuBois shared with members and supporters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) an anecdote, titled "Of Giving Work," suggesting how this tidal wave impacted in a small community in the deep South:

"We give you people work and if we didn't, how would you live?"

The speaker was a southern white man. He was of the genus called "good." He had come down from the Big House to advise these Negroes, in the forlorn little church that crouched on the creek. He didn't come to learn, but to teach. The result was that he did not learn, and he saw only that blank, imperious gaze which colored people know how to assume; and that dark wall of absolute silence which they have a habit of putting up instead of applause. He felt awkward, but he repeated what he had said, because he could not think of anything else to say:

"We give you people work, and if we didn't, how would you live?"

And then the old and rather ragged black man arose in the back of the church and came slowly forward and as he came, he said:

"And we gives you homes; and we gives you cotton; and we makes your land worth money; and we waits on you and gets your meals and cleans up your dirt. If we didn't do all these things for you, how would you live?"

The white man choked and got red, but the old black man went on talking:

"And what's more: we gives you a heap more than you gives us and we's getting mighty tired of the bargain —"

"I think we ought to give you fair wages," stammered the white man.

"And that ain't all," continued the old black man, "we ought to have something to say about your wages. Because if what *you* gives us gives *you* a right to say what we ought to get, then what *we* gives you gives *us* a right to say what *you* ought to get; and we're going to take that right *some day*."

The white man blustered:

"That's Bolshevism!" he shouted.

And then church broke up.<sup>13</sup>

Such sensibilities informed a deep current of working-class African American radicalism reflected — in diverse ways — through the lives of such different people as Nate Shaw (Ned Cobb), A. Philip Randolph, Richard Wright, Al Murphy, Hosea Hudson, Harry Haywood, Abner Berry, E.D. Nixon, Charles Denby, Edgar Keemer, Larry Stewart, Ella Baker, Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, and many others. They, in turn, influenced a new generation of activists who came to the fore in the work of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Congress On Racial Equality, the Student Nonviolent Co-

ordinating Committee, and later groups. Such continuity is secured through cultural means: anecdotes, jokes, ethical codes, art, literature, songs, organizations, ways of relating to people, social activities, educational work. This must be grounded in and interwoven with a broader cultural reality, with which people are familiar, in some measure consistent with the value systems and experiences they have known. We can see, in the Black liberation movement over the course of the twentieth century, that its experience as a genuinely *mass* phenomenon was dependent in large measure on this cultural base. The sensibilities captured in the anecdote of DuBois reverberated in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, and in the enthusiasm with which masses of African Americans responded to those words.<sup>14</sup> These "sensibilities" are embedded (in the phrase of the anthropologists) in "the knowledge of ways of adjusting to our surroundings, language, customs, and systems of etiquette, ethics, religion, and morals."

In a similar manner, in the years stretching from the end of the Civil War through the 1930s, and into the 1940s, other sections of the ethnically diverse working class also were part of radical-proletarian subcultures developing in confrontation to the bourgeois-dominated "national culture." The existence of these subcultures — traced and documented by Herbert Gutman, Philip Foner, David Brody, David Montgomery, Joyce Kornbluh, Staughton and Alice Lynd, Barbara Wertheimer, Alice Kessler-Harris, and many others — encompasses the Knights of Labor, the early American Federation of Labor, the Industrial Workers of the World, the Congress of Industrial Organizations. It is reflected in many aspects of such class-struggle battles as the mass uprising of 1877, the eight-hour upsurge of 1886, the Homestead steel strike of 1892, the Lawrence textile strike of 1913, the momentous 1919 strike wave, the 1934 general strikes in Minneapolis, Toledo, and San Francisco, the innumerable sit-down strikes of the 1930s, etc. It is in this context that the Workingmen's Party of the United States, the early Socialist Labor Party, and International Working Peoples Association (associated with the Haymarket martyrs), the Socialist Party of America led by Debs, the Communist Party, and American Trotskyism arose, had meaning, and played essential roles.

An examination of labor history in other countries where far more powerful left-wing workers movements arose — Russia, Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Britain, etc. — reveals quite similar dynamics, although the working classes in those countries were far less fragmented, ethnically and culturally, than in the U.S.

It is certainly *not* the case that there was some kind of one-to-one continuity among all the participants of the various struggles. The millions of workers who built the unions of the CIO in the 1930s, in their great majority, had little or no knowledge of the Knights of Labor, Eugene V. Debs, or the IWW. But among the core of organizers, central participants, and much-



needed supporters were those who had a keen and vibrant knowledge of such things, in some cases connected with this radical heritage through lived experience and family ties. (For example, see James P. Cannon's essay, "A Socialist Pioneer," reprinted elsewhere in this issue.) Such people constituted a kind of historical memory of the working class, a repository of many lessons and insights and skills, that was a vital resource in the struggles which attracted and trained new layers of working-class insurgents. These struggles helped to transform the culture (the way of life, the sensibilities, the body of knowledge) of the working class, as well as the larger (bourgeois-dominated) national culture and the more specific left-wing working-class subculture.

There is, of course, an even more restricted set of micro-cultures: those of the various organizations on the Left such as the Communist Party, Socialist Party, Socialist Workers Party, and smaller groups. Those involved in the more restricted micro-cultures are sometimes prone to sectarian delusions, so that their own perceptions, commitments, needs, and desires blind them to those of broader working-class layers. Referring to letters by Frederick Engels criticizing some late nineteenth-century socialists, Cannon commented in a 1955 letter to V.R. Dunne: "The key to Engels's thought is his striking expression that the conscious socialists should act as a 'leaven' in the instinctive and spontaneous movement of the working class. Those are winged words that every party member should memorize. The leaven can help the dough to rise and eventually become a loaf of bread, but can never be a loaf of bread itself." Cannon added that "every tendency, direct or indirect, of a small revolutionary party to construct a world of its own, outside and apart from the real movement of the workers in the class struggle, is sectarian."

Such a "small revolutionary party" cannot be seen as an authentically Leninist *party* in the sense that the Bolsheviks constituted such a party in the period of 1912–1917. If Leninist-oriented revolutionaries group themselves into organizations of three or thirty or three hundred — operating according to principles which they call "democratic-centralist" and basing themselves on what they conceive to be a revolutionary Marxist program — they cannot view themselves as a serious revolutionary *party*, even if they call themselves that, nor should the energies expended within such grouplets be confused with real "party-building." Such groups can do important work, but they are, at best, only an element of a future revolutionary party, which by definition must have a mass working-class membership base (numbering in the thousands) and some influence among broader radicalized sectors of the working class (numbering in the millions).

"I know that sectarianism — in one form or another — is an ever-present danger to any small organization of revolutionists condemned to isolation by circumstances beyond their control, regardless of their original intentions,"

Cannon commented. "The moment such an organization ceases to think of itself as a part of the working class, which can realize its aims only with and through the working class, and to conduct itself accordingly, it is done for."<sup>15</sup>

There is an important reason why Cannon was especially concerned about this form of sectarianism in the 1950s. The impact of major economic, social, and political developments in the post-World War II period presented U.S. revolutionaries with the most difficult problems they had ever faced. The way of life of majority sectors of the U.S. working class became dramatically transformed — in terms of living standards, occupational experience, education, housing patterns and community development, the explosive development of a mass-consumer culture, etc. — in the ever-present danger to any small organization of revolutionists condemned to isolation by circumstances beyond their control, regardless of their original intentions," Cannon commented. "The moment such an organization ceases to think of itself as a part of the working class, which can realize its aims only with and through the working class, and to conduct itself accordingly, it is done for."<sup>15</sup>

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### Future Tasks

The relation of this broken continuity to the youth radicalization of the 1960s, and the impact on American Trotskyism, are discussed in my introductory essay to the book *Revolutionary Principles and Working-Class Democracy*. What is most important for us here, however, is the question of what to do in this final decade of the twentieth century, as multiple opportunities open up for a recomposition of a left-wing working-class movement. There is no equivalent of a Leninist party in the United States, and such a thing — in the sense that it existed in Russia, as a mass revolutionary workers party — has not been possible for more than

forty years. Such a thing may be possible over the course of the period in which we presently find ourselves. But it can only be brought into being if revolutionary socialists have a clear notion of how such things happen, and for this we need to understand some of the complexities of class consciousness, culture, and labor history touched on in this essay. This will turn our attention and energies in certain directions.

Over the past two decades conscious socialists have been playing a central role in a number of efforts contributing to the revitalization of sectors of the labor movement and of the larger working class. These include the outstanding monthly publication *Labor Notes*, and such caucuses and organizations as Teamsters for a Democratic Union, the New Directions Caucus in the United Auto Workers union, Black Workers for Justice, and more recently the Workers Unity Network. There have been a number of labor educational projects and workers' centers; union-initiated social action efforts such as Jobs with Justice, anti-NAFTA and health coalitions, as well as important forums such as Labor Party Advocates.

Nor is this all. "There are deep divisions within the working class along the lines of race, ethnicity and gender," I noted in my initial article, "and some of those who are prepared to struggle against oppression do so around such issues as opposition to the destruction of the environment, opposition to war, support for gay and lesbian rights, etc." I expressed the view that "revolutionary socialists must be active and visible in all such struggles against oppression. They must see these struggles as having value in and of themselves, and at the same time understand that they are part of the general struggle of the working class." The fact is, of course, that socialists *have* been centrally involved in such efforts, contributing invaluable skills, insights, analysis, energy — and this is not a "detour" or a form of "waiting" for the class struggle. It is an essential aspect of the class struggle.

All such things — outward-reaching, connecting with and encouraging creative initiatives from thoughtful working-class activists, hospitable to a broad range of people — contribute to the recomposition of a left-wing workers' movement, and much more so than tightly organized, doctrinaire grouplets which see *themselves* as embryonic Leninist parties. The development of a democratic, socially conscious, action-oriented, mass-based labor party — connecting with a vibrant and multifaceted radical workers' subculture — creates the framework in which the Leninist tradition can become an integral part (and at some point a defining part) of the revolutionary socialist current that will quite naturally arise within such a party, just as the Bolsheviks did in the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party.

While I am convinced that it will be impossible to create a genuinely Leninist party outside such a broad social-political development, Lenin-

*Continued on page 33*



# The Appeal to Reason and the Mass Socialist Movement Before World War I

by David Riehle

"I received a letter the other day," Jack London wrote in 1905. "It was from a man in Arizona. It began 'Dear Comrade.' It ended, 'Yours for the revolution.' I replied to the letter, and my letter began, 'Dear Comrade.' It ended, 'Yours for the revolution.' In the United States there are 400,000 men, of men and women nearly 1,000,000, who begin their letters 'Dear Comrade,' and end them 'Yours for the revolution.'"\*

Once in this country, still within the living memory of a very few, there was a time when many thousands of ordinary people, workers and farmers for the most part, were seething with the possibility of a future free of oppression, hunger, and violence, a future based on human solidarity, to be organized through the abolition of private property and collective participation in the work of society for the good of all. They called this future "socialism."

This is not entirely unknown, especially to people who have some knowledge of American history. But even to them this remains for the most part something only dimly perceived, as people in the Middle Ages were faintly aware that there were countries on the other side of the world, but had little or no idea of who lived there or what they were like. But for the most part it is utterly expunged from popular consciousness.

One of the few alive today whose conscious life coincided with this era is the poet and writer Meridel Le Seuer, born in 1900. Writing in 1984, she recalls the great socialist camp meetings of the Middle West before World War I:

I got my education at these great picnics, meetings of farmers, lumberjacks, miners, factory workers. They came for miles, some hiking, some in long lines with great banners — "We ask for justice." "We want land." It was a pentecostal of politics. Speakers went up and down the countryside. . . Everyone was talking, learning, listening. Farmers, mechanics, ranchers, hoboes, wanderers, itinerant workers mounted soapboxes, shouted in wheat fields, passed out leaflets at factory gates. And gaunt, suntanned women who had rarely spoken now rose at meetings and there were singers and everyone could write his own piece and pass it out or pile it on the tables at the meetings. Tongues of flame, witnesses to the agony of the farm evictions. All were touched with prophecy and utterance. The landscape changed, the plow had a new meaning and became alive in the hands of the people who were not going to be silent. . . Most of all they discovered the fire and wonder of solidarity. (*Crusaders — the Radical Legacy of Marian and Arthur Le Seuer*, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984.)

The flame did not just flare for a moment. This great broad movement of the people, of the producers, spanned decades and generations, arising at the close of the Civil War. The socialist mass meetings Le Seuer describes had their roots in the movements of the latter part of the nineteenth century — in the Greenback-Labor Party and the People's Party, the Knights of Labor, the great labor struggles of 1877 and 1886.

"Everywhere and in all countries the oppressed people are waking up," wrote my great grandmother, Jennie Jones, editor of the *Workman*, published in the small town of Bloomer, Wisconsin. Their struggles, from Russia to France, to Ireland, to the United States, she said in the cadences of that time, "are synonymous, and all rumbling volcanoes, coming up from the oppressed masses of the people. And they will yet break from the grasp of the oppressor, and will tear his bloody hand from the white throat of labor" (*Bloomer Workman*, October 20, 1881).

Driven by the stupendous industrialization that swept across the continent, revolutionizing the means of production and creating a modern industrial proletariat, thousands upon thousands of them saw with new insight this gigantic productive machine as something that could be seized by the people and used to build a better world.

"Who are the oppressors?" Mark Twain asked in 1886.

The few, the king, the capitalist and a handful of other overseers and superintendents. Who are the oppressed? The many: the nations of the earth; the valuable personages; the workers; they that make the bread that the soft-handed and idle eat. Why is there not a fairer division of the spoils all around? . . . But when all the bricklayers, and all the machinists and all the miners and blacksmiths and printers and hod carriers and stevedores and house painters and brakemen and engineers and conductors and factory hands and horse car drivers and all the shopgirls and all the sewing women and all the telegraph operators; in a word all the myriads of toilers in whom is slumbering the reality of that thing which you call power, not its age-worn sham and substanceless spectre — when these rise, call the vast spectacle by any deluding name that will please your ear, but the fact remains a *Nation* has risen. (Speech by Mark Twain, "The Knights of Labor, a New Dynasty," March 21, 1886.)

At the beginning of the twentieth century these currents of protest and struggle came together in the new Socialist Party. James P. Cannon, who entered political life as a participant in this movement in the first decade of the century under the tutelage of his father described his father's pioneer socialism as "the predominant mid-Western American socialism of his time — inspired by the great spirit and burning eloquence of [Eugene V.] Debs][...]

"In my opinion," Cannon said, "the modern movement, with its more precise analysis and its necessary concentration on the struggle, would do well to infuse its propaganda with more emphasis on the ultimate meaning of the struggle; speak out, as the old pioneers did, for human rights and human dignity, for freedom and equality and abundance for all. That is what we are really fighting for when we fight for socialism." ("Farewell to a Socialist Pioneer," June 7, 1947, reprinted in *Notebook of An Agitator*, 1958, and on page 21 of this issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.)

\*Quoted in *Yours for the Revolution: The Appeal to Reason, 1895-1922*, p. ix.





Masthead of the April 6, 1912, issue of the *Appeal to Reason*

Cannon's view on this, which he expressed many times, has had the occasional misfortune of being mistaken for sentimentalism and nostalgia. The movement of that time has likewise had the misfortune of having been described historically too often as a primitive and naive anticipation of various things to come, sometimes the Democratic Party reforms of the New Deal, and sometimes intransigent and hard-hearted Marxism-Leninism, depending on who is doing the describing. In a sense, neither of these is true and both of them are true. There is no doubt that within the Socialist Party of the first two decades of the century can be found the germ of all these things, and others as well. But it was more than that. First of all, it was better than what had come before. Now the goal of a better world, a world of abundance and human solidarity, which was inherent in the great people's struggles that preceded it, could be formulated in a definite, material, and coherent manner, and a social engine for achieving the new society, the working class, could be identified. It could be *explained*. It was not necessary to take it on faith, or accept it as revelation. It was necessary only to be *convinced*.

The people who joined the socialist movement marched, went on strike, contested for elected office, and a myriad of other activities. But central to all their activity they *read* and they *talked*. A 1908 national survey discovered that 54 percent of the rank and file discovered socialism through reading. They studied and discussed *ideas*. "Educate, Agitate and Organize," as it was inscribed on the masthead of my great grandparents' Greenback-Labor Party newspaper, and a thousand other places. The new mass socialist movement, growing out of the old, could not do otherwise than adopt the old slogan, and give it new content.

Who were the people who made up this movement? They had names. They had faces. They had lives. A multitude of us are their descendants, although for the most part we are unaware of it. And, as burns so intensely in Meridel Le Seuer's memory, they found their voices in this movement. They were not just simple folk as they have so often been condescendingly portrayed. They were grown-up people responsible for their own lives and for the lives of others. They learned what they could of the world around them and they were educated by a movement that poured out an avalanche of printed material. *And they talked back*.

More than anything, the institution for this reciprocal discussion was the socialist newspaper the *Appeal to Reason*. Published from 1895 to 1922, the *Appeal* was a mass circulation political medium on a scale and proportion almost unimaginable today, and never exceeded since. At its peak in 1913 the *Appeal's* regular circulation was over 750,000, reaching as high as 3 million for special editions. For a long time its circulation was one of the top three or four largest for weeklies in the United States, larger than the *Saturday Evening Post*, for example. In its pages are recorded, more than anywhere else, the voices of the thousands of articulate, inspired, and intellectually awakened human beings who *were* this movement.

We now have the best opportunity presented so far in the historical literature of the American socialist movement to open a window on this era and hear their voices.

*Yours for the Revolution: The "Appeal to Reason," 1895-1922*, edited by John Graham (University of Nebraska Press, 1990) is both a sensitive and insightful history of the *Appeal* and an anthology of its nearly thirty years of publication.

Graham's superb introduction, accompanying historical and political commentary, and selection of material is done with an evident profound respect for the thousands of men and women who read, circulated, and wrote much of the *Appeal*, as well as for its remarkable editor, J.A. Wayland.

"The editorial policy of 'Tell the *Appeal*' meant that substantial parts of many issues of the paper were written by citizens widely dispersed throughout the United States," he writes.

"Much more than simply a newspaper, the *Appeal* was a participatory counterinstitution that actively represented the socialist movement."

The book contains many examples. *Appeal* readers reported on strikes, free speech struggles, accounts of workers' life under capitalism, efforts to convince others of the tenets of socialism, and anecdotes from everyday life. A story from Fresno, California, in the February 11, 1911, *Appeal* signed by "Mrs. W.F. Little" reported on a battle for free speech and union organization of the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] involving herself and other comrades. She reported that over 100 workers, including her husband Frank Little, were in jail, arrested for the crime of trying to speak on the streets of Fresno, "in sunny California that you read so much about, where every prospect pleases and only man is vile." In 1917, IWW leader Frank Little was dragged from a jail in Butte, Montana, by a mob of businessmen and lynched from a railroad trestle.

The *Appeal* commissioned and first published serially in the paper Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, exposing brutal, oppressive, and unsanitary conditions in the meatpacking industry. The *Appeal* version, in fact, was nearly a third longer than the book published later by Doubleday and Page, and more explicitly political.

Martha Baker wrote in the June 14, 1913, *Appeal*:

...I am uneducated. The greatest desire of my life is denied because poor working people have no chance for education and enlightenment. I am not a member of the Socialist party. I was born and raised in a state where few rights are granted to women, and to talk politics or to have a political opinion is considered unwomanly. But I have been reading the *Appeal* and trying to find out what socialism is...I can see in it a great hope for the millions of working people who are struggling for existence. In the future, under Socialism, I can see equal privileges of life granted to all, the chance to grow and develop physically, mentally and intellectually. The people will be free from poverty, they will not be robbed of what they produce. I can see the same right to live granted to woman as well as to man and she will not be kept down simply because she is a woman.



Other women discovered that the movement was itself not free of the defects of the world in which it existed. Naomi McDonald Phelps wrote in the April 18, 1903, *Appeal*:

I would like to answer Comrade Well's suggestion in regard to women, where he says he thinks women ought to be coaxed into the Socialist clubs, as they would talk the old parties to death... The fact is, men have that principle so engrafted in their natures, i.e., speaking of women in regard to public affairs much as they would of imbeciles and children — "ha! ha! Johnny's got on his firstest pair of pants; thinks he will soon be old enough to vote" — that their invitations to women to join their clubs are couched in such a manner, and their treatment of "the talking sex" is so contemptuous that the self-respecting women resent it. We're not babies; we're not fools; if you had been our servants as long as we have been yours... — I believe with all my heart that you would have been a sex of blubbering idiots. By what twist of fortune's wheel men became so wise in their own conceits, fell so in love with their own preponderance of brains, is past finding out of the wisest women.

"But I want to give the male members of all political clubs a recipe for the tolling in of women," Phelps continued.

...Always get the first grip, while you urge her to take hold: see to it that you do the talking, while urging her to talk. Have Jones, Brown and Brewster all ready for the floor, and see that they keep it from the time your club meeting opens until the motion is made to adjourn. Prove your appreciation for her assistance as a lecturer in the field by running all the consecrated, bifurcated gentry to the front, and filling all the places with the sex that God ordered to till the earth. Finish up by telling her that she's a daisy — when it comes to scrubbing — but it takes you with your wonderful preponderance of brains, to represent her interests... Well, I hope this will go in the *Appeal*, as men's attitude toward women in regard to the great issues of the day, destroys her usefulness, kills her confidence, enlarges her disgust with self-conceit and turns the volume of her patriotism back on herself, and though her soul rebel, yet their is no way out of these annoyances that hamper and annoy, until men shall LIVE the gospel they PREACH.

Questions such as this and others were argued out with admirable frankness in the pages of the *Appeal*. The *Appeal* belonged to the movement, and its supporters devoted great energy to making it better, as well as expanding its number of readers and subscribers.

Central to this was the Appeal Army. Readers of the *BIDOM* may be familiar with James P. Cannon's descriptions of the Appeal Army as the medium of his first participation in socialist politics as a teenager, distributing copies of the *Appeal's* special 3 million copy edition in defense of labor prisoners Bill Haywood and Charles Moyer, leaders of the Western Federation of Miners facing a death sentence in Idaho in 1906. Graham's book gives us a deeper appreciation of the Army, and its class content.

Editor Graham describes the Appeal Army as an organization of

agitators and propagandists who sold subscriptions to the paper and distributed extra copies at public meetings, in barbershops and union halls, on trains and street corners, on porches and doorsteps, wherever the *Appeal* could be read and socialism encountered. Like the *Appeal* itself, the Salesmen Army was a phenomenon like nothing else in American publishing or radical history: at its high point in 1913, the Army had grown to 80,000 activists, nearly all of whom could be reached in two days time when necessary. [Emphasis added — D.R.]

The Army's activities extended well beyond simply canvassing for subscriptions — in many cases the Army preceded and helped organize branches of the SP. The Appeal Army, as noted, could mobilize on short notice and intervene as a political force in its own right into political crises such as the Moyer-Haywood trial

with its special editions and thousands of agitators. This was one of the *Appeal's* many, and mostly unacknowledged, contributions to the movements which came after it. James P. Cannon's conception of a campaign newspaper for socialism which belonged to the rank and file is clearly influenced by his early experiences with the *Appeal*.

J.A. Wayland, the *Appeal's* editor, did not exempt himself from the task of building the paper's influence and circulation. Wayland reported, for example, in the September 3, 1904, issue: "Last week I rode sixty-five miles, circulating *Appeals* and pamphlets about Girard [Kansas, the small town in which the *Appeal* was located]. One evening after work I made twenty miles and left an *Appeal* and two pamphlets at every farm house."

Not everyone in the movement loved the *Appeal*, or the Appeal Army. SP leader Victor Berger accused the members of the Army of being "converts... who care more for the chance to win some trumpery prize than they do to win the Cooperative Commonwealth." It is true that the *Appeal*, especially at the beginning, offered prizes and premiums to increase circulation. At different times the *Appeal* offered successful subscription-getters prizes such as "a first class sewing machine," an "art vase, suitably inscribed," and even a 10-acre farm in the heart of the Arkansas fruit belt. It once promised instruments to outfit a complete brass band to the socialists in the city with the highest circulation when the paper's circulation went over 75,000.

The *Appeal* was a product of its time, as was J.A. Wayland, who had been a successful publisher and real estate speculator before his conversion to socialism. Wayland saw no alternative to using many of the methods of capitalist business to boost the cause. The *Appeal* was not owned by the Socialist Party, which in fact refused on principle to operate an official party newspaper, and accordingly the *Appeal* could only be sustained financially from its own revenue. Wayland agonized publicly many times in the columns of the *Appeal* over the contradiction of the most successful propaganda vehicle for socialism being a private business, and at one time he even offered the paper to the SP, an offer which was declined.

The *Appeal* had its troubles and its inconsistencies, as did the movement it championed and helped in a significant way to create. The limitations of that movement can be examined — they have been before, and will be again — both by those who nostalgically wish it could simply be recreated and by those like Cannon who went beyond it armed with a profound appreciation of those he called the "pioneers."

Another recent book on the *Appeal* — *Talkin' Socialism: J.A. Wayland and the Role of the Press in American Radicalism*, by Elliott Shore (University of Kansas Press, 1988) — provides an excellent critical history of the great socialist newspaper and its editor. In fact, it is only now, in the last few years, that the first books on the *Appeal* have come out, some 70 years after its cessation. Although the *Appeal*, as noted earlier, was among the largest circulation publications of any kind in the United States in its time, it is entirely absent, as socialist historian Paul Buhle has noted, from any history of journalism in the U.S. The *Appeal* is given only brief (and dismissive) mention even in the important histories of the pre-World War I Socialist Party written by Daniel Bell, Ira Kipnis, and David Shannon.

John Graham's *Yours for the Revolution* has been criticized as being too celebratory about the *Appeal*, some reviews echoing Berger's contemptuous dismissal of the newspaper, its readers, and supporters. More to the point, in my opinion, is the characterization of the book by Peter Ostenby in the *Illinois Historical Journal* (Spring, 1992) as a "marvelous example of the power of a historical anthology." The mighty impulse for human liberation by the



workers and farmers of the early twentieth-century United States, which the *Appeal* represented and expressed, *should* be celebrated.

Whatever its flaw and inadequacies, the *Appeal* and its Army essentially constituted a movement of equals, whose motivation and reward were the self-sufficient satisfaction of serving the movement. Although many talented and sometimes celebrated writers appeared in the *Appeal*, the paper was not just a forum for the occasional rank and filer, but the place, as a paper that belonged to them, where they spoke to each other. As is inescapable and necessary in a real working class movement, it was one which collectively educated itself. The hundreds of pamphlets produced in this era by the *Appeal*, by Charles Kerr Publishers, and others, are unmistakably the product of people who have deep mutual respect and seek to educate *each other* as thinking human beings.

The histories of the old socialist movement as they have been presented for the most part, do not make this clear enough, with their focus on the socialist municipal administrations, party agitators, union officials, middle-class reformers, professionals, and others who one way or another raised themselves above the ranks. The histories, whatever their merits, tend to be written, consciously or unconsciously, from the perspective of those "higher" types.

John Graham has made a valuable contribution to a deeper understanding of the thinking, conscious human beings who gave this movement whatever value it had, and helps to engender a deeper respect for them — and our class. They, this great tide of human beings who sought to bequeath us a better world, were not only our grandparents and great grandparents, and uncles and

*Continued on page 34*

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## From the Arsenal of Marxism

# Farewell to a Socialist Pioneer

by James P. Cannon

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*The following originally appeared in the June 7, 1947, issue of The Militant. It is reprinted from Notebook of an Agitator.*

**A**n old socialist pioneer died in Rosedale, Kansas, the other day at the age of 89, and I went home to his funeral. I was bound to him personally by many different ties and indebted to him for many things of value beyond computation. He was the first to explain to me that truth and justice are important, and he proved to me, by his life-long example, that he meant what he said. He really believed in freedom, equality, and the brotherhood of man, and thought these things attainable and worth striving for. That was his "principle," and he lived up to it.

It was from him that I first learned about socialism; he took me into the movement 36 years ago, and thus shaped my life in a pattern which has never been changed. Remembering and reliving all that on the long train ride to the old man's funeral, I thought of him, not only as a friend and counselor, but also as a true and worthy representative of that noble generation of pioneer socialists who went before us and prepared the way for us. We are here because they were there. We should never forget that.

His socialism — the predominant Midwestern American socialism of his time — inspired by the great spirit and burning eloquence of Debs, was broadly humanitarian, more ethical, perhaps, than scientific, and putting more emphasis on the goal than the road to it. But it was right in the essence of the matter, and there was a great driving force of conviction and inspiration behind it. In my opinion, the modern movement, with its more precise analysis and its necessary concentration on the struggle, would do well to infuse its propaganda with more of the old emphasis on the ultimate meaning of the struggle; speak out, as the old pioneers did, for human

rights and human dignity, for freedom and equality and abundance for all. That is what we are really fighting for when we fight for socialism.

Ben Hanford, the great socialist agitator of an earlier day, once wrote an encomium of a collective comrade whom he called Jimmy Higgins — the man in the ranks who busies himself without ostentation, recognition or reward to do all the innumerable little and unnoticed things which have to be done to keep the "movement" going and the torch burning. Such was the old man. He was an old-timer from away back — a "labor man" from the days of the Knights of labor and the eight-hour movement; a Debs man from the A.R.U. [American Railway Union] strike of '94 on; and a socialist activist all through the 20-year rise of the Socialist Party after the turn of the century. He ardently sympathized with me in all my work and struggles, and gave all the practical help he could, up to the recent years when he was too old and tired to do any more.

An account of his quiet and sustained activity for socialism could stand, with only a few unimportant changes, as a composite biography of the whole fraternity of anonymous activists whose unrecognized labors and sacrifices, freely given with unflinching faith, transformed an idea and a hope into a movement which lives after them and will yet prevail.

He was no "leader," but a simple rank-and-file man who "talked socialism" to all who would listen; hustled the subscriptions for the papers; arranged the meetings, rented the hall and drummed up the crowd for the speaker; and always had his hand in his pocket for a contribution he couldn't afford,

to help make up the deficit. In addition, he could always be counted on to "put up" a traveling agitator at his home and thus save the party expenses, although his own financial means were all too narrow.

The old man was the friend and partisan of all good causes, always ready to circulate a petition, help out a collection or get up a protest meeting to demand that wrongs be righted. The good causes, then as now, were mostly unpopular ones, and he nearly always found himself in the minority, on the side of the underdogs who couldn't do him any good in the tough game of making money and getting ahead. He had to pay for that, and his family had to pay, but it couldn't be helped. The old man was made that way, and I don't think it ever once entered his head to do otherwise or live otherwise than he did.

That's just about all there is to tell of him. But I thought, as I looked at him in his coffin for the last time, that's a great deal. Carl Sandburg said it this way: "These are heroes then — among the plain people — Heroes, did you say? And why not? They give all they've got and ask no questions and take what comes and what more do you want?"

That devoted band of pioneer socialists who lived and worked unselfishly for socialism, who did what they could for the "movement" and kept it alive so that a new generation coming along would not have to begin at the beginning, did not live in vain. They were far more important for the future of America and the world than they, with their modesty and their renunciation, could possibly realize. The old man was one of them, and I say farewell to him with gratitude and love. His name was John Cannon. He was my father. □



## Feminist and Native American Rights Activist

# Wilma Mankiller, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation

*Mankiller: A Chief and Her People*, by Wilma P. Mankiller, with Michael Wallis. New York: St. Martin's Press. 293 pages. Hardcover, \$22.95.

Reviewed by Tom Bias

For nearly 10 years, a truly remarkable woman has been leading the second-largest Native American nation in the U.S. In 1977 Wilma Pearl Mankiller brought her radical nationalist and feminist ideas back to the rugged hill country of northeast Oklahoma, and since 1985 has been Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People* is her story, combining — in alternating chapters — her own life experiences with the history of the Cherokee people since their first encounters with the European invaders over 300 years ago.

Nearly all readers will find this book fascinating; however, activists in the struggles for social change will take special interest not only in the story Mankiller tells but in her ideas concerning self-determination for her people and the liberation of her gender. The questions which she provokes go right to the heart of the struggle for socialism and for self-determination of the oppressed nations within the borders of the United States. She considers the Cherokee people to be a sovereign nation, with its own language, territory, and culture. She describes her administration's relationship with the Federal government in Washington as a "government-to-

government" relationship. It may be questioned whether Bill Clinton, whom Mankiller supported in the 1992 election, sees it the same way, especially since the Cherokee government can neither collect taxes nor enforce its decisions with armed power. However, even by speaking in those terms, Mankiller is raising the idea of genuine self-determination within the consciousness of her people, and that can prove to be a powerful beginning.

Marxists especially will find Mankiller's book challenging. She destroys the notion that the precapitalist cultures prevailing on this continent were "barbaric" or "savage," and she documents conclusively that the imposition of class society, even in the ascendant period of capitalism, in no way, shape, or form improved the lives of the indigenous people. However, of greatest interest to Marxists is the Native American struggle of today, in which Wilma Mankiller has become a central leader.

### Wilma Mankiller's Youth

The story of Wilma Mankiller's life is an inspiring one indeed. She has had to overcome not only poverty, racism, and sexism, but serious illness and injury as well. Regardless of how history judges her accomplishments, she will be remembered as a woman of extraordinary courage.

She was born in November 1945 in the Cherokee capital, Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Her family home was at Mankiller Flats, near Stilwell, which is within spitting distance of the Arkansas border. She was the sixth of eleven children. Her father, Charley Mankiller, was a full-blooded Cherokee, who continued to speak the Cherokee language as well as English. Her mother, Irene Sitton Mankiller, is a white woman of Irish descent. Names with the suffix "killer" are quite common among the Cherokee (among my own relatives is a family named Sixkiller); however, people who are not from Oklahoma sometimes find the name strange. Mankiller is sensitive to comments about her name, and when anyone (especially a male) gives her a hard time about it, she informs him that it is a nickname and that she earned it! She speculates that at one time it was a military rank or title, especially since it is usually attached to a number.

The conditions of Wilma Mankiller's early life contrast sharply with the public-relations image the state of Oklahoma likes to project — of a society in which Indians and whites

live together in perfect harmony and share equally in the state's prosperity. Her family was, in her words, "dirt poor." They had neither electricity nor indoor plumbing. The family made its living basically by subsistence farming, supplementing their diet with squirrels and other wild game, with fish, frogs, and "crawdads" (Oklahoma slang for crayfish) caught in the streams and ponds, and with wild onions, mushrooms, poke, and other greens which they gathered in the woods. They sold strawberries and peanuts for cash, and each year Mankiller's father and oldest brother would travel to Colorado to work as farm laborers, cutting broomcorn.

Mankiller's story recalled for me my father's account of his youth in Blackgum, Oklahoma (about 20 miles from Mankiller Flats), during the Great Depression. For many in northeast Oklahoma, the Depression stayed on after the 1930s ended, and in many parts of the Cherokee Nation, it continues to this day.

Oklahoma statehood (1907) more or less coincides with the beginning of this country's "national guilt trip" over its treatment of the indigenous peoples. Of course, by then it was too late — thousands of people and an entire way of life had already been destroyed. The Native peoples were no longer a threat to the whites' "manifest destiny." So the comedian Will Rogers (a mixed-blood Cherokee from Claremore) could tell his audience at the Ziegfeld Follies that "my ancestors didn't come over on the Mayflower; they met the boat!" And it became acceptable, at least in Oklahoma, to acknowledge Indian ancestry. In 1924 the U.S. government saw fit to extend American citizenship to the people who had inhabited this country since prehistory.

But the whites still didn't get it. For the brutal hostility of an earlier time they substituted a "benevolent" paternalism, which did almost as much damage as the earlier massacres. The attitude was exemplified for Mankiller by women she calls the "Bless Your Heart Ladies." As she and her brothers and sisters made their three-mile walk to school, dressed in clothes made from flour sacks, white women driving shiny new cars would on occasion stop and give them a ride. They would look down on the "poor little Indian children" with pitying smiles and say, "Bless your little hearts!" It showed her early in her life that racism wears many different expressions on its face.

The "Bless Your Heart" attitude extended to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in Washington. The BIA bureaucrats decided that the best thing they could do for the "poor Indians" was to break up their tribal enclaves and disperse them throughout the general population. In 1956 BIA representatives met with Charley Mankiller and offered to move the family out of Mankiller Flats, where economic conditions were undoubtedly acutely depressed, to an urban area where he could get a better job and where electricity, running water, and telephone service were available. After a pe-



Wilma Mankiller with Deputy Chief John Ketcher



riod of soul-searching and discussion with his wife, he decided to accept the BIA offer, and the family moved to San Francisco.

For 11-year-old Wilma it was the saddest day of her life up to that time. She did not understand how having more material possessions could justify being torn from familiar surroundings and from a loving extended family. She had never felt deprived by the lack of a telephone, but she felt intensely deprived by being snatched away from her grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins and put into an environment where she was the only Indian in her classroom and where children made fun of her "Okie" accent.

What was worse, the promises which the BIA made to the Mankiller family turned out to be false. San Francisco's streets were hardly paved with gold, and the Mankillers found that they had traded their hardscrabble farm for a city slum. The only jobs which Charley Mankiller could get — even in the booming 1950s — were low-paying unskilled laboring jobs. So the family was still poor, except that in San Francisco they *felt* poor, living in a noisy, dirty, unsafe section of a city where great wealth was to be seen.

During her teenage years Wilma Mankiller found herself most comfortable with other young people of color — African Americans, Asian Americans, and other displaced Native Americans whom she met at the San Francisco Indian Center in the Mission District. The Indian Center soon became the center of her social life, giving her a sense of belonging to a larger community, and very likely saving her and her entire family from the loss of self-esteem that has pushed so many urbanized Native Americans into the cycle of despair, unemployment, substance abuse, and even suicide. It gave them an opportunity to work with others to improve the conditions of their lives. Mankiller writes:

In many ways, the Indian Center became even more important to me than the junior high and various high schools I attended....at the end of the day, everything seemed brighter at the Indian Center. For me, it became an oasis where I could share my feelings and frustrations with kids from similar backgrounds....

The Indian Center was important to everyone in my family, including my father. Always a determined person who stuck to his principles, even if they turned out to be lost causes, Dad ultimately quit working as a longshoreman to become a shop steward and union organizer with a spice company based in San Francisco. Besides his union activities, he also became more involved with projects at the Indian Center. For instance, when the question arose about the need for a free health clinic for Indians living in the Bay area, he rallied the forces at the Indian Center to get behind the issue. In an effort to heighten public awareness, he appeared on a television panel discussion about the urban clinic. Perhaps at that time, he influenced my life in ways I could not imagine then.

After graduating from high school she married a well-to-do Ecuadoran businessman, gave birth to two daughters, and settled

into the life of a California housewife. However, she felt vaguely dissatisfied, even smothered. Her life of quiet indifference was shattered in 1969 when a group of militant Native Americans sailed out into the San Francisco Bay and occupied Alcatraz Island.

### Alcatraz and the Radicalization of a Native American Generation

There is a provision in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 allowing any male Native American over the age of 18 whose tribe was party to the treaty to file for a homestead on abandoned or unused federal property. Alcatraz, once the maximum in maximum-security prisons, had been closed since 1963. Sparked by a suspicious fire which destroyed the San Francisco Indian Center, a small group of Native American youth took possession of the island on the night of November 9, 1969, pursuant to the terms of the Fort Laramie Treaty. Nineteen hours later the U.S. Coast Guard escorted the occupiers from the island. But they came back. In the early hours of November 20, 89 men, women, and children from a number of different tribes returned to Alcatraz and settled in for a long stay. Their occupation was to last 19 months, involve hundreds of people, both Indian and non-Indian (including 5 members of the Mankiller family), and bring the Native American struggle to the consciousness of the entire country.

The Alcatraz occupiers were telling the world that indigenous Americans had had enough of genocide, poverty, despair, and paternalism. They had seen militant direct action get results for African Americans, for migrant Chicano farmworkers (the broader Chicano struggle was in its beginning stages), and for opponents of the Vietnam War. They had given up on any positive action coming out of the Bureau of Indian Affairs or any other government agency unless Native Americans stopped trying to "work within the system." The system had failed — actually, the system was never intended to help Native Americans in the first place.

Mankiller herself did not join her two brothers and two sisters in the permanent occupation — Mankiller's younger brother Richard served on the occupiers' elected council — but returned to the mainland each night to work on support activities, including publicity, fund raising, and setting up a new Indian Center to replace the one destroyed by fire. During this period she developed the organizational and administrative skills which she has put to use in the service of the Cherokee Nation. She also became close friends with a number of Native American militant leaders who influenced her thinking greatly. They included Richard Oakes (Mojave), his wife Annie Oakes (Pomo), John Trudell (Lakota), and Bill Wahpepah (Kickapoo-Sac and Fox). At Wahpepah's home Mankiller met Dennis Banks, Carter Camp, and Vernon and Clyde Bellecourt,

who were later to establish the American Indian Movement (AIM) and lead the occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota (in which Richard Mankiller participated).

### Return to Oklahoma

Mankiller had become an independent and self-reliant woman by this time. Unfortunately, her husband Hugo Olaya had not seen their marriage as a relationship of equals; rather, he wanted a wife whose "place was in the home." It was at this time that Mankiller's father died. Charley Mankiller's premature death (at age 56) of polycystic kidney disease (a genetic condition from which she also suffered) brought about a momentous decision. The family took their father's body back home to Oklahoma for burial — there was simply no way they could have left him in California. At that time Wilma Mankiller decided that she had to go home to stay.

It took several years to get a divorce from Olaya and get everything prepared. In the summer of 1977, she packed up the family belongings, loaded them, her two daughters, a dog, and a guinea pig into a U-Haul truck, and reversed the journey she had made 20 years earlier. Walking down the street in Stilwell shortly after their arrival, she passed some old Cherokee men sitting in front of the courthouse chewing tobacco and "chewing the fat." As she passed, one of them remarked, "There goes John Mankiller's granddaughter." She knew she was home.

She got a job with the tribal administration, putting her considerable skills to work. In 1981 she helped to set up the Cherokee Nation Community Development Department and was its first director. The department grew out of a rural redevelopment project in Bell, Oklahoma, a small town near Stilwell, which built energy-efficient housing and brought running water to the community's residents for the first time ever. At the same time she pursued graduate studies at the University of Arkansas, just across the border in Fayetteville. Her work on the Bell redevelopment project made a favorable impression on H. Ross Swimmer, the Principal Chief.

Swimmer's political views could not have been more dissimilar to Mankiller's. A wealthy attorney and local bank president, Swimmer was a conservative Republican, with views far closer to those of Oklahoma's state politicians than to the San Francisco radicals and AIM militants who had influenced Mankiller. Nevertheless, the two came to respect each other, and in 1983 Swimmer asked Mankiller to be his running mate in his reelection campaign for Principal Chief.

Tribal elections today are mainstream political events, little different from other elections in the United States, with buttons, banners, broadcast advertising, and backstabbing. Campaigns for public office are not for the thin-skinned, and Cherokee campaigns are no exception. In spite of Mankiller's left-wing political views and her recent return to



Oklahoma, the only issue which was used against her was her gender. The opponents of the Swimmer-Mankiller ticket appealed to the lowest levels of sexism to defeat her, and Mankiller found it emotionally upsetting. However, she had by this time survived two serious illnesses (myasthenia gravis and polycystic kidney disease) and a near fatal auto accident, and she was not about to let a bunch of sexist reactionaries stop her. Ironically, sexism is completely alien to the Cherokee culture; it is one of the unfortunate things which Cherokee men learned from the whites.

In 1985 President Ronald Reagan appointed Swimmer to head the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington. Under the Cherokee Constitution, Mankiller automatically succeeded him as Principal Chief. In 1987 she ran for re-election and endured another grueling campaign. She won by a 6 percent margin. In 1991 she was re-elected by a landslide. The overwhelming majority of voting Cherokees have become convinced that not only can a woman be Principal Chief, but that Wilma Mankiller has served her people well.

Up to now, Mankiller's work has centered on rural redevelopment and social services. Coming from a poor background herself — unlike many past tribal officials — she understands that the past policies of developing the Cherokee Nation as a recreation area, where people from the cities can come to hunt, fish, and water ski, are of only limited benefit to the local residents. She as well continues to champion the cause of preserving the Cherokee language, traditions, and culture.

### The Rich History of the Cherokee Nation

Most readers will find Mankiller's introduction to Cherokee history, told in alternate chapters to the autobiographical ones, both informative and fascinating. For one thing, it is *history*, not archeology or anthropology. There are written records in English, and, after 1821, written records in the Cherokee language as well. Like Mankiller's autobiography, it is a story most of all about overcoming adversity and surviving.

The Cherokee were the largest tribe in the United States at the time of the American Revolution, inhabiting the southern half of the Appalachian mountains from present-day West Virginia to Georgia. They are an Iroquoian people, with a language and culture more similar to the Five Nations of New York state and Pennsylvania (the Mohawk, Oneida, Seneca, Onondaga, and Cayuga), than to their Muskogean neighbors, the Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws. They owned their farmland in common, and kin-

ship followed the female line, as described in Lewis Morgan's studies which Engels used as source material for *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Though women had a different social role, they were in every way equal to men and were never considered "property" until the whites introduced male supremacist notions.

Mankiller blends traditional myths and legends with the account of the Cherokees' unsuccessful struggle to defend their land from the whites' invasion. She disabuses readers of whatever illusions they may have in the "liberalism" of the "Founding Fathers" with respect to the indigenous peoples. Ironically, nearly all whites who had contact with the Cherokee developed a great respect for them. All the accounts by fur traders, government agents, and — later — Christian missionaries describe the Cherokees as completely equal to the whites in intelligence and physical abilities, and therefore fully able to be assimilated into the "superior" European society, whether they wanted to be or not. This was the express wish of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other leaders of the early Republic. The big obstacle to the assimilation they sought was the Cherokees' hopeless insistence on land ownership in common. Mankiller points to the breakdown of common land ownership and the introduction of the private property system as the greatest of all defeats suffered by her nation. She is, of course, completely right, and the implications of her conclusion are profound indeed, and go to the root cause of *all* oppression in our society today.

In a book of this type it would be impossible to give a detailed and nuanced history of the Cherokee people, and in any event Mankiller is more a political leader than an historical scholar. Nevertheless, I was less satisfied with her discussion of the Removal — the infamous Trail of Tears of 1838 — and the intratribal political discussion which preceded it. In 1832, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, and in 1835, in compliance with that law, three Cherokee leaders — Major Ridge, his son John Ridge, and his nephew Buck Watie (also known as Elias Boudinot) — signed the Treaty of New Echota, by which the Cherokees agreed to give up their remaining lands in Georgia and emigrate to lands west of the Mississippi, today the 14 counties in the northeastern corner of Oklahoma.<sup>1</sup> The Principal Chief at that time, John Ross, opposed the treaty, and the Ridge family had no authority to sign it. Mankiller portrays the Ridges as traitors and Ross as a hero; the reality is somewhat more complex. The issue is not the U.S. Government's Indian removal policy, which was one of the greatest

crimes ever perpetrated in the history of the United States. The controversy centered over how the Cherokees should respond to a seemingly hopeless situation, and the debate was a rich and serious one, with strong arguments on all sides.<sup>2</sup>

The principal division within the Cherokee nation was based on land ownership — between a predominantly mixed-blood class of private landowners, most of whom were also slaveowners, and full-bloods who continued to hold land in common and follow more traditional ways. The Ridge faction clearly represented the interest of the wealthy landowners. The more traditional-minded full-bloods followed Ross; however, Ross himself was a landowner, a slaveholder, and seven-eighths white. Consequently, he vacillated between representing the interests of his constituency and representing the interests of his own class.

Ridge had always opposed giving up the Nation's lands in the Appalachians and moving west, but the election of the notorious Indian-hater Andrew Jackson as president convinced him that there was no possible way of defeating the white onslaught. He concluded that the Cherokees' only hope was to accept the Removal, minimize the loss of life, and make a fresh start in the West. Of course, this was the best course for rich planters like himself. For the majority, however, the choice was not so clear.

Ross opposed the Removal on any terms, but he offered no alternative to it. He continued to assure his followers that they could hold out, but when Jackson's successor Martin Van Buren sent in the troops to enforce the Removal, there was no hope of resistance. The unprepared Cherokees were forced from their homes in the dead of winter in what can best be compared to a tsarist pogrom. Twenty-five percent of the tribe died on that forced march; the toll was especially high on children. The Trail of Tears aroused public condemnation even at that time, and the Whig Party used it as a campaign issue in its successful presidential campaign in 1840.

There was, however, a third faction, which Mankiller acknowledges but to which she devotes little attention. This group is known as the "Old Settlers," Cherokees who decided even before Jackson became president that it was hopeless to try to coexist with the whites, that in order to preserve their language, traditions, and culture, it was necessary to move west voluntarily. Their leader was the remarkable Sequoyah, the inventor of the Cherokee script — eighty-five symbols representing each syllable of the Cherokee language. Sequoyah himself emigrated to

*Continued on page 35*

1. Four other tribes, the Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles, were also forced from their ancestral lands at this time, and were given other areas in present-day Oklahoma for settlement.

2. For further reading on this subject see John Ehle's *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation*, New York: Doubleday, 1988.



# Does Leninism Equal Sectarianism?

by Mary Scully

*The following is the second part of a two-part article, continued from last month's issue. In the first part, there was a typographical error, which needs to be corrected: the name "Angeles" should have been Engels.*

## The Crisis of Leadership

Le Blanc's perspective, in order to be persuasive, has to ignore some awfully formidable facts. For one thing, the capitalist class is a powerful and well-organized enemy with a deliberate plan of action and enormous resources at its disposal to accomplish it; they at no point and on no question take the equilibrium of the working class for granted. Right now they are organizing on an international scale and are engaged in a vicious offensive against the working class. There is nothing our class enemy would like better than to see the revolutionary movement disperse and retreat "until the upsurge" happens. That dispersal will not prevent eruptions in the spontaneous movement of the class, but it will leave it without political leadership, or more precisely, it will leave it to the leadership of the class collaborationists.

Another troubling reality that Le Blanc overlooks is that the working class needs its own organization and plan of action to answer the capitalist offensive. When it comes to identifying their problems, American workers are way ahead of anybody else. They have lots to say about the threat of unemployment, the increase in temporary and part-time workers, the New Management Techniques and union-busting, NAFTA, "globalization," racial and sexual oppression. American workers are facing catastrophe, and they want explanations and solutions for the problems that confront them. They, better than anyone else, know they need to formulate a plan of action: thus they grasp, better than anyone else, that they have a crisis of leadership.

There have been significant class battles involving hundreds of thousands of workers, from PATCO, to Hormel, the airlines, the railroads, Caterpillar, the mineworkers, nurses, teachers, newspaper workers, farm workers. In all of these battles, despite the willingness of workers to risk everything, the class-collaborationist union leadership has demonstrated its treachery by its incapacity and unwillingness to lead these strikes to a successful conclusion by mobilizing the ranks of labor. What the working class needs is a new leadership and of this they are fully aware. Every activist in the trade-union movement in every part of the country has heard hundreds of workers rail against "corporate greed" and repeat in almost formulaic fashion, "What the unions should have done when Reagan was trying to bust PATCO was to call every union member in the country out on strike." In these concise words, they express at once their understanding of the need for labor solidarity, the latent and untapped power of organized labor, and the bankruptcy of the present trade-union leadership.

Capitalist politicians have long since demonstrated their political corruption and bankruptcy to American workers: from Watergate to Iranagate to Contragate, to the S&L scandals, the Clarence Thomas hearings, and the bipartisan support for NAFTA. The internal and political corruption of the AFL-CIO fat cats galls most American organized workers; these officials are viewed on the shop floor as "sleeping with the enemy." To the workers' demand for a plan of action to counter the capitalist offensive, the AFL-CIO responds with its pathetic, not to mention racist and class-collaborationist, campaign to "Buy American" along with its advice to "write your congressman."

So how can American workers formulate a plan of battle? Antagonisms and conflict between the different layers of the class mean that a new leadership cannot be immediately improvised but must earn its place. Schooled as workers are in capitalist ideology and class experience, they have come to believe that "power corrupts." So who can they turn to, who can they trust to elaborate a plan of action and to defend their best interests without compromise? Isn't that the role of revolutionists?

## Culture and the Working Class

Although extremely heterogeneous, socially and politically, the American working class is not all doped up on consumer goods, as Le Blanc offensively suggests, but it is stressed out and overworked. When Le Blanc says, "Many working-class consumers appear to maintain a critical mind and a sense of humor," he only demonstrates the folly of impressionism. They're critical all right, but they are not in a light-hearted mood. They are extremely testy, beleaguered, ill-tempered, volatile, and afraid.

When Le Blanc addresses the cultural aspects of working-class life he focuses on sports, music, sneakers, and home decorating, which in importance does not distinguish itself from the preoccupations of hunting and gathering societies. Le Blanc's intention is to demonstrate that American workers are spoiled, "turned into passive sheep by a mass commodity culture." Conspicuous consumption is a problem in American life: one only has to watch "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" on TV to see the extravagance. To speak of such a problem within the working class, however, is to be out of touch with economic realities.

Let us be clear: Marxists have never been opposed to workers enjoying material wealth; in fact, we want it in abundance, but we want it for everyone. Let us be frank: the relative prosperity of American workers has certainly been attained at the expense of workers in the unde-

veloped countries. But let us also be rooted in economic reality: at the highest levels of the working class today, in order to afford refrigerators, color TVs, VCRs, and microwave ovens, workers must forego the eight-hour day and the five-day week. Excessive overtime and two-wage-earner families are required. For the average working-class family one-half a week's pay is for food, and the other half is for mortgage or rent. Is that consumerism? Cultural events like concerts or ballgames cost at least half a week's pay; if the refrigerator breaks down it may cost a whole week's pay. Is that consumerism? At the lower levels of the working class today, meaning its majority, i.e., the underpaid and underemployed who are mostly young, Black, and women workers with children, ballgames are out of the question, let alone microwave ovens or a "culture" of consumerism. So which layer of the working class is Le Blanc talking about?

Workers watch "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous": they see full well the material resources this society has which are unavailable to them. What bothers them, however, is not reduced access to consumer goods, but the fact that amidst all this wealth, public education is being undermined, that their kids cannot even consider college without substantial scholarships, that there are inadequate medical and social services for their elderly, that the majority of them have no health care at all, that there is no decent or affordable child care available, that there are no jobs for their kids.

The cultural changes of political significance within the working class pertain not to a "culture" of consumerism but to the impact of the social movements and the economic crisis. The ideas of the feminist movement in conjunction with the necessity of women working has not just legitimized the demands of women's equality (like equal pay and child care) but has generalized them to demands of the class as a whole. Marriage, the family, sexuality, and leisure time have all been affected by this cultural change. The impact of the Civil Rights Movement eliminated "Jim Crow" laws in the South but by no means ended racial oppression. By exploiting working-class racism and ignorance about the actual gains of the Civil Rights Movement, the capitalist propaganda arsenal has employed the so-called "War on Drugs" to camouflage what is really a war of violence against Black youth and against civil liberties. This has exacerbated racial tensions within the working class. Nevertheless, racism has been discredited ideologically in wider layers of the class than ever before.

The increased hours of work necessary to maintain families has led to considerably re-



duced leisure time and a very stressed-out workforce, increasing family violence, and mass addiction problems. The environmental movement has generated new health awareness as well as greater concern about health and safety on the job. These are only some of the cultural and contradictory changes which affect workers and which need to be politically assessed.

The conditions of the present crisis are creating new opportunities for revolutionists precisely because they are creating the greatest difficulties for the reformists. These phony leaders are losing the confidence of the working class because their plan of action, steadfastly opposed to class struggle, has not improved the condition of our class but has worsened it. The working class has usually dealt with its corrupt leaders by bouncing them out of union office, but that is only possible on the local level because of the lack of democracy in the unions. Today, more and more workers understand that the corruption goes all the way to the top. Certainly millions of American workers watched the AFL-CIO officials huff and puff against NAFTA for the TV cameras; many surely drew comparison with the PATCO fiasco and wondered why, once again, on such a life-and-death question as NAFTA, the ranks of labor were not mobilized to oppose it.

It is true that fear, pessimism, and opportunist moods prevail in large sections of the class. However, there is also developing within the trade-union movement a rebelliousness against the official leadership as well as against capitalist politicians and linked to this a steadily growing tendency in favor of a labor party. The large number of militant strikes indicate the potential for the emergence of a "class-struggle left wing." To even suggest at this point that revolutionists withdraw from this struggle in an organized way is to propose that we abandon the working class to the class-collaborationist schemes of the reformists against the vicious offensive of capitalism.

### **Class Consciousness**

The revolutionary movement has frequently debated the question of how the working class develops class consciousness. There have been different schools of thought on the question. One line of thinking, that of Marxists, holds that workers cannot draw revolutionary socialist conclusions from their working-class conditions. Dialectical materialism is not the logical philosophical conclusion of social, political, and economic misery. Religion and addiction represent only a few of the philosophical options. That does not mean that workers cannot develop advanced ideas. They can and do have informed and profound insights on all sorts of questions, cultural, political, scientific. They can be antiwar, for women's rights, antiracist, and even anticapitalist. They can and do recognize the class nature of society and even the need for some kind of workers' revolution, but that recognition does not in the least provide the answers for how to accomplish it, the nature of

it, or the decisive role of the working class in transforming society.

Scientific socialism, which alone elaborates the theory of socialist revolution and the role of the working class, is not the product of common sense or perspicacity (which the working class has in abundance) especially since it is the method of empiricism that is drummed into workers' heads through every agency and channel of capitalist rule. Complex social, political, and economic phenomena like the nature of fascism, the nature of imperialism, the war in Bosnia, the Gulf War, the economic crisis, require the application of Marxism.

Overcoming the philosophical programming of empiricism and acquiring and applying the science of dialectical materialism to these phenomena is a process of extreme difficulty, not only for individuals but for the revolutionary movement as a whole. The ideological history and ferment of the Marxist movement makes that crystal clear. The formidable opposition and hold of capitalist ideology is a factor of the greatest importance.

Another line of reasoning maintains that class consciousness is a systematically growing by-product of the class struggle, i.e., that misery leads workers spontaneously to revolutionary conclusions. The preponderance of historical and contemporary evidence shows otherwise; not only are workers not made more combative by misery, but they become demoralized and begin seeking the easy way out through opportunism, reformism, and capitulation. Unfortunately, however, this view is the one held by Le Blanc, and he lays it out with admirable frankness.

He argues that class consciousness results from "an accumulation of struggles." He elaborates in litany form:

An accumulation of trade union struggles, an accumulation of social movement struggles, an accumulation of coalition efforts, an accumulation of creative cultural efforts will be a necessary precondition. Also essential will be those developments which cannot be planned beforehand — economic, social, and political crises that generate mass action among large numbers of workers, opening up new possibilities. When such things come together some variant of a mass working-class party can be brought into being.

Not only have all these preconditions been abundantly met so that we should be able to proceed with the task of rebuilding a Leninist party, not only can we be certain of more crises, but Le Blanc reveals here a misunderstanding of class dynamics and the development of class consciousness that simply staggers the mind. There can be no more undialectical grasp of the nature of class consciousness and no clearer exposition of the method of empiricism. Marxism is a scientific philosophy, not an experiential one. There are, after all, experiences and experiences. Fascism, war, economic depression, and mass unemployment are experiences, too, but ones which we concentrate all of our theoretical and tactical energies to averting!

The "accumulations" concept of Le Blanc has a disconcerting similarity in embryo to the

gradualist concepts of Eduard Bernstein. Le Blanc needs to show us how it distinguishes itself from the theoretical foundations of revisionism. If class consciousness did develop in the linear fashion that Le Blanc describes, his conclusions would be absolutely correct: there would be no need for a revolutionary party, its program, or its leadership. But class consciousness is not of such a static and mechanistic nature. The working class is more complicated than that. There is ideological, social, and cultural stratification within the working class, which creates antagonisms and conflict; there is the pressure of external forces like war and revolution, and there is the ever-vigilant capitalist ideological arsenal, along with the capitalist forces of repression. Underlying all of this ideological ferment, of course, is the class struggle itself, which, like nature, is "bred in tooth and claw."

### **Marxism vs. Revolutionary Ecumenism**

"The ruling ideology of an era is the ideology of its ruling class." That means the working class is indoctrinated and imbued with capitalist ideology. But the capitalist class takes no chances; it uses all of its enormous resources to maintain its philosophical and political hold, including the media, think tanks, schools, religion, the police, courts, law, trade-union officials, racial and sexual segregation, spies, and corruption. To the stinking mendacity of all this the revolutionary movement must respond with the scientific analysis of Marxism and our conception of the class struggle between labor and capital.

Wresting the masses from the hold of capitalist ideas is a complex, complicated, and protracted process, requiring not just experience in struggle by the working class but also theoretical and tactical combat with other ideological currents — who represent other class forces — contesting for leadership. In the interests of the unity of the class we are willing to cease fratricidal struggle, but sometimes criticism of these political tendencies is necessary to build that unity. We do not want to break with the broader movement. On the contrary, that's why we devised the united front tactic. That tactic means that we will collaborate with anyone, regardless of our differences, to advance the struggle of the working class. But that doesn't mean we are willing to degrade Marxism theoretically by subordinating it to the needs of some phony and sentimental harmony within the "broader" revolutionary movement. No such harmony exists between the two opposing classes nor certainly in the trade unions or social movements where activists must combat class collaboration on a daily basis. So why should we demand it in the socialist movement? And why should we liquidate our program and our party to accomplish it?

We cannot, in the interests of good relations, eliminate theoretical combat with other tendencies within the movement unless we first eliminate the antagonisms between the classes and between the different layers of the class, say,

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# Continued U.S. Intervention in a Post-Cold War World

*Imperial Alibis: Rationalizing U.S. Intervention after the Cold War*, by Stephen Ross-kamm Shalom. Boston: South End Press, 1993. Paper. \$16.00

Reviewed by Michael Livingston

In *Imperial Alibis* Stephen Shalom examines the rhetoric politicians use to justify intervention. By looking at the history of U.S. intervention, analyzing the roots of U.S. foreign policy, and contrasting the reality of intervention with the rhetoric of intervention, Shalom exposes the imperialist alibis that are used to manipulate and deceive the American people, including large sections of the peace and anti-intervention movements. *Imperial Alibis* is logical and clear. Shalom has filled the book with useful analogies and arguments that can help activists and nonactivists alike understand U.S. intervention.

After a short introduction, the first chapter outlines the sources of U.S. foreign policy. Shalom starts from a class analysis: "It should not be very controversial to assert that a country's foreign policy reflects the interests of those who control the country's political system" (p. 5). Shalom shows how American foreign policy is rooted in capitalism, racism, and sexism. A particular strength of the first chapter is that it takes up and destroys a number of arguments against the imperialist thesis. The imperialist thesis, the idea that American foreign policy and the policy of other core capitalist countries is driven by the needs of monopoly capital, is often attacked by mainstream intellectuals. As Shalom shows, those attacks are either illogical, not supported by the facts, or both.

Perhaps the only weakness in this chapter (and in the book as a whole) is Shalom's failure to examine the relationship between monopoly capital on the one hand and racism and sexism on the other. Such an examination would probably have required a much longer book, and one not as clearly focused on the domestic rhetoric of intervention.

In the second chapter Shalom analyzes the rationale for U.S. intervention in the post-World War II period — the Soviet threat. Through an analysis of the historical record, Shalom shows that the Soviet threat was always pretext, never the real reason, for U.S. policy. This pretext was based on exaggeration and misrepresentation of the Soviet Union and served to (1) preserve the domestic status quo against pressure for social change; (2) build support for greater military spending; (3) pressure U.S. allies into accepting U.S. leadership; and (4) rationalize U.S. intervention in the Third World to preserve the international capitalist order. The Soviet threat served the U.S. ruling class (and the ruling

classes of other capitalist countries) well, but with the demise of the Soviet Union, Shalom says, "Other threats need to be invented if the American people are going to be duped into continued funding of the U.S. war machine and support for foreign interventions" (p. 37).

Chapters 3 through 8 analyze six of these invented threats or alibis, to use Shalom's apt phrase, in detail. In all cases, Shalom uses the same method. He demonstrates, through an analysis of specific cases, the sordid reality behind the hypocritically used alibi. In practice, American rulers will often use several of these alibis together. With the demise of the Soviet threat as the most serviceable alibi, Shalom feels that we will see greater and greater use of these other alibis.

What are these other alibis? They are: (1) stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction; (2) protecting resources; (3) protecting Americans abroad; (4) responding to humanitarian crises; (5) combating terrorism; and (6) fighting drugs. Shalom devotes a chapter to each. The only alibis he does not survey directly are the need to uphold international law and (one I heard for the first time during the Persian Gulf War) the need to stop eco-terrorism.

Chapter Three examines the first of these alibis, stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Shalom treats the spread of weapons of mass destruction as a serious problem and analyzes its root causes. One of the most important of these root causes is the actions and policies of the U.S. government, as well as the actions and policies of other major capitalist powers. Shalom examines U.S. support of the Shah of Iran, U.S. support to both Iran and Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, U.S. support of Israel's nuclear weapons program, and U.S. production, use, and sale of chemical and conventional weapons. While the U.S. exaggerated the threat posed by Iraq during the Persian Gulf War, there is a real problem caused by a global proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. is a primary cause of this proliferation, and expecting the Pentagon to stop this proliferation is like asking the fox to guard the chicken coop.

In Chapter Four Shalom analyzes an alibi that we heard used during the Persian Gulf War: protecting resources. Through an historical analysis of U.S. policy in the Middle East, where this alibi is most often used, Shalom shows that it is not the availability of oil, nor the cost to the consumer, but who controls it, that is, who can profit from it, that determines policy. "The struggle for oil," Shalom writes, "is not a struggle to ensure

that American cars and factories have adequate supplies of oil so that they won't be forced to grind to a halt. It is a struggle to see who is going to be able to use this crucial resource for its own economic advantage" (p. 87).

Chapter Five contains case studies of U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic and Grenada, and the *Mayagüez* incident. These case studies show the hypocrisy of claims that U.S. intervention was needed to save American lives. "[In] each case Americans were said to be in danger, but the dangers were concocted. In each case, American soldiers and a larger number of Dominicans, Cambodians, Grenadians, and Cubans died, not to save U.S. nationals who would have been safer without U.S. intervention, but so that Washington might make clear that it ruled much of the world and that it was prepared to engage in paroxysms of violence to enforce its will" (p. 108). At the same time, as Shalom points out, there are numerous cases of American lives being threatened, or of Americans being killed, where the U.S. does nothing, or indeed, where the U.S. aids and abets the killing of its own citizens. We have only to recall the killing of the four U.S. nuns in El Salvador to know the level of hypocrisy.

Chapter Six provides a critique of another alibi for intervention that we have been hearing a lot about lately — the need to respond to humanitarian crises. Starting from a class perspective, Shalom argues that nation-states are not motivated by humanitarian concerns; they intervene because of the material interests of their ruling classes in ways that rarely, if ever, serve humanitarian ends. "Indeed," Shalom writes, "there is the danger that if the doctrine of humanitarian intervention becomes widely adopted there would be no end to wars and their attendant human misery" (p. 111).

He supports his argument by examining a number of cases where the intervention had been justified on humanitarian grounds by politicians or historians. He focuses much of his attention on five hard cases — instances that appear to have been clearly justified on humanitarian grounds. These five hard cases are the Holocaust, Biafra, Bangladesh, Burundi, and Cambodia. In each case he shows convincingly that the U.S. did little or nothing to stop human misery. In fact, in many cases the U.S. pursuit of imperialist ends magnified the human toll.

Shalom's analysis of the Holocaust illustrates his approach. He argues that while the Allied victory over Germany did stop the Holocaust, the U.S. did virtually nothing to save the Jewish people either before or during the war. Aware of what was happening early on, the U.S. did not open its immigration quotas to allow in more Jews before or during the war; the U.S. did not pressure other countries to open their borders, and it did not bomb the death camps (even though it would have been very easy to do so). The U.S. could have saved millions of Jews, and it did nothing. The U.S. did end the Holocaust by defeating



Germany, but the war against Germany was in no way motivated by a desire to stop genocide.

Shalom concludes by cautioning us about the danger of accepting the humanitarian aid alibi:

[When] a country [meaning the U.S.] has a record of not protesting mass murder (as in Biafra, Bangladesh, and Burundi), of not taking simple steps that might have saved millions (such as opening immigration quotas during the Holocaust or threatening to cut off coffee purchases from Burundi), of actually cooperating with mass murderers (as in Cambodia), and of supporting mass murderers (as in Indonesia, East Timor, and Guatemala) then one has to be very wary when that country tries to justify intervention on humanitarian grounds [p. 138].

I would go further than Shalom, given the U.S. record. We should not just be wary, we should go ballistic.

Chapter Seven uses the case of Libyan terrorism to analyze another of the alibis — the need to stop international terrorism. Libya illustrates a general process of “demonization,” a process Shalom understands well. When an enemy is needed for domestic political reasons or to justify intervention, “Washington can arbitrarily declare certain nations to be engaged in international terrorism, though their behavior may not be significantly different from the behavior of many other nations, including close allies or even the United States itself” (p. 139). Shalom lays out the characteristics of a country that make it a convenient target for this process of demonization: the country must be weak militarily; the citizens must be people of color, so that the claim of terrorism will be supported by the racism endemic to our society, and the country must occasionally use terrorism. The real level of terrorism is not important, says Shalom, since the process of demonization can convert a country that occasionally uses terror into a world-class terrorist. In this chapter Shalom shows how hypocritical this process is and how, in the case of Libya, the crimes of the demonizer far exceed those of the demon.

Finally, Chapter Eight looks at a relatively new imperial alibi — the need to fight the drug epidemic. The War on Drugs, both at home and abroad, is rooted in hypocrisy. This hypocrisy includes U.S. involvement in the drug trade and support for drug dealers, as well as support of harmful drugs such as tobacco, pesticides, and infant formula that are exported from the U.S. to the rest of the world. The War on Drugs has proven to be totally ineffectual in dealing with the drug problems in this country, but it has the advan-

tage of appearing to do something while at the same time permitting the U.S. ruling class to accomplish several other aims.

Internationally, these aims include safeguarding the Pentagon’s budget (and thus its ability to intervene), justifying direct intervention, as in the case of Panama, or indirect intervention, as in the case of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. While Shalom does not discuss the domestic aims of the war on drugs, I would argue that these aims include increasing the repressive power of the police and eroding democratic rights, especially those of the working class and people of color.

The effectiveness of this alibi stems in part from the public’s justified concern over drug abuse and drug-related crimes, poverty, and alienation. Shalom concludes this chapter by pointing out that the war on drugs will not solve these root problems. They can be solved when “our national priority becomes the rebuilding of our cities, our hospitals, and the very lives of our people” (p. 191). In other words, never under capitalism.

We should note in passing that the Clinton administration has not substantially altered the Bush drug policy. While the current Democratic administration has downplayed the rhetoric, as did the Reagan administration at certain points, it has not abandoned the policy. The drug war alibi remains available to the ruling class propagandists, and as long as the real drug crisis eats away at America, it will continue to resonate with large sections of the American public.

*Imperial Alibis* ends with a short conclusion in which Shalom outlines what he thinks, based on his analysis, the likely contours of U.S. intervention will be in the future. First, Shalom notes that while the collapse of the USSR and the Eastern Bloc countries was dramatic, it had little impact on the roots of U.S. foreign policy, a policy still shaped by monopoly capital and the racist and sexist ideologies of the capitalist class. The dramatically changed international situation will alter the pattern of intervention, he argues. The USSR, while not a revolutionary force, did hold U.S. intervention in some kind of check. The capitalists were reluctant to directly confront the USSR. Similarly, the Soviet Union (or its allies, such as Cuba) did provide support to indigenous revolutionary movements.

With the demise of the Soviet system, an important brake on imperialist intervention has been removed, while at the same time an important source of support for revolutionary movements has disappeared. After the collapse of the USSR and because of shared interests, many of the capitalist countries will

intervene under the guise of collective action. But because of increasing intercapitalist rivalry we should also expect different imperialist powers to support different sides in various local wars (as we have already seen in the former Yugoslavia and to a lesser extent in Somalia). Finally, Shalom expects the UN, currently dominated by the U.S., to come under pressure from other capitalist powers, chiefly Japan and Germany. This pressure could lead to a restructuring of the UN to reflect current realities of imperialist rivalry. Taken together, we cannot and should not expect any diminution of imperialist intervention. The pattern of intervention may change, and certainly the alibis used to justify that intervention to the working classes of the core capitalist countries will change, but imperialist intervention will not.

Shalom ends with a clear moral call for continued action against intervention.

The focus on domestic issues in the U.S. presidential campaign may suggest that foreign policy isn’t that important any more, that U.S. intervention no longer matters very much. But U.S. intervention aims to maintain the global status quo, a status quo that consigns much of the Earth’s population, mostly people of color, to poverty and misery....

This is suffering on a massive scale. And it is perpetuated by the interventions on behalf of the status quo on the part of the United States and other rich nations. An end to these interventions will not suddenly eliminate global poverty. But it would create a space within which popular movements throughout the world could confront the systemic roots of that poverty.

Stopping U.S. interventionism thus constitutes a continuing moral imperative for those in the United States concerned with peace and social justice. The U.S. government will try to build public support for its interventionist policies by claiming it is defending vital resources, human rights, or Americans in distress, or preventing weapons proliferation, terrorism, or drug-trafficking. But...these are just covers for policies motivated by the dynamics of U.S. capitalism and a racist, sexist, and heterosexist ideology [pp. 196–197].

In the wake of the events in Central America, the war in the Persian Gulf, and imperialist interventions in the former Yugoslavia and in Somalia, the outlines of the New World Order are clear. We have entered a time of intensified imperialist rape, pillage, and plunder of our planet. To fight these crimes effectively we need the clear analysis and presentation found in *Imperial Alibis*. Buy it; read it, but, most of all, use it. □

December 7, 1993



# Victor Serge on the Rise and Fall of the Russian Revolution

*Year One of the Russian Revolution* by Victor Serge, translated and edited by Peter Sedgwick with a new preface by Paul Foot (Bookmarks, 1992; \$24.95), and *The Case of Comrade Tulayev* by Victor Serge, introduction by Gareth Jenkins (Bookmarks, 1993; \$17.95). Available from Bookmarks, P.O. Box 16085, Chicago, IL 60616. (Please add \$1.50 postage for each book ordered.)

Reviewed by Phil Gasper

The past few years have witnessed a welcome revival of interest in the life and works of the international revolutionary activist and intellectual Victor Serge. Radical magazines and journals have published a number of articles dealing with Serge,<sup>1</sup> there has been at least one full-length academic study,<sup>2</sup> and now Bookmarks has republished two of Serge's major works, both long out of print and difficult to obtain in English.

Why this renewed attention to Serge's contributions to the revolutionary tradition? In large part it is probably due to the fact that December 1990 marked the centenary of Serge's birth, providing an opportunity for Serge aficionados to remind us of the important contributions made by this great, but frequently forgotten, revolutionary. But I like to think, too, that following the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Serge's work has acquired a fresh relevance for all those who continue to fight for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist society and for the construction of a new social order based on equality, democracy, freedom, and the rational use of economic resources — in other words, for genuine socialism.

From the 1920s on, Serge was an uncompromising opponent of Stalin's counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, arguing both that the triumph of Stalinism was not an inevitable outcome of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and that its victory represented the repudiation and reversal of the ideals and achievements of that revolution. Moreover, even in the mid-1930s, writing in the period he called "Midnight in the Century" — a time when the international workers' movement and the genuine Marxist tradition had been all but destroyed by fascism and Stalinism — Serge, like Trotsky, retained an unshakable belief in the revolutionary potential of the working class and looked forward to the day when the

Stalinist regime would disintegrate as a consequence of its own internal contradictions. Now that that day has come, Serge's vision of revolutionary, libertarian socialism and his insights into why that vision failed to take permanent root in the years following the Russian revolution are worth re-examining for their inspiration and lessons.

Serge was born Victor Kibalchich 103 years ago in Brussels. His parents were exiled Russian émigrés who had been active in the Narodnik movement, and Serge, who apprenticed as a printer, was soon attracted to revolutionary politics himself. He became active in the anarcho-syndicalist movement and in 1911 was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment after refusing to inform on a group of anarchist bank robbers in Paris. Serge was one of those anarchists who, as Trotsky was later to characterize them, "not only wish to fight against the bourgeoisie but who...really want to tear its head off."<sup>3</sup> The main issue separating these anarchists from Marxism concerned the necessity of building a fighting, revolutionary party, but many of them, including Serge, were quickly won over on this question by the events of the Russian revolution itself.

Serge became an immediate supporter of the revolution as a blow for human liberation and against the imperialist carnage of the First World War. For his troubles, Serge was imprisoned for 18 months in a French concentration camp as a Bolshevik sympathizer. On his release, he made his way to Russia, arriving in early 1919. He quickly became a member of the Bolshevik party and a central figure in the newly-formed Communist International, traveling widely in its service and editing its journal.

Serge was never an "orthodox" Bolshevik — indeed, in the days before Stalin's revisions of history, there was no such thing as "orthodox Bolshevism." Serge's Marxism was deeply humanistic and libertarian. For that reason, it is all the more significant that in *Year One of the Russian Revolution* (YORR) — written in the late 1920s and covering the period just prior to his own arrival in the country — Serge offers an uncompromising defense of Bolshevik policies in the early days of the revolution, including the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly (an event which, he comments, "passed almost unnoticed" [YORR, p. 135] in Russia itself) and the decision to bring large sectors of the economy under state control.

The latter, Serge points out, was very much a choice dictated by the circumstances in which the Bolsheviks found themselves. In November 1917 the Bolshevik government passed a decree for workers' control in industry which "legalized the intervention of workers in the management of factories" and abolished commercial secrets. Banks and credit institutions were nationalized, but the "leaders of the revolution had no further plans at this stage" (YORR, p. 135). As late as April 1918 they were "envisaging the formation of mixed companies which would have been floated jointly by the state and by Russian and foreign capital."

This "rational form of progress towards socialism," however, soon became impossible. Opposition came initially from Russian capitalists, "who were still confident in their own strength and convinced that it was impossible for the proletariat to keep power. The innumerable economic conflicts which had gone on before October [1917] now multiplied, and indeed became more serious as the combativity of the contestants was everywhere greater. The initiatives for acts of expropriation, undertaken as necessities of struggle rather than according to any design for socialism, came from the masses rather than from the government" (YORR, p. 136; emphasis added). Just as the power of the Russian bourgeoisie was being broken, the revolutionary government faced an even more serious threat in the shape of foreign intervention. This, finally, made large-scale nationalization an urgent priority.

Serge also defends the Bolsheviks against criticisms that they sought to establish an undemocratic, one-party state. On the contrary, while implacably opposed to sharing power with those "socialists" who were opponents of the October revolution and who supported the kind of sham "constitutionalism" that in practice was little more than a cover for counterrevolution, the Bolsheviks were eager to share power with anyone willing to rally to the revolution's defense. The Mensheviks and Right Socialist Revolutionaries (SR's) refused. The Left SR's were invited to participate in the government. After some hesitation they accepted and became part of the Soviet government until the summer of 1918, when a large number of them broke with the Bolsheviks and organized an uprising against them. The Bolsheviks were motivated not only by a commitment to working-class democracy but, as Serge

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1. See, for example, J. Hoberman, "Who Is Victor Serge? (And Why Do We Have to Ask?)," [Village] Voice Literary Supplement, No. 30, November 1984.
2. Bill Marshall, *Victor Serge: The Uses of Dissent* (London: Berg, 1992; distributed in the U.S. by St. Martin's Press). (Marshall's book is useful but extremely expensive — the copy I read still had its British price tag of £45! Borrow it from a library.) Richard Greeman is also working on a biography of Serge.
3. *The First Five Years of the Communist International* (New York: Monad, 1972), Vol. 1, p. 98.



points out, by some very practical considerations as well.

To govern alone was, in effect, to assume, undivided, all the overwhelming responsibilities of the moment, and to leave open to rivals, to hidden opponents, and to waverers, the advantageous role of the opposition. It was a difficult situation for a party which had been denounced for months unanimously by the bourgeois press as a nest of enemy agents and whose leaders [had] high treason charges hanging over their heads...

Where Serge is critical of Bolshevik policies in the early days of the revolution it is not for being overly ruthless but, rather, for their frequent lack of decisiveness, particularly in dealing with open enemies of the revolution. Army officers who massacred Red workers at the Kremlin in early November 1917, for example, were allowed to keep their sidearms and to walk free! "Foolish clemency!" writes Serge. "These very Junkers, these officers, these students, these socialists of counter-revolution, dispersed themselves throughout the length and breadth of Russia, and there organized the civil war" (YORR, p. 76). At about the same time, General Krasnov led an abortive march on Petrograd. Following his capture "[t]he revolution made the mistake of showing magnanimity to the leader of the Cossack attack. He should have been shot on the spot. At the end of a few days he recovered his liberty, after giving his word of honor never to take up arms again against the revolution. But what value can promises of honor have towards enemies of a fatherland and property? He was to go off to put the Don region to fire and sword" (YORR, p. 105). Elsewhere he notes that "[a]t the outset of the revolution, the greatest humanity lies in the utmost rigor; magnanimity costs too much" (YORR, p. 388, n.11).

Serge arrived in Russia at a time when the revolution itself hung in the balance. In 1917, "the policy of the Soviet authority consisted principally in awakening, stimulating, sometimes guiding, but more usually simply endorsing the initiative of the masses" (YORR, p. 92). By 1919, such initiative was barely possible, as the workers' state found itself devastated by the consequences of economic backwardness, imperialist intervention and blockade, and civil war. In such circumstances it was easy to blame the disintegration of workers' power on "Bolshevik authoritarianism," rather than on the objective circumstances in which the revolution found itself. Serge, as we have seen, did not

make this mistake. He recognized that, in however distorted a form, the early Soviet state genuinely represented the interests of the international workers' movement and thus the future of humanity, and he sided wholeheartedly with it. In doing so, however, Serge did not abandon the critical intellect which had led him to revolutionary socialism in the first place. At one point in *Year One*, Serge declares:

The patriotism of the British expresses itself eloquently in the powerful expression "My country right or wrong." The Bolshevik mentality implies a similar patriotism, one of inestimable value in the class war, a patriotism of class and party: better to be wrong with the party of the proletariat than right against it. There is no greater revolutionary wisdom than this" (YORR, pp. 98-99).

Yet by the time he wrote these words, Serge had already rejected them in practice<sup>4</sup> by siding with Trotsky's Left Opposition to oppose the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy.<sup>5</sup>

By 1928 Serge's active political life in the Soviet Union had come to an end, and he made a decision to devote himself to chronicling the successes and failures of the Russian experiment. *Year One* was the first result of his efforts. Serge was arrested by the regime in 1933 and exiled to Central Asia. There is little doubt that he would have perished in the purges that were just beginning had it not been for an international defense campaign launched on his behalf by writers in France. He was released from the Soviet Union in 1936 and spent the rest of his life living close to poverty in France and then Mexico, where he died in 1947.

Despite the fact that Serge was denied most opportunities to publish (his brand of revolutionary politics was anathema to both the established publishing houses and journals and the Stalinist left), Serge maintained a steady literary output until his death, celebrating the achievements of the Russian Revolution and attempting to expose the realities of Stalin's counterrevolution. The manuscript of Serge's sequel to *Year One* — titled, unsurprisingly enough, *Year Two of the Russian Revolution* — was confiscated (along with several other works) when he was expelled from the Soviet Union, but we still have his works chronicling the degeneration of the revolution — notably *From Lenin to Stalin* and *Russia: Twenty Years After*.

Perhaps Serge's greatest achievement in the last twenty years of his life was not purely political or historical, however, but literary.

Already by the time he left Russia, Serge had published several novels in the West dealing with the revolutionary upturn that had culminated with the Russian revolution (*Men in Prison*, *Birth of Our Power*, *Conquered City*). In the late 1930s and 1940s he wrote a second set of novels that explore the revolution's decline. Together, Serge's fictional writings constitute, in my opinion, the greatest works of revolutionary literature in the present century.

*The Case of Comrade Tulayev* is perhaps the finest of Serge's novels.<sup>6</sup> The book deals with the purge trials that were used by Stalin in the 1930s to wipe out the generation of revolutionaries that had made the Russian revolution and to consolidate his counter-revolution. Tulayev is a high-ranking Stalinist official who meets his death by an assassin's bullet on a winter's night in 1938. Tulayev's murder is loosely based on the real-life assassination of Kirov in 1934. Although the killing is a random act, a complex conspiracy is invented which eventually sucks down not only old Bolsheviks but also members of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Serge explores the psychology of accused and accusers alike, shedding light on why so many of Stalin's opponents confessed to being fascist agents, saboteurs, or enemies of the people. I know of no work — fiction or nonfiction — which better evokes the feel of Stalin's Russia or which better portrays the full tragedy of Stalinism without succumbing to cynicism or despair.

Victor Serge is one of the great figures of the revolutionary Marxist tradition. Socialists unfamiliar with his writings will find much awaiting them in *Year One of the Russian Revolution*, *The Case of Comrade Tulayev*, and Serge's other works. I leave the last word to Serge himself in the shape of the testament he composed a few years before his death:

I have undergone a little over ten years of various forms of captivity, agitated in seven countries, and written 20 books. I own nothing. On several occasions a press with a vast circulation has thrown filth at me because I spoke the truth. Behind us lies a victorious revolution gone astray, several abortive attempts at revolution, and massacres in so great a number as to inspire a certain dizziness. And to think that it is not over yet. Let me be done with this digression; those were the only roads possible for us. I have more confidence in mankind and in the future than ever before. □

4. In his fine autobiography, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (London: Writers & Readers, 1984), written some years later, Serge rejected this judgment in theory as well.  
5. It must be admitted that the Left Opposition was hampered in its efforts by its failure to fully recognize that the Bolshevik party of the mid-1920s was no longer the revolutionary workers' party of 1917 and by the extent to which it continued to believe that it is "better to be wrong with the party of the proletariat than right against it." (See Tony Cliff, Trotsky: *Fighting the Stalinist Bureaucracy, 1923-27* [Bookmarks, 1991].) For the Left Opposition in the 1920s this was a partial tendency. For many other old Bolsheviks it was a far more serious and tragic mistake. Serge brilliantly explores the psychology of those unable to break with Stalinism in *The Case of Comrade Tulayev*.  
6. For a detailed literary and political analysis, see Greeman, "The Return of Comrade Tulayev," op. cit.



## Bosnia, NATO, and the New World Order

*Continued from page 1*

— the global expansion of unrestrained profit-seeking, which Serbian and Russian chauvinists now want to join in on. In Mexico, this old world disorder has taken the form of NAFTA, and the ones to be dispossessed are the poor peasants, many of them indigenous people. But NAFTA and the world disorder ran up against a serious obstacle: the Zapatistas and the indigenous peasant communities that stand behind them, committed to their ancestral communal landholding system (the *ejidos*). They have dared to place the human needs of their people higher than the impersonal demands of the “free market” system.

The claptrap about so-called impersonal market forces actually masks *fortune building*, the accumulation and expansion of capital for the personal benefit of the wealthy few at the expense of the impoverished many.

In the heartland of the purported free market system, we currently see the example of an

Arkansas “mafia” involving Bill and Hillary Clinton and their associates in the Rose Law Firm, Stephens, Inc., Beverly Enterprises, Ventana Investments, and the Arkansas Development Finance Authority (described by Alexander Cockburn in the March 14 *Nation* magazine). This tale of wheeling and dealing could rival any of the sordid fortune-building schemes being hatched by marketeers and racketeers in Russia or Serbia. The Arkansas ploy for getting rich on the backs of sick old folks is a case study in the reality of imperialism (modern finance capitalism), whether in the heartland of “free enterprise” or in the former colonial, semi-colonial, and even formerly “socialist” areas that this system is expanding into. It is a system of organized gouging carried out through a myriad of banks, real estate outfits, law firms, and corporations, dummy or otherwise, in collusion with governments that are totally dominated by business interests, whether

at the local, state, or federal level.

Working people can and must fight back against the domination of government and of people’s lives by big business. Free trade and the free market mean freedom for capitalists to rob, rape, gouge, and destroy (whether they are aspiring Mercedes drivers in Serbian chauvinist garb, or aspiring entrants into “the First World” in the form of the Salinas crowd in Mexico, or the Clintons or any other combination of swindler, politician, and warlord — Democrat, Republican, or Perotist — in the United States). That is why working people need their own political organization as one of the keys to a successful fightback. And that is why it is of overriding historical importance that a section of the union movement in the United States, through Labor Party Advocates, is calling for a founding convention of such a party in 1995. □

March 8, 1994

## New Teamsters Battle on Two Fronts: UPS and Strikebreakers

*Continued from page 3*

and the contradiction of seeming to be voting with the Old Guard should not be viewed as support for the old-boy network or its hostility to Carey.

Standing beside Carey every step of the way is a rank-and-file caucus, Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), which supports the dues increase and gave total support to the strike. TDU said about the Old Guard and the injunction: “Funny thing, when they ran the international, they had no problem with racketeers like Jackie Presser or Roy Williams. But when it comes to a strike over our health and safety, suddenly they become law-abiding citizens.” Although TDU gave Carey his margin of victory in 1991, the regrouped opposition of the

bureaucracy, which split in 1991, seems likely to defeat the dues increase, which will compel Carey to move boldly to reduce the Old Guard’s power to stymie his reform program.

Carey’s options include abolishing the area conferences, to which the international pays a subsidy of \$3 million a year. Far greater savings would result if Carey shuts down the special pension plan for local officers, as he did the international officers’ plan. In any event, it seems far more likely that open confrontation akin to a bitter faction fight, if not a civil war, will prevail at least until the rank and file votes for international officers in 1996. Needless to say, the results of the Teamster turmoil cannot fail to have a major long-term impact on all of organized labor. For now, progressive unionists

can take great satisfaction that not only has labor won a strike, but the strike revealed to the ranks whose side the Teamster Old Guard is on! □

February 22, 1994

[For more details on this important strike, see the March 1994 *Labor Notes*, especially the articles on pp. 10–11, “Illegal Strike Boosts Union Activism at UPS”; TDU Launches ‘Save our Backs’ Campaign,” and “Union Time in Seattle.” See also the March 1994 *Socialist Action* for the text of a TDU “Save Our Backs” petition, the terms of the agreement with UPS, and two valuable articles, “The real issues behind the dues increase furor” and “Teamsters’ UPS strike: A giant step forward,” by Nat Weinstein.]

## Randy Shilts: Chronicler of Injustice

*Continued from page 7*

face the charge of perjury. Where I went to journalism school, that was a news story. One reporter responded to my tip with the question “But who’s going to play you in the miniseries?”

### Gays in the Military

On the day he completed *And the Band Played On*, Shilts said he was tested for HIV. It came back positive. Until February 1993, when the rumors started circulating, he kept his diagnosis private. “I did not want my health issues to overshadow my work,” he told Ros Davidson of Reuters last year.

Instead, he embarked on a new project. As he told *The Progressive* in 1991, he hoped that his study of the treatment of gays and lesbians by the U.S. military would be “the definitive statement on antigay prejudice in America.” He said that while simple discrimination against gays could be dismissed as employer capriciousness, “military policies are created by the U.S. government, and enforced brutally as a matter of policy. The brutality of the policies — they

drive people to suicide.”

Shilts started interviewing gay veterans, famous and obscure, privates to generals. After 1,100 interviews, he found a military which used the formal ban on gays and lesbians more as a threat to uppity personnel than as a hard and fast rule.

For example, while the Navy was discharging 1,700 people a year for being gay in the early 1960s, at the height of the Vietnam War buildup in 1970 it was only discharging 400 a year.

*Conduct Unbecoming: Gays and Lesbians in the U.S. Military* was published in early 1993, just as the Clinton administration was proposing a “reform” of the gay ban. The book again rose in the bestseller lists, but had no effect on the policy. Clinton instead responded to the “concerns” of the bigots about the rights of heterosexual soldiers to safe showers.

But writing the book took a toll. He told Davidson that he dictated the end of *Conduct Unbecoming* from a hospital bed. He had contracted AIDS-related pneumonia. On Christmas Eve 1992, one of his lungs collapsed. “I was very

sick — there was literally a doctor standing over my bed saying I was going to die, that I would never leave the hospital,” he told Davidson.

He hung on for another year, giving interviews and continuing to raise questions about the treatment of gays in U.S. society. When he died, the media marked his passing with much the same fanfare that Rock Hudson got, complete with a “last interview” on *60 Minutes*.

As is the fate with most truth-tellers, that fanfare left out the harder truths Shilts wrote about. In an interview with *Esquire* in 1988, he explained the essence of his view: “Ultimately, the story of the failure of our nation to deal with AIDS is a story about prejudice, and largely about prejudice to gay people. I really think that our society lacks a fundamental awareness of the injustice it has done. We’ve got famine and hatred and violence affecting so much of this world. But people still think it’s important whether or not somebody goes home to Jack instead of Jill.” □

March 5, 1994



## Interview with Lula, Presidential Candidate of the Brazilian Workers Party

*Continued from page 12*

house of his and a domestic worker in another, since he believes that it is not profitable to rent his houses.

Tomorrow, if he needs his house, I will go back to mine without any problem, since I put every little brick in my house, and I am intimately familiar with it. With regard to the school, in the first place, my children aren't the only Brazilians to have scholarships to go to school.

**Q.: But the other candidates for the presidency...**

A.: The guy offered me that scholarship at a time in Brazil when 99 percent believed that Lula had given up public life, in 1990. After having offered me this scholarship for 10 years, without my accepting it, he offered it to Marisa [Lula's wife], and she decided to accept it. He offered me a house in a period when nobody even offered me a Dreher cognac, and now I am not going to throw away a bit of it unless he doesn't want to give me the scholarship. If he doesn't want to, I can't pay, and the bit can go back to where it always was.

**Q.: If in the presidency, he comes and asks a favor, would you put yourself in prison?**

A.: He doesn't have credit. I have a small public life, and I help many of our mayors to win

election, and not one of them can say that at some time Luis asked a favor, a job for someone. I will introduce you to *companheiros* in São Bernardo do Campo who are unemployed, my son and my daughter among them, and I have never telephoned anyone to get a job for them. That is my political culture. Robert Teixeira, in whose house I live, has never occupied any post in any mayoralty of the PT. Besides, Santo André called Robert Teixeira to be secretary, and he didn't want to. If there is a thing I have become hard about, it is not connecting my political activity to personal things.

**Q.: You proposed to President Itamar, when he took office, that he form a cabinet with 12 Jatenes...**

A.: I said with 12 Maradonas.

**Q.: Will you form a government with 12 Maradonas, be they from the PT or not?**

A.: I believe that a government that can solve the problems of the country has to be a government of people not only of the highest professional qualification but also of the highest political qualification. It is not enough to locate a good technician. What is needed is a good technician with a political sensibility. People who know this country in order to carry things out.

If I win the elections, a man like Olivio Dutra,

for example, is going to be a kind of brother in power, because he has a face I can really trust and I have such a deep friendship with him that I would leave a situation with him and go and rest easy knowing that he would get things done.<sup>10</sup>

We do not have the right to fail. That is my slogan. On the one hand, you're going to have the conservative sectors trying to blame the age-old problems of Brazil on the 5 months of our government, and on the other hand, you are going to have the starving masses wanting people to take care in 3 months of what hasn't been taken care of in 30 years. And we are going to have to account for that.

**Q.: Returning to the question of an institutional breakdown — if you fail, could there be a breakdown?**

A.: I am not afraid of failing. I am so prepared and so conscious of the responsibilities that bear on my shoulders that I don't have the right to fail. We cannot govern Brazil with traditional methods, because that kind of governing failed. Failed. And running this country in the same way is not new. Governments come and go, and the people go on hungry and homeless.

We have to rethink how to run this country, and I am ready to make this sacrifice. □

August 29, 1993

## Rehabilitate People — Don't Warehouse Them

*Continued from page 13*

Antonio Gramsci, a member of Italy's parliament who was imprisoned by the fascist regime under Mussolini, quoted from Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* in reference to the "dual perspective," which stated:

You should understand, therefore, that there are two ways of fighting, by law or by force. The first way is natural to men, and the second to beasts. But as the first way often proves inadequate one must have recourse to the second. (Footnote 71, from *The Modern Prince*, Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, International Publishers.)

Also, according to Emerson Montgomery Lakes, *Aronism in Practice and Purpose*: "where diplomacy fails, war prevails."

It is against the repressive measures that we protest. When we are given no other choice but to resort to violence just so our complaints will be heard and taken seriously, the prison administration retaliates with even more repressive measures. They fail to realize that if they extend relief and solutions to the existing problems, we, prisoners and prison officials, would come a long way from violence. Aleister Crowley

stated to the effect:

As long as a man can get rid of his surplus energy in enjoyment, he finds life easy and submits. Deprive him of pleasure, of ecstasy, and his mind begins to worry about the way he is exploited and oppressed. Very soon he begins furtively to throw bombs; and, gathering strength, to send his tyrants to the gallows. (Aleister Crowley, *The Law Is for All: An Extensive Commentary on the Book of the Law*, p. 152.)

However, the system — the administration — just doesn't care. So why should we? If they don't care and violate our rights, they're justified, but if we protest, riot, or resort to violence just to be heard, then we're hardened and dangerous criminals in need of severe repressive measures. Just because we're in prison doesn't mean that we do not have rights or that we cease to be human.

Take for instance death row. The administration says that disruptive behavior took place that warranted the conditions which are currently being imposed. However, what the prison administration neglects to tell society is that "they" created the situations from which those incidents arose. On October 1, 1992, the ad-

ministration moved and relocated various prisoners to different sections. Knowing that some prisoners are not to be housed together, the prison administration blatantly and deliberately housed prisoners on units that directly jeopardized the lives of various death row prisoners. Every incident that took place on death row between October and January stemmed from move changes. No problems existed on death row before. Recreation was being run three hours per day, six days per week, with absolutely no violent disturbances, turbulence, or activity whatsoever. Only after the move changes did violence occur. But the prison administration has gone to great lengths to displace blame and misinform the public as to the cause. They absolutely refuse to shoulder responsibility for their mistakes.

Instead of crying and whining for more and harsher repressive measures to be imposed, society needs to get more involved in helping to create more rehabilitation and educational programs for prisoners. Instead of funneling more money into building prisons to warehouse people, the money should be directed towards a more positive means of rehabilitation and education. After all, some day we will be placed

10. Olivio Dutra was the PT mayor of Porto Alegre for 4 years. During that time he is credited with improving sanitation, education, and transportation and organizing new micro-regions for collective budget making. His administration was democratic and honest. He did have conflicts with the public transportation companies and with public transport workers. See the article by Patricia Pessi of the Democratic Socialist Tendency in *Em Tempo*, No. 264, February 1993.



back into society, and the effect of the conditions we are subjected to in prison will reflect on how productive we become as citizens.

Be part of a solution, not part of a continual problem.

Anyone interested in helping to support prisoners' rights or to protest the conditions resulting from the lockdown imposed on the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City, and the Indiana State

Reformatory in Pendleton should write or call:

Evan Bayh, Governor of Indiana  
Office of the Governor  
100 N. State Avenue  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Christian DeBruyn, Commissioner  
Indiana Department of Corrections  
E 334 Indiana Government Center South

302 West Washington St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
(317) 232-5715

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)  
445 N. Pennsylvania Ave., Suite 911  
Indianapolis, IN 46204-1883  
(317) 635-4056

□

## Culture, Consciousness, and Class Struggle

*Continued from page 17*

ist politics and Leninist organizational norms can and should guide the efforts of those who continue to embrace the revolutionary Marxist commitments which animated the Bolsheviks. That politics is defined by writings ranging from the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 down to the Fourth International's present-day programmatic manifesto, *Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century*. Leninist organizational norms — collective, democratic, purposeful, grounded in the Marxist program while flexibly adapting to specific realities — are explored in depth (with ample quotations from Lenin and his comrades, plus an examination of the relation of texts to contexts) in my study *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*. As U.S. Leninists organize themselves according to such politics and organizational norms (it is certainly possible to create Leninist organizations even when it is not yet possible to establish Leninist parties), they must avoid the all-too-common pitfall of constructing a world of their own that is, as Cannon put it, "outside and apart from the real movement of the workers in the class struggle." They cannot contribute to the development of class consciousness in the U.S. proletariat if they "come not to learn but to teach," as DuBois put it, but only if (in the tradition of Mother Jones, Gene Debs, "Big Bill" Haywood, Jim Cannon) they are able to integrate their own insights with the sensibilities, idioms, and life experiences of the American working class.

Related to the task of helping to recompose a mass left-wing vanguard of the U.S. working class is the task of utilizing, developing, and revitalizing revolutionary Marxist theory as we strive to understand the vast and complex realities of which we are part. The dialogue and debate, the research and analysis made available by *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is only one element (although a vitally important one) in the carrying out of this task. In a differently-focused manner, similar efforts are made by *Against the Current*, *New Politics*, *Monthly Review*, *Science and Society*, and other Marxist-oriented publications in the United States, as well as by Monthly Review Press, the "Revolutionary Studies" series of Humanities Press, and other Marxist book publishing projects, plus the activities of such institutions as the Socialist Scholars Conference and the New York Marxist School, the Tamiment Library and Prometheus Research Library, etc. Resources like these are invaluable for those who seek to develop a vital Marxist intellectual culture which is necessary

for sustaining a mass socialist workers movement.

There is also the task to which this magazine has devoted considerable attention — that of building a world revolutionary socialist movement, since capitalism is a global system and can only be replaced on an international scale. Of special importance in this work is the global organization founded by Leon Trotsky and his comrades in 1938, the Fourth International. Unfortunately, the Fourth Internationalists in the United States have been disunited for over a decade, a dilemma which *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* has been committed to overcoming since it first began publication.

All of this brings me to certain points made by Peter Johnson and Steve Bloom in their critical responses to my original article. Both comrades call for a regroupment of the disunited Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. Johnson proposes that "a democratic-centralist Trotskyist propaganda group" could be drawn together in the United States for the purpose of establishing a revolutionary socialist newspaper with a mass readership (similar in conception to *Iskra* in prerevolutionary Russia). Bloom proposes that Solidarity, a small revolutionary socialist group (to which he and I belong), should be projected as providing a framework for such unity.

The kind of newspaper proposed by Peter Johnson cannot be brought about through the means he proposes. There have been many little Trotskyist newspapers in the United States which — while projecting themselves as a U.S. version of *Iskra* — have not been a Marxist paper providing "open and all-embracing discussion of the fundamental principles and tactics" (as Lenin put it) for those engaged in the democratic, labor, and socialist struggles of our time. Instead, newspapers put out by "democratic-centralist Trotskyist propaganda groups" have tended to be exceedingly narrow, abstract, and sterile. One positive exception today is *Socialist Action* — certainly not an *Iskra*, but a well-written, attractive, readable socialist monthly paper. At best, Johnson's proposal could result in a duplication of this, perhaps a little better or a little worse, but not qualitatively different. If, on the other hand, nonsectarian Trotskyists could join together with other socialists to produce a weekly left-wing paper similar to the recently-defunct *Guardian* (but better, with more sustained focus on the U.S. class struggle, and more open than previously to serious discussion and debate), a genuine contribution would be made both to the development of a left-wing workers movement and to laying the groundwork for a revolutionary party.

Steve Bloom writes as if Solidarity might well become such a mass revolutionary party, and that it could reasonably be expected to contain all Fourth Internationalists in the United States. Regardless of that organization's genuine virtues, I find such a scenario so unrealistic as to be detrimental to Solidarity and to the twin cause of building a Leninist party and of achieving the unity of Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. Solidarity has important contributions it can make to the creation of preconditions for a mass workers' party in the U.S. (and for a revolutionary socialist current in that party). This is why revolutionary socialists should join it — not because Solidarity is the embryo of a Leninist party or the framework for FI unity here.

At present, the best way to build FI unity in the United States is to draw more and more Fourth Internationalists into the work of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* — and also, as much as possible, into the work of recomposing a mass left-wing workers' movement in our country. The pages of this magazine have provided a space for a number of Fourth Internationalists, and others, from varying perspectives to engage in serious discussion of what we are facing, what we are doing, and what needs to be done. Such discussion is an essential precondition for achieving the revolutionary socialist unity that is needed in this country.

One final word on a phrase from my initial article which seems to have startled some readers: my insistence that we must "do good work." By this I am not proposing a transformation of Leninists into philanthropic "do-gooders." I am suggesting that those who want to advance the socialist struggle in the United States have to do more than engage in "hard-hitting" polemics or clever "discourse" or sweeping rhetoric — because if this is all they do, they are not serious revolutionaries at all. Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, and others like them certainly were masters of polemic and rhetoric, but they also left behind durable scholarship that even today helps millions of people understand the world; they also helped build substantial organizations and organize mass activity which did much to change the world. They did a lot of serious work, and they tried to make it as good as they possibly could. And although they failed in a great deal of what they were trying to do, the fact that they did *good work* has greatly helped later generations to carry on the struggle. We should live like them. □

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  3. Eleanor Leacock, "Marxism and Anthropology," in Bertell Ollman and Edward Vernoff, eds., *The Left Academy: Marxist Scholarship on American Campuses* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), pp. 267–268.
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  8. Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), pp. 18, 15.
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- Accounts of other left-wing Black activists can be found in: Jervis Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph, A Biographical Portrait* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973); Charles Denby, *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal* (Boston: South End Press, 1978); Edgar Keemer, *Confessions of a Pro-Life Abortionist* (Detroit: Vinco Press, 1980); material on Larry Stewart in *Revolutionary Principles and Working-Class Democracy*, ed. by Paul Le Blanc (New York: Fourth Internationalist Tendency, 1992), pp. 298–323; Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *I Do Mind Dying, A Study in Urban Revolution* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1975).
- On Ella Baker, see the entry by Susan Gushee O'Malley in *Encyclopedia of the American Left*. Baker, Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, and many other key activists in the Southern civil rights movement were influenced in part through contact with the radical educational and cultural institution established in Tennessee in 1932 by Myles Horton and others, the Highlander Folk School, which is discussed in: Frank Adams, *Unearthing Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1975), and in Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).
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## The Appeal to Reason and the Mass Socialist Movement Before World War I

Continued from page 21

aunts, whether we know it or not, but our brothers and sisters. In my opinion, our understanding is enriched immeasurably by *Yours for the Revolution*. It belongs in the library of every socialist.

As we know, these brothers and sisters of ours did not succeed, and the movement of which they were the foundation faltered and eventually degenerated, and was succeeded by another one, which, too, faltered and degenerated in its turn. But they did not fail.

Meridel Le Seuer said, writing in the name of her parents, Arthur and Marian, about the whole movement:

If they made a miscalculation, those great rebels of our past, it was the inability to imagine the final brutality of power... But I cannot criticize their heroic warning and their faithful love. It becomes like a turning lighthouse beacon throwing directions to us, maps we never thought of, new social structures of peace and abundance, images of a new reality. How clearly they saw that and showed it on their maps in country schoolhouses and spoke of it from soap boxes on city streets, always threatened by arrest. What they saw and did now

appears strong and amazing, moving in new directions, in the enormous battles of the dispossessed to regain and protect our humanity.

Unlike elitists and intellectuals, they never gave up hope, never were addicted to cynicism, disbelief or philosophical defense of what they called failure. They never failed. (Crusaders, pp. xxvii–xxviii.)

In the present, when the whole perspective of historical optimism, to say nothing of the socialist reconstruction of society, has been shunted to the margins of intellectual and political discourse, it is essential to restudy and penetrate more deeply into the great models of the past. They, and their movement, are not irrelevant historical artifacts. They are not just part of our past, but of our present, if we can blast a passage through to our real history.

That is what Jim Cannon was trying to tell us:

I think to this day that the spirit, method and technique of the pre-war socialist and IWW movements belong naturally and of necessity to a genuine proletarian movement growing indigenously in the soil of America. The tradition is a rich heritage which the new generation of revolutionary militants must make their own. ("In the Spirit of the Pioneers," November 28,

1936, reprinted in *Notebook of an Agitator*.)

In the last analysis, the comrades of the *Appeal* said it as good as anybody. "As the January 5, 1912, issue of the *Appeal to Reason* was being made up, Charles L. Phifer, a columnist and associate editor, paused in the commotion of his work to reflect on the *Appeal*," Graham tells us. Phifer wrote:

The *Appeal* is not as good as it ought to be. It is crude — I know it. It isn't "literary" or pretty. But it touches souls every week. Sometimes I stand in awe of the fact, sensing the deeper and unexpressed forces and feelings of a nation, of a world, surge upon me, calling for an outlet; and if I thought I did justice to it, I should realize I was inadequate for the position. I like literature; I like art; but sometimes I think the *Appeal*, harsh and ugly as it is, partial as it is and must be, is after all, the truest literature of the day, tracing the richest art of the soul, and that future bibliographers will go through its files to catch the spirit of an awakening people speaking in broken sentences through it. (*Yours for the Revolution*, pp. xi–xii.) □



## Wilma Mankiller, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation

*Continued from page 24*

present-day Arkansas in 1821, shortly after he completed work on his syllabary, eventually settling near Sallisaw, Oklahoma. Sequoyah, like Ridge, recognized that there was no hope of preserving the tribal lands in the Southern Appalachians. Unlike Ridge — and Ross, for that matter — he opposed any and all attempts at assimilating into white society. Whether he ever learned the English language is not certain; what is certain is that he refused to speak it. He rejected the Christian religion and the private property system, and had no interest in the material wealth enjoyed by Ridge and Ross.

Mankiller proudly relates the Cherokees' recovery from the Removal; once they were re-established in their new homes they resumed publication of a daily newspaper in both English and Cherokee. They established a public school system and institutions of higher education, one for men and another for women. What was most informative to me was Mankiller's account of how their prosperity and social institutions were taken away.

After my family moved east when I was a very small child, my grandmother — like all grandmothers — tried to make sure that my brother and sister and I did not forget our Cherokee heritage and Oklahoma roots. She sent us many books on Cherokee and Oklahoma history; however, since she was a public school teacher, the books came mainly from the ap-

proved Oklahoma history curriculum. Consequently, they did not explain what *really* happened when the Indian Territory (as it was known) was opened up to white settlement. Mankiller does. She presents the coming of the "Boomers" and "Sooners" as another defeat for her people, and the admission of Oklahoma into the Union in 1907 as the crushing of Cherokee nationhood.

The state dismantled the tribal school system. However, it did not set up local public schools in its place. In order to learn to read and write, Cherokee children had to leave their homes and attend boarding schools, where they were punished for speaking their native language and forced to dress and pray like the whites. Those who did not attend the boarding schools received no education at all, and illiteracy — which had been practically nonexistent — rose dramatically. The Cherokees lost the right to elect their leaders; the BIA appointed them. The state confiscated the tribal lands and gave each family 160 acres — to be owned privately — in compensation. As Mankiller explains, this was the fundamental cause of the persistent poverty in northeastern Oklahoma. Many families were swindled out of their land by unscrupulous whites. Others grew cotton and other soil-depleting crops in order to earn necessary cash. The drought of 1936 hit the Cherokee Nation especially hard.

The Cherokees struggled for many years to

regain the right to elect their own tribal leadership, which was finally won in 1971. Today, Mankiller is leading a struggle to overcome the region's persistent poverty and to preserve the rich Cherokee cultural heritage. She is working to reverse the damage done by "benevolent" attempts to assimilate her people into white society. At the same time she is mobilizing communities at the grassroots level to build housing and infrastructure to improve the quality of people's lives. The Cherokees are demonstrating in action what people of color can do when they gain control of their own communities.

### An Inspiring Book

I would recommend *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People* as required reading for any activist who has become pessimistic about the prospects for social change. This book is more than anything a story of survival — by an individual woman and by an entire Native American nation — and of meeting adversity head-on and defeating it. The Cherokees, like all oppressed people in the United States, have a long struggle ahead. But, as *Mankiller* shows, there are many victories which can and will be won on the way to the final victory which will usher in a new age of peace and social justice. □

January 30, 1994

## Does Leninism Equal Sectarianism?

*Continued from page 26*

e.g., between racist workers and Black workers, or between misogynist workers and women workers. We cannot subordinate our political program and perspectives just because other political currents don't agree with us.

The questions at stake in this ideological conflict are not over trifles; the differences between us do not merely involve "petty competitions," as Le Blanc argues, but are of the gravest consequence. Witness the disunity of the antiwar movement during the Gulf War, a division created by the sectarian and reformist leaderships of that movement. Among the more unspeakable atrocities of the war is that 47,000 Iraqi children under the age of 5 were killed as a direct result of the U.S. bombing. This is not a trifle, but a catastrophe. This is not to blame the sectarians or the reformists for the crimes of imperialism but to demonstrate the gravity of our differences and the consequence of abstention from theoretical dispute. The revolutionary priority in the antiwar movement was its unity in opposing imperialist war and against all odds we counterposed that to the divisive agenda of the sectarians and reformists.

A look at the history of the socialist movement internationally shows the folly and naïveté of Le Blanc's desire for harmony. The revolutionary Marxist movement has been decimated by the class collaborationists — social democrats, Stalinists, and sectarians — including persecution, frame-ups, murder,

prison. In the movement today we faced-baiting, physical threats and assaults, slanders, and character assassination from these same political forces. Our debates have not usually taken the form of academic and diplomatic exchanges, nor have they always involved differences over the tactics of the movement: just as often we have had to defend ourselves against fists, clubs, and numchucks wielded by these forces. Often the provocations of these groups provided cover for police attacks not only against the revolutionary movement but against the mass movement.

The purpose of this struggle against other political currents is to win the political respect and leadership of the class, i.e., for scientific socialism to gain acceptance and dominance in the working class, both in its ideas and its method of struggle. We don't make any bones about it or any apologies for it, because socialist revolution depends on it.

To reduce the political differences between the various political currents — sectarian, centrists, Stalinists, social democrats, Marxists — to the political equivalent of "I'm OK, you're OK" is to degrade the theory of Marxism. In practice it means subordinating the demands of the working class in deference to good will; it means abandoning the class struggle in the name of some phony harmony with other left groups. This we cannot do.

### The Fourth International and Ecumenism

Le Blanc applies the exact same concept of a tranquil and harmonious revolutionary movement to the Fourth International. He speculates about the possibility of an international above the Fourth International, a "broader revolutionary international" of which the FI is only a part, even a minority part. What Le Blanc really wants is an international above program, above conflict, above the class struggle. Only Zen Buddhism (which anyway has a program Marxism rejects) can offer such a prospect. The founders of revolutionary Marxism viewed the International as the world party of socialist revolution, not as a center for diplomatic fraternization.

Viewing the Fourth International as a clearinghouse where we can engage in diplomatic exchanges while waiting for more "accumulations," invent new theories (as if theory was conceptual invention and did not derive from experiences in the class struggle) and establish harmonious relations with other disparate political tendencies is not a caricature but a fair summation of Le Blanc's ideas. It is certainly the quickest route to sectarian oblivion and political impotency.

If the condition of the class struggle in the U.S. afforded revolutionists such a desultory approach as Le Blanc lays out — and it most certainly does not — the international class struggle issues an immediate call to arms; the

*Continued on page 36*



# Letters

## From a Kurdish Prisoner

I am writing this letter from a "special type of prison" which is used for keeping political prisoners. As you may guess from this sentence, I'm a political prisoner. I'm a Kurd, and I was arrested after the military intervention of 1980 and sentenced to life imprisonment because of my political activities. Now there are some new lawsuits about me concerning some of my articles which have appeared in different newspapers and magazines during the last six months. If they won't have been ended negatively, I'll be released in about two years.

## Does Leninism Equal Sectarianism?

*Continued from page 35*

Gulf War, the events in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti. Revolutionists have a duty to respond to these crises whatever the consciousness and understanding of American workers concerning them.

Le Blanc maintains that there are legions of revolutionaries, globally, who "are not inclined even for a moment" to join the FI. Hadn't we better find out why these revolutionaries have such a profound abhorrence for the revolutionary Marxist movement and why they recoil so strongly from it? What exactly is it about the FI that so repels them? After all, the FI, despite its weaknesses and mistakes, was alone able to formulate an explanation for the rise of Stalinism and the phenomenon of fascism; it has organized and led opposition to every imperialist war, it has built international solidarity with every revolution against capitalism and imperialism.

If harmony and good will within this "broader revolutionary movement" can only be bought by the ecumenical gesture of liquidating

## What's "Left" of the CPSU?

*Continued from page 6*

The **Russian Party of Communists**, founded in late 1991 by some supporters of the Marxist Platform — a reform movement that had developed inside the CPSU in the late Gorbachev period — also seeks to distance itself from the more blatantly bureaucratic methods and abuses of the party and government. However, the democratization it envisions may not affect most of the population. Its program actually has much in common with that of the CPRF.

The same is true of the **Union of Communists**, formed in October 1991, which also calls for the re-establishment of the USSR, implicitly denying the legitimacy of the national movements against Kremlin domination that have arisen in the non-Russian republics.

All of these leftovers from the CPSU, including their local creations — such as the RCWP's "broad fronts" on the local level, Working Moscow, Working Chelyabinsk, etc. — rely on the phony pro-worker rhetoric of the Stalin and even post-Stalin periods and have not broken in any significant way with the discredited policies and bureaucratic methods of the past. They all support the anti-Marxist orientation of "build-

I ran into an old issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* (No. 88, Sept. 1991) by chance. I don't know whether you are continuing to publish the review or not. I want to add that if you are continuing to publish, I want to read your review. Sorrowfully, as a prisoner I can't work, and I can't afford the subscription. So if it is possible on your part, please make me a free subscriber to your review.

On the other hand, for me it isn't so important whether I read the review on time or not, so you can send me back issues.

For your interest thank you from now.

our Marxist program, by rendering our program devoid of class struggle, wouldn't the interests of the world working class be better served by recognizing the differences and letting the chips fall where they may?

## Conclusion

We cannot close our eyes to the fact that the disintegration of Stalinism and, above all, the almost unbroken series of defeats and setbacks suffered by the world working class in the past several years have produced a profound effect on the thinking and morale of the political workers movement. After the slaughter in the Gulf War, the shadow of the awesome power of American imperialism is very dark. It would be absurd to imagine that the Marxian wing of the workers movement, represented by the Fourth International, could be immune from this reaction.

If imperialism's "New World Order" has made socialism only a remote aspiration, then a tightly disciplined combat party with a professional leadership, i.e., a Leninist party, is not

ing socialism in one country" and appeal to bureaucratic, military intervention instead of international workers solidarity.

All these forces have ended up in "red-brown" (or "pink-beige") alliances with reactionary Russian patriots.

All these organizations have worked and continue to work from time to time in one way or another on reunification and enter various blocs and alliances with each other, such as the Union of Communist Parties-CPSU (UCP-CPSU) — formed in March 1993 and based on the program of the old pre-Gorbachev period — or the Russian Communist Alliance initiated in January 1994.

While these organizations seem large when compared with the new parties in the workers movement, their size should also be measured by their strength today — when membership is voluntary and carries no particular privileges — as opposed to the pre-1991 period when party membership was usually a precondition for personal advancement.

The CPSU had a membership until the late 1980s of some 19 million. The combined membership of all the descendants today is not one million and most of these are not new members

With my best wishes

Camil Gundogan  
Turkey

## Better and Better

Hi! Just a note to say, keep up the excellent work for '94. The magazine is getting better and better!

Enclosed is an introductory sub for a political friend.

With warmest comradely greetings

Joe Johnson  
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

P.S.: Do you know what happened to Cannon's and V.R. [Dunne]'s letters?

necessary today; it would be like playing soldier. But it is certain that as the economic crisis breaks into full force in this country, wider circles of workers will consider revolutionary possibilities.

As in the time of the formation of American Trotskyism (due to the ascendancy of Stalinism), the movement now (in the decline of Stalinism) needs to rearm itself through educational, literary, and propagandistic work. Revolutionary work within the working class today is untiring, energetic, and daily work: it means leading the fight for the regeneration of the revolutionary movement and the workers movement and the raising of class consciousness. A Leninist party remains as much as ever "a colossal factor" (Trotsky) in that process. Nothing can do more to focus our energies and resources on those tasks than a positive assertion that we see the prospects for the American socialist revolution and are organizing for it. □

but were previously members of the CPSU — that is former apparatchiks. Just because these descendants are often opposed to some aspects of Yeltsin's and the IMF's policies does not mean that they are "left" or that they have suddenly become advocates of genuine workers rights, which had previously been anathema to them.

Genuine worker-based organizations will need to be built by a new layer of militants who advance a program which offers ways for organized workers to take more and more control over the use of the resources and the wealth and over how production and the economy are organized and run. This does not mean a return to the old discredited bureaucratic order or variations of it like the descendants of the CPSU offer. Nor does it mean the restoration of capitalist rule. It means a third course of a worker-controlled government that is now only a vision. Prerequisites for this vision to become a reality are democratic openings, international workers solidarity on our part, and a little time. Using terms like "left" and "right" to define "friends" and foes in the context of the former Soviet Union only confuses the issue. □

February 10, 1994



Information, Education, Discussion Bulletin

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## To all our readers:

You may have missed our modest notice in the March *BIDOM* about the Bulletin Builders Fund, but we're sure you'll be glad to know that even before that issue reached you another of our loyal readers learned of the fund and sent us another \$1,000. So this effort started almost from the beginning with \$2,000 in the bank. Our goal is to build it to \$10,000 by the time of our *BIDOM* Conference this year in Pittsburgh, Memorial Day weekend, May 28-30.

The purpose of the Builders Fund is not only to raise badly needed current operating funds. We also hope

# BIDOM Builders Fund

your response will include greater participation in the production and distribution of this publication. This is essential to the proper functioning of *BIDOM* as an authentic voice of the Fourth International and of revolutionary socialism in this country.

Under present political conditions *BIDOM* has a unique place in the floundering radical movement. Our most immediate and pressing task is to describe and define the economic and social crises that grip the world as the 20th century winds down — applying the analytical tools of Marxist philosophy in order to do this. We know that human history through the ages can be understood and explained only in terms of irreconcilable class conflict. We have learned in our modern industrial age that the working class and the employing class have no interests in common, and the problems of our advanced capitalist system can be solved only when the working class is prepared to take control of society and establish workers and farmers governments for that purpose. Furthermore, the cataclysmic events of this most wantonly destructive century of all recorded history teach us that the sweep of working class control must be envisioned and extended to include all nations. Workers of the world must unite.

These are the basic tenets of historical materialism elucidated by Marx and Engels in the 19th century. The political validity of Marxist philosophy was demonstrated in the early 20th century. The 1917 October revolution in Russia, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, proved that workers are capable of establishing their own government and reorganizing society even under the most difficult circumstances and against great odds. But for present-day radicals who have participated in revolutionary uprisings, working class struggles, and mass movements of social protest during the last half century, it is not easy to sort through the larger body of 20th-century working class history and discover what needs to be done now. *BIDOM*, with your participation, hopes to provide guidelines to this task.

*BIDOM* addresses the worldwide economic and social crises as no other publication can or will.

We are convinced that progressive social change in the interest of human survival depends entirely upon the ability of workers and other exploited people to organize their own forces independent of and in opposition to ruling class institutions and political organizations; and we believe that more and more of the world's oppressed and downtrodden are daily coming to realize that their fate — and the fate of humankind — depends on what they themselves do. The peasant uprising in Chiapas is the most recent and inspiring example of this new consciousness.

We can expect this sense of independence and self-confidence to grow in all parts of the world, including in the working class and among other oppressed sections of society in the U.S. We receive and publish reports of these new developments from our correspondents abroad, and we have had first-hand accounts of big changes now occurring within the unions and other working class organizations in this country. Our editors are trying to provide more material in this area, as recent *BIDOM* issues show.

We know there are writers, recruiters, and organizers among the ranks of our readers, and we expect to hear from you in response to our Bulletin Builders Fund appeals. Above all, we hope to see all of you at the *BIDOM* Conference, Memorial Day weekend.

**Please make your checks payable to Bulletin Builders Fund, c/o *BIDOM*, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009.**

(Note that the Builders Fund address is different from the one for other correspondence with *BIDOM*.)

Frank Lovell  
March 4, 1994

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 began in February this

year 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.