

Information, Education, Discussion Bulletin

In Defense of Marxism

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Special Issue on the Russian Revolution and the Year 1919

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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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Editors' Note: A World Affected by the Russian Revolution

This issue takes a special look at the Russian revolution and the year 1919.

In this issue we also print reports from the scene in Chiapas, made available by solidarity activists in the United States. These reports show clearly what class forces are arrayed on each side. In our next issue we expect to continue the detailed coverage we have carried during this past year concerning this key conflict in the worldwide class struggle.

Also in our next issue we expect to resume our coverage of critical struggles in Palestine, Bosnia, and Haiti, as well as major strike battles in Decatur, Illinois, and elsewhere. We also hope to have news on an important international conference in defense of Cuba, and to continue discussion on the meaning of the November 1994 elections and the ongoing effort to found a labor party in the United States.

In coming issues we will also carry a major contribution by Ernest Mandel, the noted Marxist economist and leader of the Fourth International. This will be the full text of material he abridged by half in a recent debate with a representative of the U.S.-based sect, the Spartacist League. The debate was held in New York City November 10, 1994. An important article touching on the background and significance of the November 10 meeting, written by *BIDOM* editor Paul Le Blanc, a cochair of the debate, will also appear in a future issue.

75 Years Later

With the end of 1994 we enter the last half-decade of the 20th century. This past year marked three-quarters of a century since the second full year of the Bolshevik revolution, a year when the impact of that revolution extended to ever widening circles and seemed to shake the world to its foundations, and a year when major labor struggles rocked the United States (and Canada, with the Winnipeg general strike).

Looking back, one can't help reflecting on how much has changed over the circuitous course of this century, and yet how much remains the same. The corporations and the employing class continue to dominate society — and the consequences of their rule grow worse and worse (including the threat of nuclear annihilation, environmental catastrophe, and genocidal and barbarous conflicts from Bosnia to Rwanda, from Tajikistan and Afghanistan to the death squads of the Americas).

In its essential nature capitalism remains the same, placing most workers in the position of wage slavery, of dependence on the

paycheck for the necessities of life, or of being relegated to the "surplus army" of the unemployed. At present, with the devastating setbacks to the first great attempt at establishing workers' republics throughout the world (though most were marred by Stalinist bureaucratism), the capitalist system of domination by the owners of wealth and the effective enslavement of the propertyless is hailed by the rulers and their opinion makers as the universal triumph of "free trade" and "the free market." (A valuable discussion of "Democracy and the Free Market" appears in this issue in Jean Tussey's article on another important anniversary, the 100th anniversary of the 1894 Pullman strike.)

However, the same kind of conditions that produced the Russian revolution, and the great workers' rebellions of 1919, persist and can produce even greater risings of the workers and their allies, armed with an even greater wisdom derived from the lessons of this century. There is the continuing prospect that the international solidarity of a united and determined working class — which, together with its allies, represents the vast majority of the human race — can ultimately end the "free market" system and replace it once and for all with a system that meets human needs.

The Russian Revolution

In this issue we carry a series of articles evaluating the Russian revolution in the light of the difficulties faced by the labor and radical movements today. Morris Slavin and Paul Le Blanc take up some fundamental questions of the revolution in articles based on talks given at a conference at Youngstown University in April 1994. Aleksandr Pantsov, an honest historian — one of a rare breed to emerge from the ex-USSR — reports on new information available from recently opened Kremlin archives. We also include a talk by Marilyn Vogt-Downey at the first conference on Leon Trotsky ever to be held in Russia. (The conference adopted her proposal for a concerted effort to have more of Trotsky's writings published in his homeland.) Jim Miles, whose article was also presented at the Trotsky conference in Moscow, looks at the analyses and predictions of Trotsky, Lenin, Marx, and Engels, who foresaw the possibility of the kind of setbacks that are affecting the bureaucratized workers states today. And Kirill Buketov, Boris Kagarlitsky, Irina Glushchenko, and Renfrey Clarke take up some of the issues facing the labor and radical movements in the former Soviet Union.

A few words are in order about the unusual length of Jim Miles's article, which represents several years of research, thought, and compilation. Since our present issue focuses on the Russian revolution and its place in the worldwide process of socialist revolution, and since the material in Comrade Miles's article relates importantly to that discussion, it seemed to us warranted to run it in full in this issue rather than to serialize it.

In future issues we expect to continue the discussion, begun with this article, on the fate of the Russian revolution and how it fits in with the worldwide struggle of the working class. The other articles about the current situation in Russia (by Buketov, Clarke, and Kagarlitsky) indicate that the Russian working class, despite its problems of leadership, remains a force to contend with, one which still could challenge capitalist restoration. As Trotsky put it, "In the last analysis, the question will be decided by a struggle of living social forces, both on the national and on the world arena." International working class solidarity, not least between workers of Russia and North America, can be an important source of increased strength for the difficult battles ahead.

1919 and U.S. Labor

Why did 1919 prove to be such a significant year in the history of the labor and radical movements in the United States?

For one thing, World War I had just ended (November 1918), and workers sought to make up for government-imposed wartime austerity, which had seen their wages and conditions frozen or eaten away by inflation. Meanwhile, war-related profits had fattened the coffers of the employers, who were under no restraints in raising their prices. The corporate bosses went on the offensive, hoping to use wartime patriotism and restraints to keep labor tied down. (A similar situation also occurred in this country after World War II, resulting in the great strike wave of 1946, followed by the era of Taft-Hartley and cold war anti-Communism.)

For another thing, 1919 was a year in which the radicalizing effect of the Russian revolution, the establishment of the world's first workers and peasants government based on Soviets (councils of workers, peasants, and soldiers), had an increasing impact in many parts of the world, as the patriotic fumes dissipated and many saw the horrors of the imperialist slaughter of 1914–1918 for

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A New Low in Capitalist Politics — Opportunity for a Labor Party Greater Than Ever

by Tom Barrett

"Analyses" of the 1994 mid-term elections in the United States are at this writing filling the airwaves and newsprint throughout the country. We are informed that the Republican capture of a majority in both houses of Congress is a "revolution," a "sea change," a "historic shift." Some tell us that we voted for "smaller government" and "traditional values"; others tell us that we had an "anti-incumbent" mood; still others inform us that we delivered a vote of no-confidence in the Clinton administration.

One wonders if any of those "analyzing" what the voters did on November 8 ever talked to a real live voter. I know that none has talked to me or to any of my neighbors or co-workers. And I know as surely as I know anything that the results of the 1994 elections will have very

little effect on the day-to-day life of my family or any other working-class family in this country. However, the Democrats' ignominious defeat has created a big opportunity to convince working people that the time for a new political party — a labor party, organized by and responsible to the ranks of organized labor — is now.

Several things about the 1994 political campaigns were remarkable. They show how little respect capitalist politicians have for the people who elect them, and they show how little relevance the issues which actually affect working people have to what passes for political debate in this country. A number of the victorious Republicans seem to be making the dangerous error of interpreting the voters' rejection of the Democrats — and Bill Clinton first among them

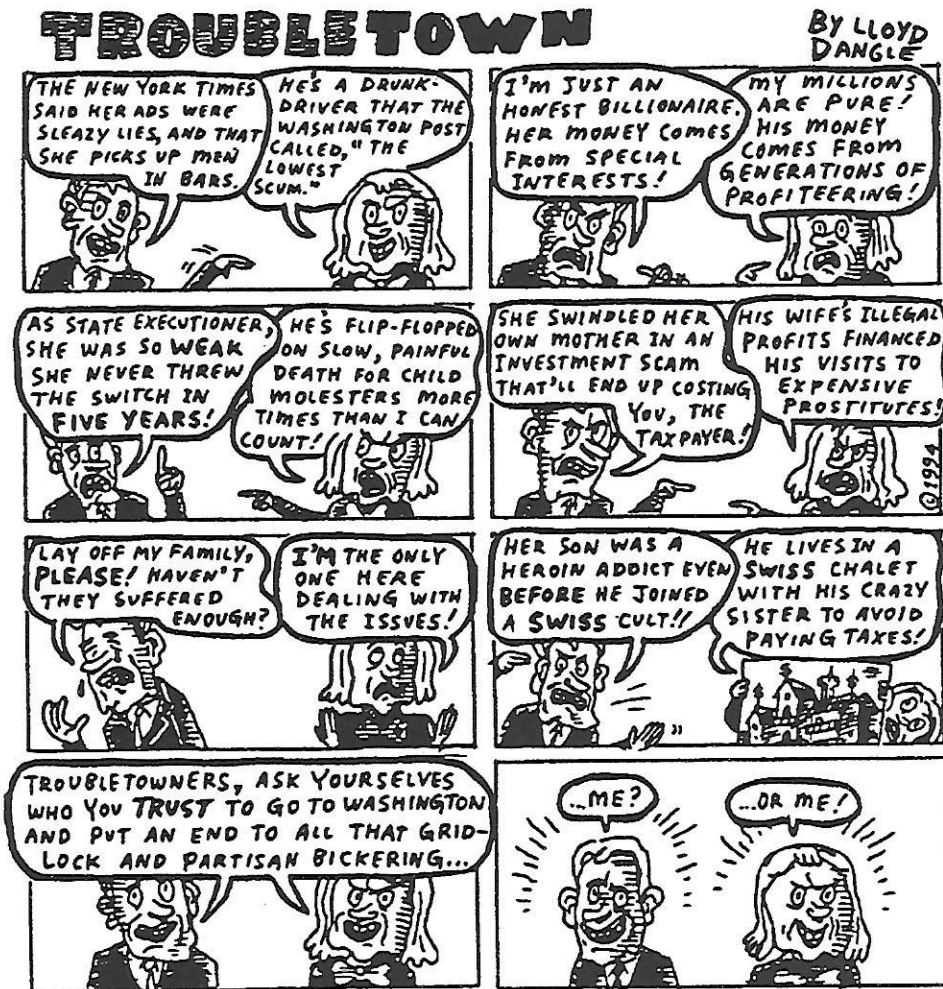
— as a mandate for their racist, sexist, labor-hating policies. The more astute among them, including — surprisingly — Newt Gingrich of Georgia, the next speaker of the House, recognize that the voters will be just as unmerciful to the Republicans if they fail to address the concerns of American working families.

The Real Crisis Facing Working People

Clinton claims credit for bringing about an "economic recovery." The financial pages of our daily newspapers inform us that an "economic recovery" is in progress. Our trade union newspapers editorialize that the Clinton administration has given us an "economic recovery." However, on November 8, exit polls revealed that a big majority of voters — especially women voters — do not believe that an economic recovery is under way. Mothers who manage family budgets and who are concerned that their children get nutritious food and warm, sturdy clothing to wear to school are especially worried. Fathers and mothers who are working longer hours each week — and therefore unable to give adequate attention and care to their children — just to meet monthly expenses, who are driving their cars until they literally fall apart, and who are unable to go away on vacation for years at a time, are feeling stressed out, depressed, and angry.

And the thousands who wish they had a job at which they worked longer hours each week just to meet monthly expenses are even more stressed out, depressed, and angry. If there is an "economic recovery" why are we not sharing in it? What's wrong with us? We see pretty people on television asserting that they "can handle" leasing a BMW automobile; we see the same pretty people jetting to Caribbean islands, and we wonder why we can't have just a little fun in our own lives.

The anger that working people feel is often misdirected at whatever target happens to be available. Husbands blame wives; wives blame husbands, with the result that families are all too often torn apart and divorce lawyers collect fat legal fees. Racial tensions are exacerbated, as politicians and labor bureaucrats encourage working people to seek scapegoats in "welfare cheats" or "illegal aliens" (see "Fight for Immigrant Rights Continues in California" by Evelyn Sell, elsewhere in this issue). In some extreme cases, the stress that working people



feel has tragic results, when someone snaps and commits murder and/or suicide.

A Worsening "Quality of Life"

Though few working people understand why, they do know that their "quality of life" is deteriorating rapidly. Whatever false ideas people may have about the causes of violent crime, crime is nevertheless a hard fact, and people of color suffer from it the most. Not only are city streets unsafe; the parking lots at suburban shopping malls have become dangerous places, especially for women. As federal and state politicians reduce spending for social services and education, local communities are raising property taxes, the majority of which go to the public schools. Even so, schools are deteriorating physically and in educational quality, and not just in core urban areas. Drug use in high schools is again on the increase (by the children who were inundated with "Just Say No" messages during the Reagan years), and sexual harassment and even rape have become serious problems in the high schools and even junior high schools. And this is not a problem which is confined to poverty-stricken city school districts. Working-class families who have left the cities in search of safe streets, good schools, and lower property taxes have been disappointed, and the 1994 elections reflected their disappointment.

Does working people's disbelief that an economic recovery is occurring mean that the politicians and journalists are lying to us? Unfortunately, it does not, and the current economic recovery which is under way is cause for even *greater* worker resentment. The bosses and financiers are indeed enjoying a recovery, but workers are not sharing in it. Employment levels are not increasing at the same rates as economic growth, and bosses are taking advantage of organized labor's weakness to pay dramatically lower wages than they have in the past. Laid-off union printers, for example, are accepting work in non-union shops at wage reductions up to \$10/hour in some cases. Virtually no working-class families can meet their expenses without either two incomes (either by two people working or one person holding two or more jobs), overtime work, or both.

The most egregious example of an industry which is not sharing its recovery with its employees is the U.S. auto industry, which is selling more cars than at any time in its history — including the boom years of the 1950s and '60s. However, rather than rehiring the thousands of auto workers who were laid off over the years, the companies have sped up the lines and depended on overtime work to fill their production quotas. At the end of September, workers at General Motors, beginning at the old plants in Flint, Michigan, said "Enough!" and went out on strike, demanding that unemployed auto workers be rehired. In positive contrast to other strikes during the recent period, the General Motors strike lasted only a few days and ended in victory for the United Auto Workers union. (GM was forced to agree to rehire nearly 800

workers to spread out the workload. These would be the first new hires since 1986! See *Labor Notes*, November 1994, for details of this victory by UAW Local 599.)

...And the Politicians' "Response"

Based on both their performance in office and their campaign messages, the voters concluded that their elected officials — above all the members of Congress — don't even have a clue about what is wrong, let alone how to fix it. And since Congress has been dominated for 40 years by the Democratic Party, the voters dumped a sufficient number of Democratic incumbents to give the Republicans their first majority in both Houses of Congress since 1954.

The manner in which candidates for all offices appealed to the voters was absolutely insulting. Rather than address the genuine concerns that we have as workers, as parents, and as residents of our communities, they gave us simplistic slogans and mudslinging accusations against one another. Pollsters found that negative campaign ads offended the voters; however, since candidates of both parties were equally guilty of using them, they did not have an impact on the results. For example: campaigning for Republican Senate candidate Garabed Haytaian, New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman told us, "The incumbent [Democrat Frank Lautenberg] has been down there for twelve years voting against the death penalty and raising your taxes." Whitman is a popular governor, who is considered to have a bright future in national Republican politics; however, New Jerseyans recognized (1) that capital punishment is not a federal issue and that Whitman's predecessor, Democrat James Florio, signed legislation to reinstate it, and (2) that their federal taxes have not been significantly increased since the Reagan administration's Tax Reform Act of 1986. Lautenberg won.

Another example: three-term New York Governor Mario Cuomo attempted to capitalize on strong pro-choice sentiment and accused his Republican opponent, George Pataki, of opposing the right to abortion. Pataki's wife, Libby Pataki, appeared in an effective campaign ad proclaiming her own and her husband's support to a woman's right to choose, which is not in danger in the state of New York, at least for now. Cuomo, once thought of as an impressive presidential candidate for the Democrats, was turned out of office.

The Broken Record and Broken Promises

Like the droning of a broken record, Republicans repeatedly portrayed Democrats as "pro-criminal," while Democrats repeatedly portrayed Republicans as corrupt. None of the mudslinging got the kind of favorable response that Ross Perot got in 1992 when he appeared before the American people with pie charts and bar graphs explaining the danger of the federal deficit. Perot has no more answers than any other capitalist candidate to the problems facing

working people, but he at least attempted to level with us, not just "talk trash."

A big liability for the Democrats was the Clinton administration's record of broken promises. Clinton promised economic recovery, and indeed that has come about — but he didn't tell us that working people weren't going to share in it! He promised us good jobs with good wages, a promise which he did not and could not keep. He promised that he would — in the wake of the Soviet Union's demise — divert funds from military spending to domestic infrastructure and social services. Instead, he has engaged in military intervention in the Caribbean and Middle East.

Health Care Debacle

Of course, Clinton staked his administration's future on health care reform, and the 1994 elections showed just how the people think he has done. The United States is no closer to solving the health insurance mess now than it was when Clinton took office, and the Democratic Party and Clinton administration deserve the American people's harsh judgment on their failure even to begin to address the problem.

It was no surprise that Clinton would fail to reform the health insurance "system." The only surprise was how ignominiously he failed. This administration came to Washington with a plan to "reform" health insurance which left the private insurance companies still providing the overwhelming majority of working people's coverage. The only change was to establish a means by which uninsured people would be covered — by these same private carriers. When the lawyers and bureaucrats, led by Hillary Rodham Clinton, finally proposed a piece of legislation, it combined the worst features of both the present non-system of private coverage with yet another bloated, inefficient, federal bureaucracy. The problem of out-of-control increases in medical bills and insurance premiums was in fact going to get worse if Clinton's plan were enacted. What a gift to those congressional reactionaries who opposed any change in the present health insurance system!

Had Clinton proposed a single-payer system, like the ones existing in every other G-7 country (the seven wealthiest countries, including England, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, and Japan), working people would have stood with him. However, depriving the insurance companies of the super-profits which they are reaping from their health insurance subsidiaries was simply not an option open to a capitalist politician; in most of the G-7 countries Social Democratic governments put single-payer health systems in place (in most cases before insurance companies became as large and powerful as they are today), and in Canada the New Democratic Party, Canada's labor party, had sufficient strength in the federal parliament to bloc with sections of the Liberal Party to enact Canada's single-payer system in the early 1970s. Instead of taking on the powerful insurance industry, Clinton proposed a plan which simply would

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Fight for Immigrant Rights Continues in California

by Evelyn Sell

Proposition 187: "ILLEGAL ALIENS. INITIATIVE STATUTE Makes illegal aliens ineligible for public social services, public health care services (unless emergency under federal law), and attendance at public schools. Requires state/local agencies report suspected illegal aliens. Fiscal impact: Annual state/local program savings of roughly \$200 million, offset by administrative costs of tens of millions (potentially more than \$100 million in first year). Places at possible risk billions of dollars in federal funding for California."

*OFFICIAL VOTER INFORMATION
booklet by Los Angeles County
Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk*

Within hours of winning 59 percent of the votes cast on November 8, Proposition 187 was challenged by eight lawsuits — with more to come — directed against violations of constitutional guarantees of due process, privacy, equal protection, and other rights. The court fights were announced even before election results were reported. Opponents of 187, pointing to a multitude of civil liberties transgressions, frequently cited the 1982 U.S. Supreme Court decision against a Texas law denying a public school education to undocumented children. In response to the suit filed by the Los Angeles and San Francisco school boards and the California School Boards Association, a state judge temporarily halted enforcement of 187's provision excluding illegal immigrants from public schools. The judge extended this injunction to public colleges and universities. A federal judge scheduled a November 16 hearing on four suits filed by civil rights groups and individuals seeking to void other parts of the new law.

Eager to capitalize on the ballot box victory, re-elected Governor Pete Wilson immediately issued an executive order directing health care providers to stop prenatal services and admissions to nursing homes — making pregnant women, infants, and medically-needy persons the first victims of 187. Attorney General Lungren immediately began to distribute forms to local law enforcement agencies to gather names of suspected illegal immigrants. Although the proposition did not address employment, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that some bosses are already beginning to check documents of job applicants.

Protesting passage of 187, student demonstrations were held in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and San Francisco. Walkouts took place at several University of California law schools and at UCLA. Shortly before the election, 1,000 Los Angeles teachers signed statements declaring they would not report any students, and similar pre-election refusals were issued by health care and social services workers. These noncompliance pledges were again voiced after the vote.

There is no doubt that battles — in schools and public services workplaces, on the streets, and in the courts — will continue over immigrant rights and the rights of citizens whose skin color and features target them as "suspected illegals."

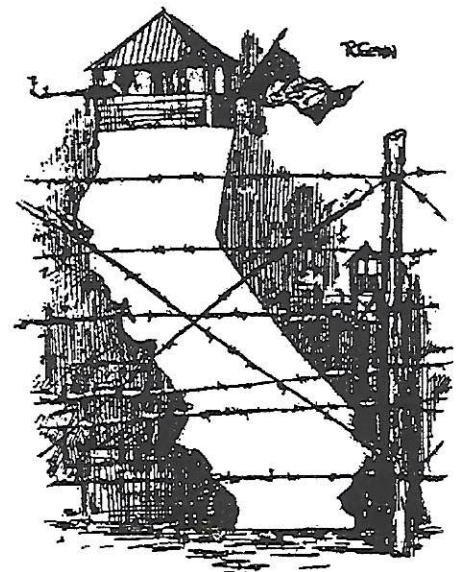
Pre-Election Activities

The ballot initiative was co-authored by Harold and Nelson Ezell, former high-ranking officials in the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and Republican Assemblyman Richard Mountjoy. Initially supported by a loose network of community-based groups organized as the California Coalition for Immigration Reform, the campaign to collect sufficient signatures to qualify for the ballot was bolstered by an infusion of over \$100,000 from the Republican Party and GOP legislators. Hiring a professional signature-gathering firm resulted in the collection of almost 600,000 names to place the measure on the ballot.

From the first, Proposition 187 campaigners appealed to Californians' insecurities and prejudices by claiming that the loss of jobs was due to an "invasion" of undocumented workers from Mexico and Central America, that illegal aliens were draining away taxpayers' dollars by excessive use of health care facilities, that "foreigners" were depriving native-born children of a good education by overcrowding schools, and that illegal immigrants were responsible for rising crime rates. These scapegoating arguments were summarized in 187's unofficial name: the "Save Our State" initiative. The pro-187 campaign was carried out through a barrage of media events, radio ads, and endorsements by prominent persons and organizations. Governor Pete Wilson, far behind in the polls, which predicted victory for Democrat Kathleen Brown, made his support for Proposition 187 the focal point of his campaign to retain his political office.

The well-financed and vigorous attack against immigrants was countered initially by groups having neither sufficient resources nor statewide political weight. Among them was the Pro-Immigrant Mobilization Coalition, which was founded in the Los Angeles area in June of 1993, in order

to respond to the increasing attacks on immigrants, with or without official documentation, by any and all government and private individuals and groups.... We defend the rights of all immigrants to full civil and human rights, regardless of their legal status. We support the right of all immigrants to work with dignity and without fear of harassment or deportation. To defend immigrant rights, we organize peaceful, legal marches and picket lines, teach-ins, and public forums and responses to attacks appearing in the different forms of the media that shape public opinion.



The racist fear-mongering by pro-187 forces was not combated by authoritative figures and organizations until late in the pre-election period. Taxpayers Against 187 was formed in July 1994 by a coalition of statewide labor, education, health, and law enforcement groups. Their first news conference wasn't held until mid-August; fund-raising was below \$1 million until a month before Election Day, and their anti-187 position was that illegal immigration was a serious problem, but Proposition 187 would only make this bad situation even worse.

Managed by a professional consulting firm, the mainstream anti-187 organization actually aided the chauvinistic theme of the initiative's backers by appealing to white voters with the following arguments: if hundreds of thousands of students are thrown out of schools, they will be in the streets committing crimes, and if illegal immigrants are denied health care and their children are refused immunizations, they will spread diseases throughout the entire community. There were behind-the-scenes efforts to "go soft" on Democratic Party candidates and not demand that they come out strongly against 187 as well as attempts to squelch the street demonstrations organized by the Latino community and students.

Mass March, Student Actions

On October 16, at least 100,000 marched close to four miles from the Eastside Latino community to Los Angeles City Hall protesting Proposition 187. The numbers far surpassed any previous mass action, including the 1970 Chicano Moratorium, which drew 25,000 demonstrators. Overwhelmingly Mexicano, Chicano, and Centroamericano, the anti-187 marchers included Korean contingents, Filipinos and Asians, African Americans, and Anglos. There

were unionists from the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union, United Teachers—Los Angeles, garment workers (ILGWU), United Electrical Workers, and Service Employees International Union. At the rally site, across the street from City Hall, speakers included leading figures in the Latino community and the executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The huge march and rally, along with the many other actions which followed, had significant effects on public opinion polls. Pro-187 sentiment, which had been registering at the level of about 60 percent, slipped to 51 percent and then, on the eve of the election, polls showed an almost even split on the measure. Reacting to their perceptions of public opinion and locked in tight races, some leading Democratic Party candidates, such as U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, announced opposition to 187 — although, at the same time, she said to a November 6 campaign rally, “Let me go back to Washington...to pass a *correct* bill to stop illegal immigration at the borders.”

Along with the mass mobilization on October 16, student activities were the most inspiring anti-187 events leading up to Election Day. On November 1, students walked out of eight Los Angeles schools. The following day, over 10,000 youths engaged in walkouts from more than 30 Los Angeles schools and held various rallies: at the Federal Building in Westwood, in a South-Central street, on the steps of the Los Angeles City Hall. Similar actions were carried out by students in nearby cities and Orange County. An estimated 4,000 students held walkouts on November 3, including 1,000 youths from a number of high schools, who gathered in a protest rally on the grounds of Cerritos College. Scattered walkouts also took place on November 4 in Los Angeles County.

Los Angeles Unified School District administrators and Latino politicians called on students to remain in school. Cardinal Roger M. Mahoney, a strong opponent of 187, also spoke out against the walkouts; he praised students for “their passionate interest in this election” but asked them to work against 187 after school. At a news conference organized by Taxpayers Against 187, students were urged to follow a “Top Ten List” of ways to defeat 187, including: participating in a phone bank, putting a “No on 187” message on their backpacks, organizing a car wash or other fund-raising event to help pay for radio ads, or walking precincts in “get out the vote” efforts. But local student actions continued. On the eve of Election Day, students participated in a demonstration in front of the Los Angeles City Hall with many workers from the downtown garment district.

Wary about the turmoil which would be created if they tried to clamp down, most local school administrators did not penalize the protesters. In some cases, teachers and administrators accompanied students, provided bullhorns, arranged for school buses to return demonstrators to campuses, and did not discipline the youth activists. At University High School,

however, six hours of detention were imposed on over 700 students who demonstrated at the Westwood Federal Building. School administrators and police agencies met to plan for “violent” reactions if 187 was approved by voters. On Election Day, the Los Angeles Police Department was placed on tactical alert, and cops in riot gear were prominently visible on the streets.

Student Leadership

The student actions were largely self-organized, and many were spontaneous. For example, enraged by Governor Wilson’s campaign attacks on illegal immigrants, college students formed the October Student Movement (OSM) in order to organize anti-Wilson rallies during the month before Election Day. A prime leader of the OSM had been an activist in the broader Californians United Against 187, which sponsored a summer conference where hundreds of high school and college students discussed mobilization techniques. Older student organizations, such as the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), were drawn into what became called “the Student Movement.” The major goal of the Movement grouping was to get students involved in traditional political activities, for example, holding a rally and precinct walk against Proposition 187 on November 5.

In September, high school students began talking informally about walking out of classes to protest 187. Cautioned against leaving schools by anti-187 organizations (including MEChA chapters and Californians United) and leading figures in the Chicano community (such as Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina), many students expressed their anti-187 sentiments through petitions, in-school seminars and assemblies, and after-school meetings and electoral activities. In other cases, according to a report in the *Los Angeles Times*, individual students took the lead in calling youths out of the classrooms. For example, 15-year-old Mariela Flores called classmates and encouraged them to join school walkouts. She was prompted to take this initiative after watching the film “El Norte” and thinking to herself, “Yeah, that’s the way it is here, and it’s just getting worse.”

At this time, it appears that youths will continue to build on the momentum created by the walkouts and student involvement in the political arena. There is a good potential for a vigorous student movement — but there is also the danger that youths will get swallowed up and conservatized by traditional organizations. In this respect, students must deal with the same questions and problems confronting the forces which oppose immigrant-bashing.

Serious Divisions

A continuing movement to protect and extend immigrant rights will have to overcome the ethnic and racial divisions revealed by pre-election debates and statements as well as by the actual voting patterns. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that pre-election student walkouts at Leuzinger High School “crystallized hostility between Latinos and African Americans. In

some cases, Latinos see their black classmates as gleefully waiting for them to be kicked out of school. Some black students, meanwhile, say their Latino classmates taunt them and blame them for the proposition.”

An African American teacher in a South-Central school stated:

“I don’t think that our borders, our welfare system, or our school system should be there for the taking. This [187] would maybe deter people from coming in over the border. They would realize that they would be under closer scrutiny. They would have second thoughts about so willingly coming into the country and getting jobs and false documents...There would be fewer people competing for services. We have more than enough people in here.”

A member of the Black Education Commission of the Los Angeles school district complained, “Public dollars are being spent for illegal immigrants.” A cofounder of the Brotherhood Crusade and state chair of the Congress of Racial Equality said that “California kids that are legitimate would not be able to get the full benefits of living here. Proposition 187 doesn’t close the border, but it takes away the magnetic appeal to come here. Something has to be done to close down the added cost or no one in the state will survive.”

Significant numbers of Latinos also were *in favor* of 187. As one legal immigrant explained, “If you talk to Latinos who have been here for years and years, they support it. The people who are legal think it will open opportunities for them. And, of course, it will.”

It would be a profound mistake to claim, as various commentators have, that white voters overwhelmingly approved 187, while minority voters overwhelmingly opposed it. The cold hard facts are: 56 percent of African American voters cast ballots against 187 — but 44 percent voted for the proposition; 54 percent of Asian American voters cast ballots against 187 — but 46 percent voted for it. Even among Latino voters, 22 percent approved 187 (78 percent voted against). In a South Los Angeles district populated mostly by Latino and Black residents, 187 was *supported* by a narrow margin of voters. There is a quick-and-ready explanation for these figures: the very bad economic situation in California has created acute insecurities, fears, and resentments. At this time, the scapegoating pronouncements of bosses and their politician-servants have convinced many working people that their problems are caused by illegal immigrants who are taking too big a slice out of a shrinking pie.

Militants in the labor movement, civil rights and civil liberties activists, and socialists are faced with many difficulties in overcoming the divisions exposed by the electoral victory of Proposition 187. It is hoped that future articles in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* will offer ideas about healing ruptures within the working class and will pose ways to build on the inspiring struggle launched by opponents of Proposition 187. □

November 11, 1994

Convención Nacional Democrática Opts for Civil Insurgency

by Cecilia Rodriguez

The author is director of the Texas-based National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, U.S.A. (NCDM). The formation of the NCDM was undertaken to promote efforts among groups and individuals in the U.S. dedicated to working for fundamental social change to give support to the broad, general movement for democracy, liberty, and justice in Mexico. The NCDM can be reached at 601 N. Cotton St. #A103, El Paso, Texas 79902. Phone/fax: (915) 532-8382; e-mail: moonlight@igc.apc.org

October 11, 1994

I
Under gray clouds and a slow drizzle thousands of convention delegates came together in San Cristóbal de las Casas in the state of Chiapas to make plans in the aftermath of the Mexican national elections and in the midst of increased militarization in Chiapas. Over 1,200 people from all over Mexico, along with international contingents from Switzerland, Spain, the United States, Germany, and Chile, met for two intense days and nights.

They were greeted by an EZLN communiqué of October 8 which broke off any possibility of a dialogue with the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) government, an event which colored their deliberations with complexity and urgency. Still struggling in its infancy, the Convención Nacional Democrática (CND — Democratic National Convention) continues to stun us (those of us who have had the privilege to participate) with its tenacious ability to keep beneath one umbrella a myriad of political tendencies and geographical, class, and racial differences.

It is only in the CND that campesinos from isolated rural areas sit together with students from the metropolitan sophistication of Mexico City, the nation's capital, movie stars, artists, teachers, labor leaders, intellectuals, gay and lesbian groups, and political party militants to discuss the future of the country. It is CND delegates who [on August 4–6 this year] forged a national mobilization plan in the middle of the Lacandón rain forest and set up a national leadership structure, the Presidencial, charged with the task of organizing the new movement. It is CND delegates who pull elaborate feats of fund raising in order to make the expensive trip to Chiapas, to mobilize hundreds of buses and acquire huge meeting halls in a matter of days, and at times hours. It is CND delegates who sit patiently through poorly organized meetings while the leadership scrambles through 20-hour days in order to respond to the enormous workload.

There were 22 of the 31 Mexican states represented here today, 103 journalists, 27 foreign observers, 71 invited guests, and 42 of the 100 elected representatives to the Presidencial. The

Convention presented progress reports, evaluated the effectiveness of its structure, and produced a statement demanding the termination of the PRI government and the acknowledgment that the internal deterioration of the PRI, and its repressive response to popular mobilization, made it necessary to move from a strategy of civil disobedience to one of civil insurgency and a state of "red alert."

The CND also called for the recognition of the EZLN as a belligerent force, the defense of Bishop Samuel Ruiz, and the demilitarization of the state of Chiapas.

II
One thing was striking. Local news reports had changed. Now they were pointedly trying to prove their objectivity. "The only objective news source in Tuxtla Gutiérrez [capital of Chiapas]," said one white-haired news anchor. And as though to prove his point, he presented a five-minute report. A doctor and his family had been shot at by a mysterious car on the highway. To their surprise, they learned the snipers were local police. "We thought the vehicle had been stolen" said the police commander. "The ones who shot are here, you know; we're not trying to hide anything. Why would we be here in front of the television cameras?" "What are we going to do?" said the injured doctor. "I was riding, my child, my wife. These policemen are worse than hardened criminals. Who will prosecute them, who will bring them to justice? There's no restraint; it's scary." The frightened doctor cradled his arm and looked past the microphone at some object off camera.

III
Convention delegates have etched in their memory from August the sight of the enormous amphitheater which the Zapatistas erected in the middle of the jungle. Aguascalientes fills the eyes like the sphinxes of Egypt, like the great pre-Conquest pyramids of the Mayan Indians; it is symbolic of the enormous thirst for justice of the Zapatistas. In response the CND constructs an equally awesome monument: a massive union of progressive forces, inexperienced, poor, contending with the lack of infrastructure

in an underdeveloped country, putting their lives and security on the line in an unheralded enthusiasm in a world which has become cynical and old.

IV
"We get a variety of threats," Rosario Ibarra de Piedra said to me. A diminutive, energetic woman whose line-worn face is almost always wreathed in a smile, Rosario lost her son to the repressive forces in Mexico in the 1970s. As president of the CND she steers the massive gathering with great patience, humor, and consistency.

"They'll leave a message on your answering machine," Rosario said. "Be careful, we will kill you...this is the devil calling you...we will murder you...and no one will find one trace..."

V
On September 14 of this year the indigenous people of Guerrero organized an enormous peaceful march. They were met with armed police, and over 300 men, women, and children were detained, beaten, and tortured. The group, named 500 Years of Resistance, fully supports the Zapatista demands, and insists on peace for the country.

In response to the repression, 100 indigenous people today began a hunger strike at the UN branch offices in Mexico City. They talk about getting 502 hunger strikers; one striker per year of resistance.

"Everyone focuses on the courage of the Zapatistas," someone commented. "No one gives a damn that there are thousands of unarmed, defenseless dark-skinned people taking to the streets, blocking roads, bringing everything to a stop, risking their lives, because they have no doubts about mobilizing and taking a stand. The state is unlikely to forget, much less forgive their activism. No one talks about them. No one lets people know about their heroism and determination."

VI
Limping on the arm of a relative, Amado Aven-
daño of the PRD (Revolutionary Democratic Party), [who was seriously injured in an auto accident of suspicious origin less than a month before the August 21 elections,] came to speak

December Confrontation Building in Chiapas

As we approach the first anniversary of the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, there is imminent danger that the Mexican ruling class will attempt a ruthless military suppression of the indigenous people who have dared to protest, demonstrate, and fight for their rights.

On December 8, 1994, Eduardo Robledo Rincón, the PRI candidate for governor of Chiapas, who claims to have won the August election, will take office. The indigenous population, and the opposition to the PRI in general, claim that the PRD candidate, Amado Avendaño Figueroa, won the election, and refuse to recognize Robledo. They vow to establish their own institutions and to be governed only by them. The opposition has declared half the counties in Chiapas state to be "rebel territory." Tens of thousands gathered in the capital, simultaneously with the official swearing-in of the PRI candidate, for their own mass ceremony to swear in their own government, that of Avendaño.

The PRI central government, under the newly installed President Ernesto Zedillo, continues its full backing for the local property owners and their strong-arm men. The stage is set for a bloody denouement, unless the forces of freedom, justice, democracy, and socialism everywhere in the world make themselves felt in defense of the heroic fighting people of Chiapas.

The following information was taken from an article on the situation in Chiapas made available on e-mail by Robert Shapiro of Boston University: "Only our governor-elect, Amado Avendaño Figueroa, and his representatives will be recognized as our state authorities."

"The independent (i.e., not dominated by the PRI government) Statewide Coalition of Indigenous and Campesino Organizations (CEIOC) issued an 8-point declaration summarizing the measures that will be applied irreversibly in nine regions of the state in

order to create autonomous, multiethnic regions of the Indian peoples and their free self-determination.

"They declare that the indigenous will form their regional governments of transition to democracy and to peace with dignity and justice.

"They also decided that starting today they will pay 'neither water, nor electricity, nor taxes imposed by representatives of the government that usurps popular will.' Nor will they continue to make payments on loans that have been granted to ejidos, communities, and social organizations by state, federal, or municipal agencies, 'until Eduardo Robledo Rincón resigns and the triumph of Amado Avendaño is recognized.'

"At certain places and times, to be determined by the campesino organizations, 'offices of all official agencies — local, state and federal — will be closed, since their presences only serve to divide and dominate our peoples.'

"Starting today [October 12], no official of governments 'that violate popular will through electoral fraud,' no state or federal representative of the state party [the PRI], will be able to enter 'our communities, to travel the roads of our regions or be present in our territories, dividing the people or campaigning.' Only Mexican citizens of whatever indigenous or mestizo group, or representatives or officials of the government of transition 'headed by Amado Avendaño,' will be allowed to travel freely.

"The land recuperations that have been carried out recently by the people and organizations of campesinos, will be 'protected by the declaration of the Government of Transition, by Accord 169 of the United Nations, and by popular will.'

"The feeling of the leaders of the CEIOC was made clear when Arturo Luna assured that if change isn't fundamental, 'there will be war, and this no longer depends on the EZLN, now it depends on the people.'"

in the hands of a party busy assassinating its own leadership. Democracy, a feverish dream in Mexico.

VII

"Who will go to the jungle?" 500 say they want to go. But they have no more time left. If they miss one more day of work they will lose their jobs, and jobs are hard to come by. I have no clothes, others say. I'm afraid, some say frankly, remembering the EZLN communiqué, the mined roads, the bristling soldiers, the bands of tall, heavy-set judicial police dressed as Zapatistas who have been robbing people of cameras and money and any other portable goods in these wild lands.

VIII

The rumor was that dozens of anti-riot tanks left Tuxtla [for San Cristóbal] at some odd hour of the night before. No one ever saw them arrive. There were only dozens of blue pickups manned by dark-faced men who squatted in the truckbeds in raincoats, rifles placed across their knees, their bulk pelted by the steady rain. They went past the convention center as though in a parade, their lights flashing wildly; shadows in the drizzle.

October 12 — Celebrating 502 Years of Resistance

I

On this day, San Cristóbal closed its doors and its shops, and emptied its streets. It waited. It waited for the arrival of over 35,000 indigenous people from dozens of communities in Chiapas. They came on foot, on buses, in rickety and flatbed trucks. The men came with their mud-spattered rubber boots and their nylon backpacks, the women with their braids, brightly-colored ribbons, and children strapped to their backs. They came to exercise their right to peaceful protest, in spite of the threats of the armed guards, the deaths, the rapes, the hurled insults as they gathered their forces from all parts of the countryside.

They arrived contingent by contingent and unfurled their banners. There were very few light-skinned faces in the march; just those of the convention delegates who stood open-mouthed at the sides, taking pictures and waving excitedly to acquaintances. They were to gather at both entrances to San Cristóbal, meet at a given point, and march through the streets. They began to gather at 10 a.m., and finally started to march at noon.

"Salinas entiende, la patria no se vende!" (Salinas, understand, the motherland cannot be sold). "Quiera o no quiera, el PRI va pa' fuera" (Whether they like it or not, the PRI is on its way out). "No somos uno, no somos cien, p— gobierno, cuántanos bien!" (We are not one, or one hundred, damned government, count us well).

The indigenous people grinned at the urban slogans, reserving their enthusiasm for the moment of thunderous clapping which began at one end of the march and ran to the other. They ran, they clenched their fists, and at the side of the march, young men with shirt-tails flapping in their faces painted slogans on every inch of wall they could find.

The authentic coletos [the name the locals of Spanish origin use for themselves] were absent from San Cristóbal. The city hall, here called the presidential palace, which had been ransacked by the Zapatistas in January, stood passively as the marchers swarmed around it. Its enormous doors were painted black and looked like the mouths of caves. The young men from the march painted slogans again, pushed and pulled the doors; the sudden pushing and shoving was like the wave of an ocean which slaps the shore with sudden, unexpected force. They climbed

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to the convention at 11 p.m. tonight. He said quietly, "I don't know about the rest of the country...in Chiapas we are fed up with the corruption, with the mockery of justice; we will not wait anymore for the arrival of democracy..."

Even after heated disagreements and hours of discussion, convention delegates stood and cheered Avendaño, chanted and clapped, their fervor revived once again in the midst of exhaustion.

At 2 a.m., small groups of delegates met here and there in San Cristóbal, their voices low, their conversation focused on the dominant theme of thousands of Mexicans today: how to change the country, how to turn the page on this terrible moment in history when national leadership is

A New and Democratic South Africa?

by Tom Ranuga

South Africa, a country that became an international outcast because of the racist policies of the white minority government, has finally undergone the long-awaited change from the system of legalized racism called apartheid to a new political dispensation. After long and sometimes acrimonious negotiations between the government and representatives of the anti-apartheid liberation movement — negotiations that were dominated by the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies — the first nonracial elections that heralded the post-apartheid era were held in April 1994. With the support of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the ANC achieved a major electoral victory, and Nelson Mandela was subsequently inaugurated as the first Black president of the new South Africa.

All the major organizations of the liberation movement, with the notable exception of the Azanian People's Organization (Azapo), participated in the historic April elections. Azapo decided to boycott the elections because the leadership regarded the whole phenomenon as a sham, not leading to real power for the Black majority. This decision was consistent with the earlier position taken by the organization on negotiations and was very much in line with the militant and non-collaborationist tradition of the Black Consciousness Movement and the leading ideas of Steve Biko. However, in the volatile power game of politics, it remains to be seen whether that ideologically consistent stance

of Azapo will ultimately enhance or jeopardize the political fortunes of the organization.

The Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), a socialist organization with a revolutionary program and the non-collaborationist tradition of the Unity Movement, decided nevertheless to participate in the national elections under the umbrella of the Workers List Party. The campaign platform of the Workers List Party was to propagate the idea of a Mass Workers' Party as an instrument for promoting the interests of the working people of South Africa. The decision of WOSA to participate in the elections was preceded by an intense debate relating to the proper course of action to take. The organization had established a national reputation for continuously opposing and attacking the negotiations. The general expectation was that WOSA would opt for non-participation, but the very opposite actually happened. The question is, will the revolutionary image of the organization be tarnished by that participation, or will it be vindicated by the realization of a Mass Workers' Party? It therefore remains to be seen what the impact of participation will be on the political future of WOSA as a socialist entity.

The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), the country's second liberation organization, also participated in the national elections, but, as a result of internal conflicts, poor organizational preparedness, and funding problems, suffered a major electoral defeat. The defeat was particularly poignant because the election campaign of the organization was structured on orthodox nationalist lines and focused primarily on the question relating to the restoration of lands lost by subjugated Africans. However, the radical youth wing of the PAC did not make matters easy for the organization. That youth wing had a very strong influence on the leadership, which was eventually compelled to adopt the slogan "one settler, one bullet" to underline the objective of the organization to overthrow the white power structure through the armed struggle. At a time when the country was experiencing escalating violence and the prevailing national mood was for peace and reconciliation, that slogan probably contributed in part to the disastrous electoral defeat of the PAC.

Post-apartheid South Africa is now a reality. In accordance with the power-sharing provisions of the interim constitution, the former leader of the white minority government, F.W. de Klerk, was appointed to the post of second deputy president in the Government of National Unity (GNU). The urbane and suave Thabo Mbeki, who is highly regarded in the business world and Western capitals for his moderate politics, was given the position of first deputy president.

President Mandela has been a great symbol of the national liberation struggle and is a highly

respected leader. As a national icon, he was the right man to oversee the historic transition from the demise of the apartheid system to the beginning of a new South Africa. In trying to allay white fears and win the confidence of the business and investment community, the president has made major concessions that have displeased and alienated many Black people, including radical members of the ANC and its traditional ally, the South African Communist Party. Whites admire him for his generosity, forgiveness, and lack of bitterness after serving 27 years in prison for his opposition to apartheid. Blacks revere him for his historic role and contribution to the struggle for liberation. He has worked relentlessly for peace and goodwill. But the peace and goodwill dividend may not last long as the country continues to grapple with the vestiges of apartheid and tries to upgrade the socio-economic conditions of Black people. If the ANC-dominated Government of National Unity fails to deliver on its promises, then the spirit of peace and good will could be seriously threatened, as Black leaders, now waiting in the wings, come forward with more radical solutions such as nationalization of the commanding heights of the economy, equitable distribution of wealth through taxation, and the restoration of land forcefully taken from its rightful owners. Given the extremes in wealth and poverty and the unfolding revolution of rising expectations, the country may be headed for a major class battle. That may happen during Mandela's presidency but is more likely to transpire after the reins of power are assumed by his successor.

The ANC is the only liberation organization that received an overwhelming popular vote in the national elections in April and is now the majority party in the Government of National Unity. The political spotlight in the new South Africa is therefore on the role of that organization.

The ANC was voted into office primarily by the Black majority on the basis of promises and principles stated in its election manifesto, the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP). This document was not only used by the ANC and its allies, the SACP and COSATU, as a campaign platform but also as a framework for governing policy and legislative action. But, as a major partner in the GNU, which must operate on the basis of consensus and within the constraints imposed by inviolable constitutional principles, the ANC has in fact limited power to implement its election promises. This state of affairs constitutes a dilemma for the majority party and has a potential for serious political ramifications.

In the GNU the ANC shares power with parties that have divergent interests and conflicting political agendas that could make the process of reconstruction and development very



difficult for the organization. The three parties making up the GNU are the ANC, the National Party, and the Inkatha Freedom Party of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi. The National Party received its major support from the white electorate and was victorious in only one province out of the nine, the Western Cape, through the overwhelming support of Coloured voters, who are the majority in that province. The National Party believes in group rights and is in the GNU primarily to fight for and represent the interests of white and Coloured supporters. The Inkatha Freedom Party won the Natal/KwaZulu province primarily through intimidation, electoral fraud, and violence. The leader of that party, Chief Buthelezi, seems to be quite contented with his Cabinet position as Minister of Home Affairs and is now talking peace. But he is still committed to his Natal/KwaZulu constituency and wants a federal constitution as a basis for more power in his province. Both these parties can make it very difficult for the ANC to realize its objectives. But what compounds the problem even further is the fact that the ANC, whatever its declared aims to implement reform, will be hampered in its efforts by entrenched constitutional principles agreed to before the national elections. For example, one of the most critical issues that must be resolved in the new South Africa is the land question, but the restoration of lands confiscated before and during the apartheid period can be legally blocked by a sacrosanct constitutional principle that guarantees property rights. Therefore, whatever the goodwill efforts to redress historical injustices relating to the land question, the ANC is going to have serious problems. The fact that whites in South Africa legally own by far the largest portion of the land and that the ownership of that property is constitutionally guaranteed mean that the ability of the ANC to correct historical inequities is at best highly questionable. If the ANC was determined to deal decisively with the land question and was really serious about the matter, why would it agree unconditionally to a constitutional principle that would pose a major legal obstacle to agrarian reform?

One section of the population that will be directly affected by the land question and yet seems not to feature prominently in the ongoing political discussions about structural inequities is the peasantry. The African peasants have been confined to the poorest land, where they are struggling desperately for survival. There is an urgent need for land redistribution to meet the needs of these dispossessed rural people. Meeting those needs, however, will not be made easier by the entrenched constitutional principle relating to private property. Like their counterparts in the rest of Africa, South African peasants do not have much political leverage, and their plight is not likely to be treated as a top priority by the new elites.

The ANC has also agreed to allow the bloated civil service, which is dominated by whites, not to be tampered with or overhauled until 1999. This is a civil service that has been very hostile to change and will most likely continue to be

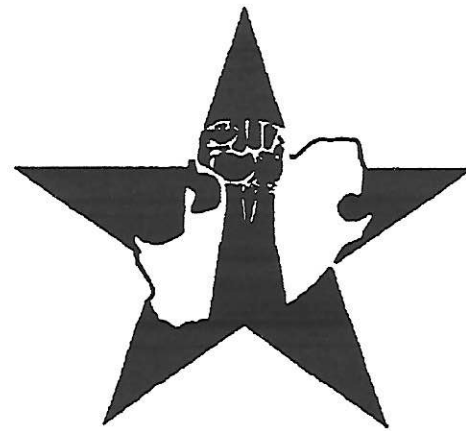
antagonistic to major structural changes within the bureaucracy. How can change be meaningful and how can reconciliation be successful if the civil service that was so instrumental under apartheid in maintaining state repression and control is left intact?

The overall objectives of the RDP regarding the creation of jobs, the construction of new houses, the electrification of homes, free elementary education, access to safe drinking water and health care are praiseworthy and legitimate. The leadership of the ANC has insisted that the reform program will be financed through economic growth and not by raising taxes, which would alienate the white financial markets. The cost of implementing the RDP will be enormous, but without raising taxes from the business establishment that has made super-profits from cheap labor and in the absence of a massive infusion of financial aid comparable to the Marshall Plan that was used by the United States to rebuild Europe after World War II, it is difficult to visualize how the new government will achieve its stated goals.

The ANC has put a high premium on conciliation in the GNU and considerable faith in the business sector as the main engine for growth and development. The weakness of that approach and its inherent potential for failure is that it is ultimately based on the assumption that the interests of the disparate parties of the GNU can be made to converge and that the business community has a vested interest in promoting social and humanitarian programs. The truth of the matter is that the various parties of the GNU have different interests and represent ideologically divergent points of view. Therefore, consensus on major structural changes will be very difficult to reach by the GNU.

Business people are motivated by profit and not the desire to advance the social agenda relating to the creation of more jobs and improving the quality of life of working people. Business people are not in the habit of sharing profits voluntarily with workers, whatever the level of growth and development. The approach of the ANC is to win the confidence and allegiance of the business community first as a precondition for growth and development. The workers are being asked to make sacrifices now in the hope that things will get better for them at some opportune time in the future. The question is, can the South African Black workers, who are so militant, be persuaded by the GNU to wait and for how long, before things begin to fall apart. Organized workers can make things very difficult for the government and, unlike the peasants, who are not an organized entity, they can always exercise their constitutional right to strike, but that right, in the new South Africa, is counterbalanced and virtually neutralized by the constitutional right of employers to lock out striking workers.

The ANC government may find it very difficult to convince the militant Black workers to defer their legitimate demands for better wages when the officials of the new government receive excessively high salaries. These highly



paid new elites have been widely criticized for helping themselves even more to the so-called "grave train" that used to be specially reserved for the members of the former government of F.W. de Klerk. The new Black bourgeoisie has arrived with a vengeance, and the new South Africa, like the rest of post-colonial Africa, will have its own share of bureaucratic elites eager to use their new power base to enrich themselves. Once again, the politics of *uhuru* (freedom) is losing ground and giving way to the disease of conspicuous consumerism and opulent lifestyles in the midst of rampant poverty.

The ANC is therefore facing a potentially explosive situation, because its politics are tilted in favor of the owning and privileged class and geared toward growth and development first, in the hope that more jobs and possibly better wages will be generated later. The problem with such policies is that they unfairly require workers, who have been deprived for so long under white minority rule, to make sacrifices and tighten their belts yet again to rebuild the new South Africa. Why is the ANC leadership not making it abundantly clear to the members of the owning class, who have made super-profits from exploited labor, that now is the time for the business community to make amends and sacrifices to uplift the living standard of the underprivileged class? It would certainly be to the interests of all South Africans if the privileged members of the society were made to realize that, given the history of racist oppression and capitalist exploitation, the so-called new South Africa is headed for yet another crisis, if the process of narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor does not begin in earnest now.

Since the historic April elections that ushered in the dawn of a new era, South Africa has been rocked by a series of labor strikes, to which the ANC government responded with little sympathy. Given the ideological tradition of the ANC relating to conservative policies and pro-capitalist tendencies, the likelihood is very high that, if the organization continues along the path of trickle-down economics that is reminiscent of the Reagan administration in the U.S., the ANC government may resort to more conservative and possibly authoritarian measures that could lead to a widening gulf between the owning and

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Nigerian Oil Strike Ends, Political Crisis Continues

by Michael Livingston

On Monday, September 5, Nigerian oil workers ended their eight-week-long strike against the military dictatorship of Gen. Sani Abacha. The strike, part of a broader pro-democracy movement, started when the 150,000-member blue-collar oil workers union, Nupeng, went on strike on July 4 to demand the release of Moshood Abiola, the imprisoned winner of the June 12, 1993, presidential elections, and the resignation of the government. The Nupeng strikers were joined a week later by Pengassan, the oil and gas technical staff union.

The strike had succeeded in paralyzing much of the country. Factory workers in many parts of the country stopped working, either because of the strike or because of a lack of electricity and fuel. Government workers in two states (Ondo and Osun) stayed home in protest of fuel scarcity. Commercial and financial institutions in the states of Delta, Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo were effectively paralyzed. The oil industry is the key sector of the Nigerian economy. Over 80 percent of the country's export earnings came from oil exports, and over 90 percent of government revenue comes from oil exports. The strike was eventually undermined by a lack of support from the Igbo-dominated east and the Muslim Hausa-dominated north, by harsh political repression against strikers and pro-democracy demonstrators (including the arrest and detention of Frank Kokori, leader of Nupeng, the disappearance of Pengassan's two top officials, and the murder of hundreds of peaceful pro-democracy demonstrators), and by lack of financial support for the strikers.

While the strike may be over, the political crisis facing Nigeria is not. And because Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa (population estimated at over 90 million), has the largest area of any country in Western Africa, and is the world's sixth largest oil exporter, the Nigerian crisis will have an impact on the rest of Africa.

The present crisis is rooted in imperialism, both past and present, and the weakness of the Nigerian nation-state. The country, like many other African states, is the product of European imperialism. In 1903 the British completed the conquest of the area now included within Nigeria's borders, and in 1914 the northern and southern areas of present-day Nigeria were amalgamated into a single administrative unit — the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. In forming this single administrative unit, the British combined over 250 different ethnic groups, each subdivided. The three regionally dominant groups are the Yoruba of the Southwest, the Igbo of the Southeast, and Hausa of the North. The country further combines three distinct religions: Islam in the North and Southwest (47 percent of the population), Christianity in the

South (35 percent), and indigenous religions (18 percent of the population). The area between the North and the South, known as the middle belt, is made up of mixed faiths. In addition to the great ethnic and religious diversity, there are between 250 and 400 recognized languages, many with dialects. English is the official language, however.

The local ruling class that developed under the British was divided along religious, ethnic, and regional lines. After independence in 1960, this ruling class proved unable to form a stable government. In the first parliamentary elections held after independence, in December of 1964, political chaos and violence broke out as a consequence of competition among various segments of the ruling class for control of the federal government. In January 1966 army officers seized power and assassinated prominent officeholders and politicians, as well as northern army officers. The coup was led by General Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi. Ironsi was an Igbo, as were many of the other coup leaders. In July 1966 northern army officers and troops staged a counter-coup, killing Ironsi and a number of other Igbo officers. The northerners named Lt. Col. Yakuba Gowon to head the military government. With the Ironsi-led coup, and the northern-led counter-coup, the pattern of Nigeria politics emerged: military government, each promising to restore democracy and provide clean, efficient government, overthrown or replaced by military government. With the exception of a brief period from 1979 to 1983, Nigeria has had a military government since 1966.

The political crisis of 1966 also led to the 1967–1970 civil war, known in the U.S. as the Biafran War, in which the Igbos of the southeast region sought to secede. Between 1 and 3 million Igbos died in the war, many from starvation and sickness.

While both the civilian and military governments have been characterized by corruption, the military regimes have been successful in achieving two goals: first, the political repression of popular struggles and the maintenance of civil order; second, the capitalist transformation of the economy in the service of the national ruling class and the imperialist powers. The military oversaw the development of the oil industry from the late 1960s on and has, since 1986, sought to implement the IMF's structural adjustment program (SAP).

Nigeria's present political crisis, its worst since the 1965–1966 crisis which resulted in civil war, can be traced to the efforts to carry out the IMF's program and the economic decline experienced by the Nigerian masses. The regime of General Ibrahim Babangida, installed by the army in 1985 to replace the government of General Muhammadu Buhari, declared a Na-

tional Economic Emergency in 1986 (Nigeria's version of the IMF's structural adjustment program). The SAP included limiting the budget deficit to 4 percent of gross domestic product, strict control of money supply and credit, privatization of industries, easing of trade restrictions, and debt rescheduling. The SAP produced falling real wages and sharply reduced spending on health, education, and other social services.

The SAP sparked widespread domestic unrest. For instance, in 1987 there were Muslim-Christian riots in Kaduna; in 1988 there were urban riots in response to reduced gasoline subsidies; in 1989 students led opposition to government economic policies. The Babangida regime responded with harsh political repression and a move toward an elected civilian government.

After drafting a new constitution, the Babangida government abolished the existing political parties and created two new parties — a slightly right-of-center party, the National Republican Convention (NRC), and a slightly left-of-center party, the Social Democratic Party (SDP). Both parties had ties to the military. Elections held in mid-1992 for the National Assembly were marked by violence between ethnic groups and between Christians and Muslims. In October and November of 1992, Babangida scrapped the presidential primaries and barred all 23 candidates from participating in the elections. He also postponed the election until mid-1993.

The elections took place on June 12, 1993. Although the SDP candidate, millionaire businessman Moshood Abiola was a friend and supporter of Babangida, it appeared that the NRC candidate, Bashir Tofa, was the choice of the military. Many in the military feared that Abiola might expose military corruption and human rights abuses. Voter turnout was light, with fewer than 30 percent of the registered voters participating. The low turnout was due to the enormous difficulty in voting (voters had to travel long distances; everyone had to be at the polling place by 8 AM and stay until past noon when the votes were counted) and dissatisfaction with the two military-approved political parties. In addition, some who tried to vote, including NRC presidential candidate Bashir Tofa, found that they were not legally registered and so were not permitted to vote. When it became clear that Abiola had won a clear victory, the government voided the elections. Abiola later declared himself the president but was arrested before he could take any action. Babangida's regime was overthrown by the military shortly thereafter. General Sani

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TDU Convention Hears Labor Officials Call for Independent Politics

by Charles Walker

Bob Wages, president of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union (OCAW), and Joel Myron, director of research for the rail union Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWWE), were keynote speakers at the 19th convention of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), held near Chicago at the end of October. They told the 500 delegates about the intractable problems their unions face and the need for a radical strategic turnaround in negotiations and political policy.

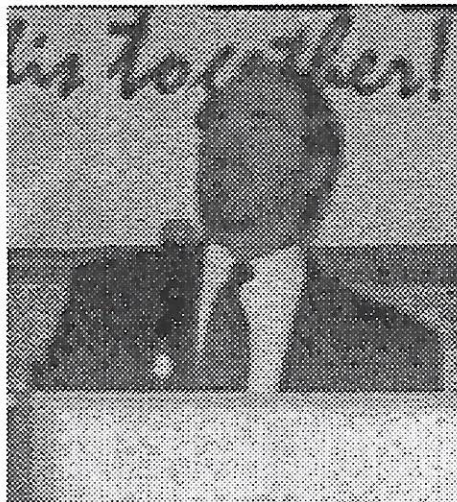
Bob Wages castigated the AFL-CIO tops with their head-in-the-sand response to the declining incomes of workers and shrinking union membership. Wages said the time had come to "build a workers movement from the ground up, a movement that kicks ass and takes names." Wages told a cheering audience that TDU is evidence that building a militant workers movement is now practical. Wages's union initiated Labor Party Advocates in 1991, around the slogan: "The bosses have two parties. We need one of our own!"

Joel Myron's BMWWE is the third national union to endorse Labor Party Advocates. Myron also endorses the creation of a single transportation union that, he said, would fulfill a dream of Eugene V. Debs, a rail workers' leader and prominent socialist until his death in 1926. (This year, 1994, incidentally, marks the hundredth anniversary of the successful Great Northern strike led by Debs's American Rail Union and of the Pullman strike, in which his single rail union was defeated. [See Jean Tussey's article on the Pullman centenary elsewhere in this issue of *BIDOM*.])

Myron keyed his union's support for a labor party to the anti-labor record of the Democrats and Republicans in Congress, who have repeatedly joined together to break rail workers' strikes. Next time, he said, "we will defy Congress."

New Teamster Freight Organizing Drive

Freight Teamsters at TDU's 19th convention heard a report by Jim Buck, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)'s new international director of freight organizing. Buck outlined a 4-year plan for organizing among the 2 million non-union freight workers and the 23 major corporations that impact upon the National Master Freight Agreement (NMFA) and



Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union President Bob Wages

the related labor market. After a 12-year loss of 120,000 freight workers, the Teamsters still represent 112,000 NMFA drivers and loaders. Buck said that a Teamster failure to organize will mean the loss of 50,000 more freight members by 1998. Therefore, he said, Teamster General President Ron Carey is making freight organizing the union's number one priority.

Buck said the Teamsters union cannot do the job with its present freight staff organizers alone, who number only 8, so the Teamster leadership has devised a plan to make organizers of thousands of rank-and-file Teamsters. Very soon, non-union freight workers will be met everywhere on the highways and truck stops, and a process of information sharing and collaboration will begin. Non-union workers will be offered associate membership and urged and helped to form in-house organizing committees. In time, area-wide stop-work meetings will be called to bolster the drive. Buck emphasized that the non-union workforce is not made up of scabs, but of fellow workers who want and deserve the same standard of living that Teamsters enjoy.

Because of weak laws that stifle ordinary union organizing at single freight terminals of major freight corporations, the Teamsters will go after entire freight companies, and not strike

until all, or substantially all, of a company can be shut down.

On October 25, the new campaign was kicked off in Los Angeles, where 250 freight workers rallied in a major trucking district to gain the attention of non-union freight workers and the public. The Teamsters later said that they were thrilled with the supportive comments, friendly honking of car and truck horns, and the resulting publicity. To date, 40 local Teamster unions have formed volunteer organizing committees.

Carey Reformers and TDU'ers Sweep Out Old Guard in Atlanta

The convention gave a standing ovation to members of Atlanta Local 528's Hilbish-McCleskey slate, which handily defeated the allies of Jerry Cook, the old guard leader. Cook had been the head of the Southern Conference of Teamsters before the area conferences were abolished last June. He was also part owner of a restaurant to which union employees were sent for lunch, free to them, but paid out of dues money from working Teamsters. Before his ouster, Cook collected multiple salaries and now rakes off multiple pensions, protected by federal law.

The new officers are mostly rank-and-file truck drivers, including Blacks and one woman. The new leadership is expected to work closely with Atlanta Local 728, which is led by Carey supporters, including Doug Mims, a TDU leader and an international vice-president of the IBT. All of Georgia's Teamsters now belong to one of the two reform locals, or else to a small local of brewery workers.

Pension Reform

The day after the TDU convention, the highest leadership body of the IBT, the General Executive Board, voted to end further funding of the Affiliates Pension Plan. The plan drained \$16 million a year from the union's treasury and provided a second, third, or fourth pension for almost all union officers. Days after taking office in 1991, Carey's slate had shut down a similar dues-funded "Cadillac" pension plan maintained for the elite of the international union. □

November 2, 1994

The Russian Trade Union Movement During the First Half of 1994: Main Lines of Development

by Kirill Buketov

The following article was provided by the Russian organization KAS-KOR (Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists/ Correspondents network). It contains a great deal of information that can help readers make an assessment of the difficult and contradictory situation in the former USSR.

The main factors shaping the development of the Russian trade union movement in 1994 remain the general economic crisis; the continuing fall in workers' living standards; the criminalization of the economy and society; and changes in the political situation.

The New Economic Reality: Crisis, Privatization, and Criminalization

Toward the end of 1993 the economic crisis entered a qualitatively new phase, taking on a general and catastrophic character. The new stage in the fall of production has been accompanied by a marked technological regression in virtually all branches of the economy compared with pre-reform levels.

Enterprises which have set the technological standard for vitally important branches of the economy are coming to a standstill. The decline is leading to the deterioration of the branch structures of industry. This conclusion is spelled out in an analytical report by the Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences (*Voprosy Ekonomiki* [Problems of Economics], 1992, no. 2).

According to data from the State Statistical Committee cited in the newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (June 29, 1994), industrial production in Russia during the first five months of this year was down by 26 percent on the figure for 1993. The rate of collapse was accelerating — January production was 23 percent below that of a year earlier, while in May the corresponding figure was 28 percent. The sharpest falls in output, according to the newspaper *Delovoi Ekspress*, were seen in sectors producing raw materials and non-food consumer goods. In the fuel and energy complex the fall during this period amounted to 12 percent; in the food processing industry, 45 percent; and in the chemical and petrochemical industry, 35 percent. In May one in four large or middle-sized industrial enterprises in Russia shut down for at least one shift. According to the State Statistical Committee, the monthly totals of enterprises which shut down partially or totally during 1994 were as follows: January — 3,789; February — 4,280; March — 4,800; April — 4,955; May — more than 5,000.

The main cause of the continuing fall in output is "privatization" and the government's ill-conceived tax policy. The state refuses to accept responsibility for unprofitable industrial enterprises, handing this responsibility over to so-called shareholders — primarily, the workers in these enterprises. This process of destabi-

lization is usually termed "privatization," though the new joint-stock firms have virtually nothing in common with genuine privately-owned capitalist enterprises. In most cases large enterprises, which may well be the only major employers in the cities where they are located, face rapid insolvency if they are left without state support.

Tax Policies

While ceasing to accept responsibility for production, the state has by no means lost interest in the enterprises. On the contrary, this interest grows with every month that passes, as is shown by the imposition of more and more new taxes. Enterprises are now required to pay more than 40 taxes to federal and local budgets. From every ruble of its profits, the metallurgical combine Tulachernet is obliged to hand over 98 kopecks in the form of taxes. Tulachernet is considered to be in a relatively good position, since the Lebedinsky Ore Enrichment Combine is required to pay taxes amounting to 105 (!) percent of its profits (according to the newspaper *Trud*, May 6, 1994).

One result of these tax policies has become the wholesale criminalization of the economy. In order to maintain production, enterprise managers are forced to conceal profits, to create fictitious or "shadow" commercial structures for the sale of goods, and much else. Thus, according to the State Committee on Customs Control, during the first three months after checks on the foreign trading activity of Russian enterprises were begun a total of 40 organizations were found to have used Western bank accounts to conceal income from their sales. The total sum concealed amounted to US\$70 million (*Izvestia*, June 21, 1994). Meanwhile, an estimated \$40 billion in capital has been exported to the West, and this sum increases by at least a billion dollars each month (*Rabochaya Tribuna*, June 22, 1994). Such is the scale of only the most widespread economic crime in Russia, the concealment of profits.

While the mechanisms involved will not be described in detail here, privatization fraud is also a significant source of crime. In the first six months of 1993 alone, a total of 3000 crimes associated with privatization were recorded. Some 2.5 percent of the crimes reported last year were linked in some way to privatization ("Sotsialno-ekonomicheskaya situatsiya v Rossii: Itogi, problemy, puti stabilizatsii. Analiticheskii doklad Instituta ekonomiki RAN" ["The Socio-Economic Situation in Russia: Results, Problems, Means of Stabilization. An

Analytical Report by the Institute of Economics, Russian Academy of Sciences"], in *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, 1994, no. 2, p. 149; *Izvestia*, April 30, 1994).

Union-Management Cooperation

A salient feature of the situation in which Russian trade unions operate is the way in which unions and managers in particular enterprises are united by a shared interest in maintaining production — and hence jobs and minimal social welfare provisions for the workers — at any cost. For trade unions in the USSR, perestroika came to an end a few months after it began, when timid efforts to sever the bonds linking unions to management were replaced by an awareness of the interests which unions shared with the corps of directors. Enterprise directors and unions very often act as allies, struggling to force their adversary, the government, to lighten the tax burden and provide benefits for their particular enterprise or even for the whole branch of industry or economic sector. The worse the situation in the economy becomes, the stronger will be the bond between unions and management.

In trying to help management maintain production, the traditional trade unions at times voluntarily take on managerial functions, and are in no hurry to renounce tasks of distribution. In most cases the old union structures still play the role of mutual aid funds, helping workers obtain cheap consumer goods, vouchers for sanatoriums and vacation resorts, and so forth. Another of their functions remains helping management ensure the best possible organization of production. To this day many trade union committees are involved in organizing competition between production brigades, trying to ensure that the work collective provides real support to the enterprise by raising the productivity of labor.

These observations relate mainly to the "traditional" trade unions, both those affiliated to the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (Russian initials, FNPR) and those that have now left the federation.

Unfortunately, the decisive factor in the decisions made by the traditional unions is usually the interests of their branch of industry as a whole, and this means that the needs and hopes of individual union members often receive short shrift. It is to the particular needs of individual members that the new, so-called alternative unions have turned their attention. As their main priority, these unions do not pose the well-being of the enterprise or the branch of industry, but

improving the living standards and working conditions of their members.

The Russian Mafia

Another peculiarity of the conditions under which Russian trade unions operate is the total criminalization of the economy. All entrepreneurial activity, whether production, trade, or banking services, is necessarily linked with criminal structures. The mafia helps to conceal profits from the state and to funnel them into Western banks, provides enterprises with protection services, guarantees them the support of corrupt organs of power, and furnishes them with a multitude of other services without which entrepreneurship cannot exist. The management of almost any enterprise is thus forced to deal with the mafia, and when union activists try to expose these links, vicious reprisals follow. It is mainly activists of the new trade unions who have been involved in these struggles.

On November 29, 1993, for example, Anatoly Safronov, the chairperson of the union shop committee at the Dimitrovsky car components plant, was murdered after he had tried to expose criminal activity by the enterprise management. In Yekaterinburg, criminal groups linked to the city authorities unleashed a veritable war against leaders of the Yekaterinburg Association of Trade Unions. On May 28 the daughter of Sergei Belyaev, the chairperson of the association's Coordinating Council, died under mysterious circumstances. Because her death was only one link in a whole chain of such "mysteries," there is good reason to believe that gangsters resorted to direct reprisals against the family of a troublesome union activist. The situation is complicated by the fact that the city administration and law enforcement organs were also involved. Pressure had also been applied to union activists earlier, but during the preceding few months a tendency had emerged for this struggle to intensify, and for the methods used to become more brutal.

The Decline in Living Standards

The changes in the economy have brought with them changes in the conditions of life of the population. All the indices show that living standards are continuing to decline, and this is forcing many experts on social policy to predict a social explosion. One possible cause is considered to be the worsening position of pensioners, who number 36 million in Russia. The level of pensions, which earlier stood at 55–75 percent of wages, fell to 40–45 percent in 1993, and early this year was down as far as 22–25 percent (*Izvestia*, June, 11 1994). When labor collectives take strike action, they more and more often include the raising of the miserable level of pensions among their demands.

By early in 1994 another element of the new qualitative phase had emerged: rising unemployment. In the first five months of this year the number of officially registered unemployed rose by 20 percent. This sharp jump was linked to the fact that enterprise managers no longer counted on the state to support production, and were no longer taking responsibility for subor-

dinates or trying to retain workers. The growth of unemployment is now tied directly to the fall in production.

Unlike the situation in previous years, when enterprises were able to get by with placing a moratorium on hiring new workers, and by sacking workers of pensionable age, in the first half of 1994 the question arose of doing away with jobs and of sacking workers in economically active age categories. Another especially notable feature of the first half of 1994 was a fall in demand for labor power, and a decline in the number of vacant jobs. A dangerous sign was an increase in the average period of unemployment from three months in early 1993 to six months at present. The number of people without work for more than eight months exceeds a quarter of the overall total of unemployed.

The development of the situation in the economy during 1993 and early 1994 has provided convincing proof of the impossibility of achieving the anticipated abrupt slowing in the rate of economic decline so long as the government persists with the policies insisted upon by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), policies which give priority to cutting the budget deficit and combating inflation. Within the government and parliament, growing numbers of people now support state regulation of a market economy. This economic program has received the support of the FNPR, the country's largest union body.

Strike Action

Throughout the first half of 1994 the deepening of the crisis was accompanied by the growth of strike activity. The State Statistical Committee noted an impressive wave of strikes in the first quarter of 1994. Strikes were recorded in a total of 288 Russian enterprises, 24 more than during the whole of 1993, and ten times more than during the first quarter of 1993. During the first quarter of 1994 a total of 114,500 people took part in strikes, and the resulting losses of work time amounted to 283,100 work days. Of these, 168,600 were lost in industry and 107,200 in the area of education.

During this period stoppages resulting from strike action, as opposed to other reasons, resulted in loss of production worth 8.8 billion rubles; losses amounting to 8.2 billion rubles were recorded in the fuel and energy complex. The greatest losses from strikes were in the Komi Republic, Western Siberia, and in Kemerovo, Tula, and Rostov provinces.

The main causes of strikes and labor conflicts were the fall in the volume of production, the financial crisis, failures to meet inter-enterprise payments, and above all, the substantial indebtedness of the federal budget and numerous delays in the payment of wages to workers in the basic areas of the economy. According to data of the General Confederation of Trade Unions, in the former USSR as a whole, general wage indebtedness in March 1994 amounted to about three trillion rubles. In Russia alone, workers in 35,000 enterprises did not receive their wages on time.

In February the government tried to ward off the strike wave using economic measures, seeking to make funds available for wage payments by increasing the budget deficit. Nevertheless, a decline in strike activity did not follow, and it can hardly be expected in the near future, since as problems are solved they are replaced by other, more difficult ones. The most threatening of these problems is the danger of mass unemployment; unprofitable enterprises are to be shut down at a time when new jobs are not being created.

Growing Wave of Popular Discontent

Throughout the first half of 1994 the FNPR unions sought to lend an organized and peaceful character to the growing wave of popular discontent. The actions organized by the traditional unions were aimed, on the one hand, at dampening down the pressures in the work collectives, at letting off steam, and, on the other, at providing a show of muscle flexing in order to impress the government.

The following were the main protest and strike actions in the first half of 1994:

- On February 10 the Union of Communications Workers held a strike which restricted broadcasts to the provinces by the central electronic media.
- On February 15 a one-day strike took place of workers in higher education and research institutes, organized by the education trade union. A total of 107 higher educational institutions canceled classes for the day. Around 100 more institutions observed a two-hour stoppage. The same day, a meeting of higher education teachers took place in Moscow.
- On March 1 a Russia-wide coal miners' strike took place around the demand for the fulfillment of the 1993 wage agreement and for the payment of wages for the first months of 1994. During the first stage, mines in Vorkuta, the Moscow coal basin, and the Kansk-Achinsk fuel and energy complex stopped work. In Vorkuta 47 miners refused to surface from the pit. In all, 30,000 miners stopped work. It is significant that members of both mine unions took part in the strike.
- On March 11 all the mines of Rostovugol, one of Russia's largest coal mining organizations, declared an indefinite strike. [Rostovugol is centered on the city of Rostov in southeastern European Russia.] The miners' main demand was for the government to pay its debts to the industry. To this, the Rostov miners added political demands for the resignation of the government and for fresh presidential elections.
- On April 5 nuclear power plant workers, who had not received their wages for several months, held a protest action. Around 150 representatives of workers from all the nuclear power plants in Russia picketed the House of Government in Moscow. On the same day there were pickets, meetings, and demonstrations by nuclear power work-

What Role for the Left in Russia's Crisis?

Comment is called for on Buketov's discussion of the possibility of a social explosion. "The preconditions for such an explosion," he says, after describing the sharp increase in the number of strikes in 1994, often under pressure from the ranks, "include a high degree of embitterment among the population; contempt for anti-strike legislation and for laws in general; the discrediting of democratic values in the eyes of broad masses of workers; [and] agitational activity by radical right-wing parties and organizations."

Perhaps we misunderstand him, but Buketov seems to equate "contempt for anti-strike legislation" (which sounds rather healthy to us) with a general "discrediting of democratic values" in the eyes of workers. If "democratic values" refer to the political chicanery, corruption, and arbitrary use of power by Yeltsin and his liberal "democratic" allies, whose policies have led to the enrichment of the few and the impoverishment of the many, it is no wonder those "values" have been discredited "in the eyes of the broad masses of workers." Are the discrediting of the "values" of capitalist restorationist "democrats" and contempt among workers for anti-strike legislation really such terrible things?

Buketov seems to suggest that such reactions among workers play into the hands of the proto-fascist Russian chauvinist and neo-Stalinist groups. He refers only to "agi-

gational activity by radical right-wing parties and organizations." But what about agitational activity by radical *left-wing* parties and organizations? He does not report that there is any, outside of Student Defense, which is affiliated with the Marxist workers group Zashchita [Defense], but there have been left-wing workers organizations (Zabastovka in Samara, Rabochii in Chelyabinsk and Magnitogorsk, Nezavisimost in St. Petersburg, not to mention a variety of small Trotskyist groups in a number of cities, plus KAS-KOR itself, with its good class-struggle record, at least in recent years). These groups have consistently campaigned for the interests of the working class, including the right to strike, and against the "democratic" facade of the procapitalist liberals. It is hard to imagine that such groups are doing nothing in 1994 in the face of the deepening crisis.

Buketov apparently doesn't see any point in indicating a revolutionary socialist solution to the crisis, a program of transitional demands pointing a way for the working class out of the present difficulties. Perhaps he doesn't feel there are any left-wing forces that can effectively intervene in the situation as it stands. But surely the need for building a working class revolutionary vanguard armed with such a program and demands deserves to be mentioned.

—George Saunders

ers throughout Russia. The action was organized by the union of nuclear industry workers.

- On March 2 and 3 the union of workers in the forest products industry held a picket in front of the House of Government. On 25 March the union of metallurgical industry workers picketed the House of Government and held workplace meetings.
- On March 30 it was reported that regional actions by miners were continuing. In Kemerovo 200 representatives of the region's coal industry held a picket. In Moscow the same day, members of the Union of Coal Industry Workers (PRUP) began picketing the House of Government. Despite opposition from the leadership of the Independent Union of Miners (NPG), several regional organizations of the NPG joined in actions which the PRUP had organized.
- On April 12 the Association of Student Union Organizations held a meeting in Moscow attended by 5,000 people. During the meeting members of the radical left organization Student Defense took the initiative, and headed a march to Red Square. Clashes took place with the militia [police], and nine people were arrested.
- On April 19 the Russian oil and gas trade union held a Day of Defense of workers in that sector, involving the organization of workplace meetings, but without halts to

production. The main demands were for the adoption of a state employment program; for guarantees of the prompt payment of wages; and for changes in tax policies.

- On April 21, textile and light industry workers picketed the House of Government.
- On May 18 civil aviation pilots began a strike organized by the Russian union of air crews. The demands included the creation of an air crew employment fund, the adoption of a new air transport code, and increases in pensions. According to the trade union, 92 out of 143 regional work collectives declared their support for the action. However, only 3 percent of air crew members took part in the strike.
- From June 1 to 3 trade unions of machine builders, workers in the automobile and agricultural machinery industries and instrument makers, together with the electrical workers union (Elektroprofsoyuz), held collective acts of protest against the government's economic policies. A picket of the House of Government was held on June 2.
- The beginning of June saw workers in yet another branch of the economy move into action: employees in the military shipyards of the northern fleet began spontaneous strikes. The reason for the actions was a 3-month delay in the payment of wages. The shipyard workers held a spontaneous meeting on the central square of Severo-

morsk. The stoppage was notable because it saw the first strike action carried out by military service personnel, about 2,000 of whom took part. Also participating were about 8,000 civilian workers.

- On June 9, defense industry workers held a protest action against cuts in budget appropriations for the purchase of weapons and military technology. These cuts are to lead to reductions in state orders and to increased unemployment. The workers halted production of goods for the civilian market for 15 minutes. The action was organized by the Association of Defense Branches of Industry.
- From June 21 to 23, fishing industry workers held a protest action coordinated by the "branch" trade union (the union organizing that branch of industry). The demands included the adoption of a state program of support for their sector of the economy, the extension to its enterprises of tax benefits applying in the agro-industrial complex, and freedom from export-import tariffs. The action took the form of a picket at the House of Government, and was accompanied by a small number of strikes in the provinces.

Initiatives from the Ranks

A qualitative change has taken place with the shifting of the center of gravity of the strike process. In the past, the leadership of the FNPR called collective actions, but quickly curtailed them after failing to receive support from below. Now the FNPR coordinates actions organized through initiatives from the ranks.

Throughout all the strike campaigns and protest actions during the first half of 1994 the FNPR acted in exceedingly moderate fashion, trying to stop political demands from being put forward and seeking to prevent strike actions in various fields from linking up into a general national strike. Judging from all the evidence, this was the task that was placed before the Coordinating Council of Collective Actions of the FNPR, which at the All-Russia Conference of Chairpersons of Primary Union Organizations on April 14 was transformed into the All-Russia Strike Committee.

The FNPR's moderate position, together with the possibilities available to the government of dampening social tensions by means of higher inflation, are fully capable of restraining the spread of strike actions at the present stage. But they will be inadequate in the near future, when a wave of bankruptcies hits and enterprises shut down without new jobs being created.

A Spontaneous Social Explosion?

It is impossible not to notice the politicization of the strikes, which more and more often are taking an anti-government and anti-presidential [i.e., anti-Yeltsin] thrust. Economic demands still predominate, but behind them can be seen a whole complex of political claims on the authorities and their policies. At present these demands are fragmentary, but they are capable in certain circumstances of becoming predominant; if this happens, we could well see a spon-

taneous uprising. The preconditions for such an explosion include a high degree of embitterment among the population; contempt for anti-strike legislation and for laws in general; the discrediting of democratic values in the eyes of broad masses of workers; agitational activity by radical right-wing parties and organizations; and other factors.

It is essential to note the way in which the idea of solidarity has undergone a negative evolution in society. Unlike strikes during the perestroika period, when manifestations of solidarity (the organizing of meetings, the collecting of funds, and so on) were an everyday occurrence, strikes are now becoming more and more isolated both on a sectoral and a regional basis. Even the miners movement, which has the strongest tradition of solidarity actions, is becoming atomized. Delegates to the Council of Representatives of the NPG [Independent Union of Miners] in Severouralsk on May 30 and 31 argued that the new economic relations meant it was necessary to find new forms of trade union work, replacing solidarity strikes with more peaceful means of providing assistance, such as telegrams of support and financial contributions. [Note: The NPG is heavily influenced by the AFL-CIO. The latter, along with the Stalinist-trained misleaders in the FNPR will naturally derail and misdirect the workers. That is why a revolutionary Marxist leadership, an organized and conscious one, is vital. — Eds.]

The "Alternative" Unions

The long-apparent tendency for the alternative trade unions to unify almost yielded concrete results at the beginning of the year, when the first serious attempt was made to establish a national association of alternative trade unions. On January 8 the Independent Union of Miners (represented by Aleksandr Sergeyev), the Russian Federation of Trade Unions SOTSPROF (represented by Sergei Khramov), and the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Russia (Russian initials, KSPR; represented by Aleksandr Alekseyev) signed an agreement to establish an Association of Russian Trade Unions of Hired Workers. The association was to aim at jointly representing the interests and defending the rights of hired workers, and at coordinating collective actions.

A Council of Chairpersons was formed, whose functions were to include representing the association in Russian and international trilateral and trade union organizations; setting up a regular exchange of information on the situation in the trade unions; reaching agreement on the goals and specific character of strikes, boycotts, pickets, and other collective actions; and reaching agreement on political declarations and actions in their support. It was also decided to form a single fund to finance the organizational work of the union association, to provide it with equipment and access to information, and also to begin work on attracting other unions into the association. [In all likelihood, this was a U.S. government/AFL-CIO initiative. — Eds.]

The process of unification was obstructed by the bitterly anti-American position of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Russia (KSPR), which accused the AFL-CIO of trying to implant "business unionism" in the Russian trade unions. A declaration along these lines by KSPR Chairperson Aleksandr Alekseyev was issued on January 17. In response, the AFL-CIO representatives in Russia accused the KSPR leader of fascism. (It is significant that prior to the declaration by the KSPR no one had paid any attention to Alekseyev's political views; the KSPR and SOTSPROF had collaborated over a long period, and Alekseyev had met regularly with Tom Bradley, the representative of the AFL-CIO's Institute of Free Trade Unions.)

On January 27 a conference of free trade unions was held on the initiative of the Russian-American Institute for Trade Union Research and Education [which is sponsored by the AFL-CIO]. Those taking part included representatives of the Independent Union of Miners, SOTSPROF, the Union of Metallurgical Industry Workers, the Seafarers Union, the Union of Locomotive Brigade Members, the Federation of Trade Unions of Air Traffic Controllers, and a number of other, smaller formations. The participants in the conference discussed the KSPR declaration and made haste to dissociate themselves from it. On the same day, the Executive Committee of the Independent Union of Miners of Russia withdrew its endorsement from the declaration on the founding of the National Association of Russian Trade Unions of Hired Workers. SOTSPROF did the same.

"Fascist Danger" Exaggerated

Although nationalist [i.e., Great Russian chauvinist] ideas were becoming increasingly widespread among workers, the danger that fascists would infiltrate the labor movement was exaggerated, to a significant degree as a matter of conscious policy. The continuing fall of living standards was impelling people to search for some alternative both to orthodox Communism and to liberal concepts of capitalism. The [Russian] "national idea" was acquiring more and more popularity as such an alternative.

In March 1994 Alekseyev, as the leader of Russia's third largest union federation, announced that an agreement had been signed between the KSPR and Russian National Unity (RNE), a paramilitary pro-fascist organization. It was also announced that a first joint action would be held in Cherepovets on the thirty-second anniversary of the massacre of workers at Novocherkassk. This action was organized by the free trade union of the joint stock company Severstal, an affiliated union of the KSPR. However, the collaboration by the KSPR leadership with RNE aroused sharp criticism from rank-and-file KSPR members and from the confederation's member unions. Meanwhile, the participants in the Cherepovets meeting included other organizations which could never be accused of harboring fascist sympathies — the Democratic Union, the Vorkuta City Workers Committee, and eco-anarchist groups. On

the other hand, it is essential to note that the union's sharp turn to the right was prompted in part by a desire to maintain its independence and to avoid slipping into the bog of "business unionism," as has happened to many new unions. From this point of view, it can be said that the popularization of nationalist ideas in the labor movement represented a reaction to the activity of the AFL-CIO in Russia.

A Potential Left Alternative

The spring of 1994 saw a radicalization among Moscow students. In March a meeting took place between politically active students and Yuri Leonov, the leader of the trade union Zashchita ("Defense"), which stands on Marxist positions. This meeting saw a start to the formation of a new union, Student Defense. This union, whose ranks consist mainly of members of the Russian Communist Union of Youth (Komsomol) and of other communist and anarchist organizations, has become an affiliate of Zashchita. During its relatively brief existence, Student Defense has been highly active, strewing Moscow institutes of higher education with leaflets and provoking clashes with the militia during the student demonstration on April 12.

It is obvious that students are gradually becoming politicized, and that the official student union APOS, which does not raise political demands, is no longer able to answer the increased demands of students in higher education.

White Collar Workers

Along with divisions on the basis of regional and sectoral characteristics, workers are increasingly coming to be distinguished on a professional basis. A specialization of interests is gradually occurring among various groups of trade union members; as a result, these groups are forced to establish special professionally-based sections. Thus, within the union of workers in state institutions and public service bodies, there are now eleven such sections covering workers in institutions of the legislative and executive authorities; the financial and banking system; law-enforcement organs; social security organs, and so forth. Meanwhile, the draft federal law "On the Bases of State Service," which was drawn up in May 1994 and which foresees a special status for civil servants, will most likely lead to "white collar" workers identifying themselves as such, and setting up a separate trade union.

Need for Trade Union Unity

Despite political and professional differences, Russian trade unions on the whole are becoming more and more conscious of the need to unite their forces in order to achieve common goals. As an example, one could note the strikes by miners in Vorkuta; these actions were conducted jointly by the Union of Coal Industry Workers and the Independent Union of Miners, despite a decision by the central organs of the Independent Union of Miners not to participate in the stoppage. Moreover, all three of the main labor movement organizations in Vorkuta, the Independent Union of Miners, the Union of

Coal Industry Workers, and the City Workers Committee, endorsed the political demand for early elections to the post of president of Russia.

Inter-sectoral links are also being created between unions of workers involved in a single chain of production. Thus the metallurgical workers of Cherepovets have established direct contacts with the miners of Vorkuta, who supply raw materials to their combine. It is obvious that the union movement on the level of the country as a whole will also develop in this direction of collaboration on a regional and professional level.

Both the old and new trade unions deserve to be quite sharply criticized — the old unions for excessive centralization, lack of initiative, and general ineptitude, and the new unions for a tendency toward rapid bureaucratization and an inability to pursue an independent political line.

But for all their faults, the unions remain the sole obstacle barring the way to poverty and joblessness. As a result, one of today's main tasks is to overcome the disagreements between the old and new unions. As a rule these disagreements are in the political sphere, and are provoked by the excessive ambitions of trade union leaders. At the local level, the conditions for collaboration have long been present; trade union committees operating within single enterprises seek to find a common language and to act in concert. This process of rapprochement has already advanced to the sectoral level, and can be expected to develop further. Life itself is forcing the trade unions to unite.

Collective Bargaining and Trilateral Partnership

As has been explained, the interests of industrialists and of the labor collectives represented by the trade unions intersect to a significant degree. As a rule, therefore, collective bargaining in the enterprises proceeds relatively smoothly. However, both the trade union committee and the management understand that the enterprise might shut down at any moment, and thus be incapable of fulfilling the obligations it has assumed. Therefore, the parties to agreements place only the most minimal demands on one another, and during the recent period Labor Ministry specialists have recorded a catastrophic decline in the number of collective agreements concluded in enterprises. Over the past two years this number has fallen almost by half, since in most cases the sides have voluntarily refrained from concluding agreements in view of the impossibility of predicting even the most immediate future of the enterprise.

Meanwhile, the number of labor conflicts has shown a steady rise. According to data from the Ministry of Labor, during the first four months of this year disputes were recorded in 1,366 enterprises. Neither entrepreneurs nor enterprise directors can give any guarantees to workers. The only institution which can now provide these guarantees is the state. The instability of the situation in production therefore imparts a special significance to the system of sectoral and regional wage agreements, and also to the

General Agreement between the trade unions, the state, and organizations of entrepreneurs.

Work on a General Agreement for 1994 began last year, and lasted about five months. This time the unions rejected participation in an agreement on regional and local problems. As a result, they were able to concentrate their attention on ensuring social guarantees at the federal level. The agreement secures for the trade unions the right to collect dues in non-cash form with the written agreement of members. Proposals by the trade unions to set the maximum allowable level of unemployment at 3.5 percent, and to raise the minimum wage to 70 percent of the subsistence minimum income [!!], were not accepted. This was among the reasons why many trade unions spoke out against signing the Pact on Social Accord.

Social Accord and the Trade Unions

The signing of the Pact on Social Accord began on April 28. According to the official version, the pact was meant to aid in the establishment of peace and concord in Russia. A separate article of the pact foresaw the introduction of a moratorium on strikes "aimed at the reassigning of budget funds, the providing of subsidies to particular territories or sectors of the economy, the granting of benefits in matters of credits or taxation, or with other goals not having a direct relationship to questions of wages, work conditions, or the retention of jobs."

The trouble was that resolving any of these issues had a particularly direct relationship to budget financing. Seeing in this provision an attempt to limit the rights of the trade unions, almost all organizations (the only exception was SOTSPROF) subjected the draft pact to sharp criticism. On the other hand, it was observed that holding any kind of talks with a government that constantly violated earlier agreements was pointless.

While accepting that for the sake of the country's prosperity all social forces and political groups had to make mutual concessions, the unions noted that these concessions should not be one-sided. As matching concessions from the state, the unions demanded: an end to the fall in output, to be achieved through changes in tax policy; support for domestic producers; resolution of the problem of inter-enterprise payments; guarantees of full and prompt payment of wages; raising the incomes of low-paid groups of the population; and the adoption by the state of a program for ensuring employment. As their main condition for signing the agreement, many unions demanded the payment of wage debts owed by the state. A number of dramatic gestures were made, as for example when Anatoly Kochur, president of the Association of Flight Crew Members, on April 9 demonstratively walked out of a Kremlin meeting at which the text of the pact was being discussed.

Participants in the All-Russia Conference of Chairpersons of Primary Trade Union Organizations, held on April 14, expressed very nega-

tive views of the pact. These attitudes were shared by the General Council of the FNPR, as a result of which the FNPR leadership was placed in a difficult position.

Fearing that a refusal to sign the pact would be interpreted as evidence of a desire for confrontation with the government, and would lead to fresh moves to restrict the property and other rights of the trade unions, the Executive Committee of the FNPR rejected the decision of the General Council and voted to endorse the pact. FNPR Chairperson Mikhail Shmakov ultimately signed the pact, but insisted that a document expressing the general position of the trade unions should be appended to the text. In the document, the trade unions did not recognize the introduction of a moratorium on strikes if, through the fault of the authorities, collective agreements on questions of wages and employment were not fulfilled. Another important point included in the document concerns guarantees that free, universal secondary education will be maintained.

Opposition to the Accord

Among the unions that refused to sign the pact were Rosugleprof [the union at the Rostov coal mining complex], Elektroprofsoyuz [the electrical industry union], the unions of oil and gas industry workers, of workers in road transport, geology, geodesy, and cartography, machine and instrument building, the fishing industry, the agro-industrial complex, the Independent Union of Miners, the trade union of metallurgical workers, and the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Russia. Besides these sectoral unions, a number of regional union organizations, including the Kuzbass Federation of Trade Unions and the Omsk Federation of Trade Unions, refused to participate in the signing, demanding instead that the government and the president resign.

No amount of qualifications or of "particular views" appended to the pact could spare the FNPR leadership from having later to engage in difficult discussions with representatives of member organizations. Thus the leaders of the union organizations of Siberia, gathered in Omsk on May 13 and 14, bitterly criticized FNPR leader Shmakov for his collaborationist position and considered it essential to publicly dissociate themselves once again from the pact.

In order to ward off the wave of criticism from below, Shmakov issued a press release in which he drew attention to the fact that immediately after the pact was signed it began to be violated, and that the authorities were continuing their efforts to deprive the unions of their constitutional right to strike. This statement was prompted by a hurriedly organized court hearing on a strike by the Union of Flight Crew Members. The hearing resulted in the strike being declared illegal.

The intensification of the economic crisis has contributed to the politicization of the strike movement and the radicalization of the trade unions. The case of the Vorkuta NPG, which refused to carry out a decision of the central organs of the union, testifies to the fact that this

process is also affecting the new trade unions which had traditionally supported the presidential power [of Boris Yeltsin].

The center of trade union activity is gradually shifting to the Far East and Siberia — regions with developed extractive industries which are only now being confronted with an acute crisis. It is precisely in these regions that the most advanced initiatives have appeared for the formation of a trade union-based party. These initiatives have the potential to grow into a new political movement, which in the near future could well constitute a real force, capable of altering the political landscape of the country.

The Russian Trade Unions and Politics

Today the majority of Russian trade unions recognize the need to be involved in politics. During the period when local organs of power were being reelected in March 1994, virtually all the trade unions — some 99 percent — sought in one way or another to participate in the elections or to influence the election process. The most usual allies of the trade unions in electoral blocs were the Agrarian Party of Russia, the organization Women of Russia [which won a large share of the vote in the December 1993 elections], regional Councils of Entrepreneurs, and divisions of the Federation of Commodity Producers.

The outcome of the March elections cannot be called a victory for the trade unions. In each region, the number of union activists elected to local organs of power varied from one to five. The tactics employed varied from region to region. In some regions the trade unions sought to influence the structures of power by using “socially-oriented” factions within the elected organs and by organizing mass campaigns. If the position of workers in a particular region had deteriorated dramatically, the question of participation in the elections was resolved in a different fashion. Here, the trade unions were faced with the task of independently forming a socially-oriented majority in the local organs of legislative power.

The interests of the trade unions in parliament [the Duma elected last December] have mainly been represented by deputies of the Agrarian Party of Russia, which has eight deputies in the lower house and one in the Council of the Federation. The Agrarian Party was formed with the participation of the central committee of the agricultural workers’ trade union, and received the support of other trade unions during the election campaign. Together with “independent” deputies who have aligned themselves with it, the trade union fraction in the Duma consists of about 30 people.

Unions Need “Their Own Ideology”

As in the past, the main problem of the trade union movement is the lack of its own ideology. This problem is becoming more acute as the politicization of the labor movement goes ahead. The trade unions cannot remain on the

sidelines of politics, but until now they have not been able to put forward an integral ideological program, that is, one based on common values and goals. What exists in the trade union milieu is not simply a pluralism of views, but at times, totally counterposed views, ranging from the desire to lead workers in an uncompromising class struggle to secure their rights, to the wish to avoid any conflicts or confrontation with the government. This divides and weakens the union movement, and leads to a situation in which the position of specific trade unions is determined by momentary considerations.

One attempt to further the political self-determination of the trade unions was the founding of the Party of Labor. To many of the participants in this process, it is now clear that this effort was doomed to failure from the very beginning, since the party was deideologized and rested mainly on the trade union bureaucracy. Many supporters of the Party of Labor were drawn to it not by conviction, but by nomenklatura clannishness.

Social Democratic Stirrings — and Rutskoi

In Russian society today there is a clearly felt need for social democratic policies based on a balance between the public interest and personal initiative, providing for a just division of national income and taking into account the interests of all layers of society. After meeting with defeat in the elections of December 1993, the leaders of the social democratic groups held a series of meetings and consultations as a result of which ideas began to be worked out for unifying the divided social democratic movement, with the participation of the trade unions. The project came to be known as the Russian Union of Labor.

The forces that participated in this project included the FNPR, the Free Russia People’s Party (the party of Rutskoi), the Party of Labor, the United Social Democrats (OSD — the Kudyukin faction), and the Russian Social Democratic Center, led by Oleg Rummyantsev. Working groups were formed to prepare for a unification congress. The process of unification was begun in the provinces. In the Krasnoyarsk region, for example, the trade union socio-political movement Union of Labor was established on the initiative of the unions of workers in education, science, culture, and art and of the district organization of the Social Democratic Party of Russia.

Several weeks before unification was to take place, however, the political situation in the country underwent another abrupt change. The opposition leaders who had been arrested in October 1993 were set free. Those who returned to political activity included Aleksandr Rutskoi [Yeltsin’s former vice president, who opposed him in October]. With Rutskoi again on the scene, his Free Russia People’s Party began voicing claims to the leading positions in the

new bloc. As a result, the Russian Union of Labor was not founded.

At a congress on May 21, 1994, Rutskoi’s Free Russia People’s Party decided to rename itself the Russian Social Democratic People’s Party (RSDNP). The members of the party described it as an organization of social democratic orientation, assigning primary importance to defending the national interests of the country. The party was seen as the basis for a new “social-patriotic” movement from which fascists, Stalinists, monarchists, and members of the Black Hundreds would be excluded. The party’s economic program foresaw regulated price formation, protection of the internal market, the imposing of control on the use of state property, the limitation of profit rates in highly monopolized sectors of the economy, and strengthened state regulation of the money supply. Rutskoi himself assigned his party the role of an “organizing link of the popular-patriotic forces.” These strong patriotic accents are one of the main distinguishing features of the nascent social democracy, and represent a sort of defensive reaction to the process by which a developed country is being turned into a semi-colony.

The RSDNP is in its formative stages, and the remaining social democratic parties and groups are still acting separately. The lack of success of the social democrats can be explained by the peculiarities of the Russian situation, and in particular, by the lack of developed market relations. The consequences of the latter include the fundamental impossibility of implementing the mechanism of social partnership, and the ill-developed character of the interests and stereotypes of behavior both of hired workers and of entrepreneurs. As a result, parties in Russia are formed through initiatives from above, not from below.

Conclusions

The future of the trade union movement depends on the development of the situation in the enterprises. Only economic stabilization will separate the trade unions and the corps of directors, arraying them on different sides of the barricades, and will remove the distortions from the activity of the trade unions. But even according to the most optimistic prognoses by economists, improvements are not foreseen in the near future, so for the time being the basis will remain for social collaboration between entrepreneurs and workers.

In organizational matters, the trade unions will seek to create closer links on the regional and professional level, while the regional organizations will play a more and more independent role in the movement.

On the political plane, the trade unions will increasingly move into opposition to the Yeltsin government. Even the new unions, which traditionally have supported the liberal bloc, are now giving only verbal support to Yeltsin, while in practice voicing demands that contradict the liberal course of the reforms. □

Russian Trade Union Day of Action Demands Back Wages

by Renfrey Clarke

Hundreds of thousands of workers throughout Russia took part in nationally coordinated demonstrations on October 27, demanding that the government pay wage arrears and make effective moves to combat unemployment. In addition, workplace meetings and conferences were held in thousands of enterprises. The day of action was organized by the country's largest union body, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR).

Beginning in the cities of the Russian Far East, unionists rallied in public squares or picketed local administrative offices. At times, the tactic chosen was to form symbolic queues for wages that are often paid months late. As well as the narrowly economic slogans endorsed by the FNPR leadership, workers and their representatives often voiced tough political demands. According to the Moscow daily *Segodnia*, a majority of the meetings called for the resignation of the government and for the holding of early presidential elections.

To an impressive degree, the protests saw workers overcome the divisions that have plagued the Russian labor movement during the past few years. Of the "alternative" unions that are outside the FNPR structures, all but a handful endorsed the actions and urged members to participate.

The prospect of mass Russia-wide demonstrations on October 27 clearly had the authorities worried. President Boris Yeltsin's administrative chief, Sergei Filatov, made a series of appeals for the FNPR to abandon its plans. In negotiations, government representatives began making significant concessions, including agreeing to tighten controls on illegal firings and to introduce new legislation governing the payment of wages. To avoid a showdown with coal miners, who had threatened an indefinite strike from November 1, the government promised to pay subsidy arrears to the coal industry.

The government's fears were not misplaced. The total of overdue wages in Russia has risen rapidly during the past few months, and now stands at the equivalent of almost US\$3 billion; of this sum, arrears on the wages of state employees account for roughly a third. Meanwhile, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has concluded that open unemployment stands at about 8 percent of the workforce, while "suppressed unemployment" affects another third. The potential obviously exists for a massive outpouring of protest.

There is no doubt that October 27 represented the largest planned protest action in Russian history. FNPR officials claimed on the day after that far more people than anticipated had taken part—as many as eight million across the country.

A figure of 70,000 participants was claimed for the largest public rally, in St. Petersburg.

Still, a real question remains of whether anything like the full potential of the day of action was realized—and of whether the protests were large enough, and the demands sufficiently hard-hitting, to put real pressure on the authorities.

It is clear that of the "eight million participants," most were simply people working in enterprises where the trade union committees organized some kind of protest activity. The turnout for the public rallies represented real interest and support, but there is a rule of thumb for gauging the size of demonstrations in Russia: divide the claimed attendance by four or five, and the resulting figure is probably close to the mark.

When these factors are taken into account, it becomes clear that the FNPR failed to mobilize more than a small minority of its more than 50 million members—or even of the many millions seriously affected by nonpayment of wages.

In Moscow, with its working population of about 5 million people, only some 5,000 turned out to a demonstration on Teatralnaya Square. Lackluster organizing by the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions (MFP) helped ensure that of the people present, most had come at the summons of Stalinist-nationalist groups rather than of trade union bodies. To the humiliation of the MFP, the official speakers were largely drowned out.

No doubt taking heart from the unimpressive Moscow rally, the Russian government has ridden out the brief storm, and has not changed the basic anti-worker thrust of its policies.

It would be wrong, of course, to suggest that indifferent and inept union leaders were the sole or even the main reason why millions of workers did not pour into the streets on October 27. The Russian working class still suffers from a terrible burden of disorientation inherited from the Stalinist past. But when union leaders preside over debacles such as the demonstration in Moscow, they cannot put all the blame on history.

Although unemployment in Russia is rising and real wage payments are continuing to drop, the FNPR has failed to mount a consistent campaign of struggle, or even to formulate a general strategy for the defense of workers' interests. Instead, the federation's leaders have restricted themselves almost entirely to negotiations—conducted from a position of obvious weakness—and to episodic attempts to pressure or cajole this or that element of the state machine.

At times, decisions of the FNPR leadership have been disastrous for workers. Late in April FNPR Chairperson Mikhail Shmakov was among the signatories of Yeltsin's Pact on So-

cial Accord. Under this wide-ranging agreement, union leaders undertook not to demand early elections, and for practical purposes, renounced the option of calling strikes. In effect, the government was handed permission to solve its budgetary problems at workers' expense. The sum of wages owed to state employees rose steeply.

By the end of the summer, the situation of large numbers of workers had become intolerable. The FNPR leaders were forced to promise Russia-wide protest actions. But the "organizing effort" consisted of little more than setting a date and urging affiliated bodies to stage protests.

As time went on, many unionists were shocked to find FNPR leaders pledging loyalty to the government, and doing their best to stop openly political demands from being raised. At a press conference on October 25, Shmakov was quoted as saying: "...it would be thoroughly disadvantageous for us to change the government, since it has just set to work on dealing with our problems." The FNPR, Shmakov stated, had "confidence in the government for the present."

The prospect that radical working-class groups would join in the protests, raising political demands whether union officials liked it or not, spurred the FNPR leadership to something close to panic. On October 26 Shmakov was reported to have sent telegrams to the heads of all FNPR affiliates, warning that the desire of parties and movements to take part in the day of protest could "give it a political coloration," "distort the process of discussions between the FNPR and the government," and even "wreck the actions."

In the event, there was often no need for "parties and movements" to introduce political demands. Regional and sectoral union leaders were quite ready to introduce such demands themselves, responding to rank-and-file sentiment. Far from wrecking the actions, the more militant flavor that resulted probably boosted attendance.

Nevertheless, the evasions and retreats of the FNPR leadership unquestionably left many workers demoralized, limiting their activism and involvement.

Whether trade unions involved in economic struggles should raise political demands is essentially a tactical question. Making such demands may be inexpedient, if it would divide workers who need to unite around concrete issues. But there are also cases where a failure to take a clear political stand is absurd, and poses the question of whose side union leaders are really on. The situation in Russia today is surely an example of the latter.

According to *Izvestia*, unpaid state wages in Russia have increased by eight and a half times since January, a rise in real terms of more than 400 percent. The Russian government's record on other rights of workers is equally shocking; the ILO recently slammed the regime for violating no fewer than 15 international conventions.

Shmakov's argument that the government should be tolerated "since it has just set to work on dealing with our problems" ignores his own

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Russian Leftists Discuss Their Future

by Boris Kagarlitsky

Despite a great deal of selfless work, and a steady increase in their political authority, non-Communist leftists in Russia have until now failed to establish a mass political organization. This is despite the fact that conditions would seem to have ripened for such a development. The Russian government's neo-liberal policies have impoverished millions of people and aroused the hostility of the bulk of the working class. Even sociologists close to the government are noting a dramatic rise in anti-capitalist sentiment. Surveys show that more than half of the country's voters are inclined to support left or left-centrist policies.

However, the majority of left-oriented voters did not take part either in the referendum of April 1993 or in the December 1993 elections to the State Duma. This was only partly due to anger at the rules of the game imposed by the Yeltsin regime; the main reason was the lack of any attractive alternative and a mistrust of politicians in general.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation, unlike its fraternal parties in Eastern Europe, has proven quite incapable of tapping into voters' growing disillusionment with neo-liberal policies. The party has also failed to carry out any serious internal reforms. The leaders of the party combine open nostalgia for the previous "golden age" with nationalist [Great Russian chauvinist] rhetoric and with appeals for policies designed to favor "national capital." Although even some liberal economists in Russia now speak of the need for massive re-nationalization of industrial enterprises, this subject is taboo for the Communist leaders.

The weakness of the Communist Party has created a political vacuum which the new left has tried to fill. But until now, all attempts to establish a united mass party or movement of the new left have ended in failure.

The most important reason for this has been developments in the trade unions. As leftists anticipated, the country's mass "traditional" union body, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), grew more radical as it became obvious that the reforms being implemented were anti-worker and anti-popular in nature. However, this radicalization was no more than superficial. The federation's leaders limited themselves to making tough statements, and even when they supported the idea of building a Party of Labor, they turned out to be incapable of creating party structures at the local level. The inefficiency of the FNPR bureaucracy stifled all initiatives, so that the conflict with the government remained purely rhetorical.

The consequences of this became fully obvious only after the events of October 1993 when the new leadership of the FNPR, headed by Mikhail Shmakov, the former leader of the left radicals, turned sharply to the right and began seeking accord with the authorities. The Party of Labor was forced to pay the full price for excessively close collaboration with the trade union bureaucracy. Party activists who had accepted various posts within the structures of the FNPR were faced with a choice: either to change their views or to quit their posts in the hierarchy of the trade unions, in the process losing a significant part of their political influence.

The overwhelming majority of the socialists in the Party of Labor chose the latter course. The only exception was Andrei Isaev, the chief editor of the trade union newspaper *Solidarnost*. As a result of Isaev's decision, the editorial line of *Solidarnost* changed along with the policies of the FNPR leadership. In the pages of his newspaper, Isaev defended the policies of the FNPR and the idea of "reformism with specifically Russian features." The more radical of the *Solidarnost* writers gradually abandoned the paper. The print run fell from 40,000 to 20,000, the volunteer distributors lost interest, and the paper finally disappeared from the streets and newsstands, to be read only by trade union bureaucrats.

Meanwhile, the majority of Party of Labor activists were no longer hiding their disappointment with Shmakov's policies. These sentiments increased after the party's Second Congress, when Council of the Federation deputy Oleg Smolin, known for his firmness and independence, was elected chairperson. The FNPR leadership's search for reconciliation with the authorities also proved repugnant to the United Social Democrats, who from 1992 had collaborated actively with the Party of Labor. With Shmakov present at the meeting, Smolin in May 1994 told an audience of trade union activists in his native city of Omsk that unless the policies of the FNPR changed, it would be necessary to begin a struggle to change the leadership of the unions. The conflict that had been ripening for several months had burst into the open.

The same happened with the official "left" opposition in the Duma. After these "leftists" voted to support the super-monetarist 1994 federal budget, they effectively became part of the government's support base. Rank-and-file members of the Communist Party put pressure on the party's Duma deputies, demanding determined action, but received only promises in return.

The Social Democratic Party of Russia, whose activists were working mainly in the alternative trade unions, was also beset with crisis. A bitter struggle between the left and right wings led to a de facto split. The United Social Democrats, headed by a former dissident, onetime Deputy Minister of Labor Pavel Kudyukin, moved sharply to the left, taking positions scarcely distinguishable from those of the Party of Labor. Meanwhile the right wing, headed by State Duma deputy Anatoly Golov, spoke of a forthcoming unification with the forces of the "democratic center." The people said to be involved in this process included former Defense Minister Marshal Shaposhnikov and former Moscow Mayor Gavriil Popov, individuals whose names are bywords for nomenklatura intrigue and corruption.

After December 1993 the Socialist Party of Workers in practice broke all its links with other leftists. Arguing that conditions in Russia had "not yet ripened for real left politics," leaders of the party staked their hopes on collaboration with sectors of the state and managerial apparatus that were dissatisfied with Yeltsin. This alliance was meant to operate within the framework of a "union of commodity producers."

The Free Russia People's Party, which has been renamed the "Russian Social Democratic People's Party," is also now in crisis. Groups centered around former Vice President Rutskoi and Duma deputy Vasily Lipitsky are waging a constant internecine struggle. It is obvious that in such circumstances new attempts to achieve unification from above can only make matters worse, especially since the programmatic basis for unifying the new left movement remains unclear. Statements continue to be issued about the "rebirth of Russian social democracy," while at the same time substantial numbers of left activists and supporters are demanding more radical policies and "new, original initiatives."

At the same time as the leaders of the traditional trade unions have tried to appear respectable and cautious, the masses are clearly unwilling to be reconciled to the "new realities." The rapid growth of the strike movement in the spring of 1994 showed that the situation was changing. However much the FNPR leaders have called for moderation, the grass roots union structures, reacting to the demands of the membership, have more and more often put forward political demands. Trying to calm people down, the union leaders themselves have come increasingly to figure among the targets of the dissatisfaction.

In these circumstances, both the Party of Labor and the United Social Democrats are

trying to make the shift from operating through leadership structures to relying on "solidarity from below." It is on this basis that a new left movement in Russia has to be created. In the words of Andrei Kolganov, one of the Party of Labor leaders, "an organization of trade union and worker activists, even if only small, is necessary today in order to provide a firm structure on the basis of which we can continue our political activity among hired workers, since acting in apparatus fashion through the hierarchy of the FNPR is unrealistic and ineffective." As Kolganov observes, activity at the grass

roots level is now beginning to yield results. "Even if slowly and uncertainly, and in small numbers, worker activists are nevertheless beginning to turn to left ideas and to the people who expound them. This is because of the content of these ideas, of their ability to explain what is happening and to define an independent position for workers in the continuing social conflicts."

A unification meeting, which has been postponed several times, was scheduled to take place in the Siberian city of Omsk on November 26. The tasks of this meeting were to be posed in a new fashion. The main aim was to be not so

much establishing a joint political organization — a goal that will be addressed primarily by the Party of Labor and the United Social Democrats — as laying the foundations for a mass movement "from below."

The future of the left movement in Russia now depends on worker and trade union activists. In this sense, the failure of the attempts to create a united organization "from above" has not been such a bad thing. □

October 10, 1994

Women in Russia: What the Research Shows

by Irina Glushchenko

To know their conditions of life are bad and getting worse, women in today's Russia do not need graphs, maps, or statistical tables. Nevertheless, the newspaper *Segodnya* performed a useful service recently when it published a special supplement containing detailed information on the lives and problems of Russian women. Despite its right-wing politics, *Segodnya* has devoted more attention to women's issues than any other newspaper in Russia; women's issues often remain completely outside the field of view of opposition and even left-wing publications.

The picture described by *Segodnya* is not a happy one. As might be expected, the position of women in Russia is best in Moscow and in a few other major centers. In provincial areas, women have fared better in regions which have put up clear resistance to Moscow, "resolutely opposing the reforms coming from the capital and defending socialist values."

The research showed that despite stereotypes, the position of women in two "Muslim" autonomous territories, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkesia, is better in many respects than the Russian average. The worst regions for women in Russia are Siberia and the Urals, and in the European part of the country, Kostroma and Ivanovo provinces, where the textile industry has traditionally been centered.

The economic situation in the latter regions is so appalling that even the local authorities speak of these provinces as disaster zones. A recent report from Ivanovo described how a

jobless mother took her two children with her to the office of a factory director and committed suicide before their eyes. Journalists describe such incidents, but nothing changes in provincial life.

The eastern regions of Russia also rate far worse than average in the number of recorded cases of alcoholism and tuberculosis in women, with more than 25 cases per 100,000. In the country's northern and northeastern provinces as many as 3.5 percent of women are employed doing heavy physical labor, while in European Russia this figure is not usually more than 1 percent.

In general, it can be seen that the position of women has deteriorated most sharply in the zones that have suffered most from the current economic policies. Unemployment is also higher among women than among men. Women have suffered more than men from the collapse of social welfare provisions, from the decline of state child care facilities, and from the crisis in education. While it may be no strain for wealthy "new Russians" to engage a full-time child care nurse for \$100-200 a week, this is more than the monthly wage of an average worker. Child care centers for the offspring of "good families" cost \$100 a month or more, and are obviously quite inaccessible to most parents.

It is not surprising that all this leads, on the one hand, to a decline in the birth rate and, on the other, to increased subjugation for women. The rise in women's unemployment has not meant that fewer women are having to perform

heavy physical labor. Nor has it brought any notable increase in the wages of those who still have jobs. Meanwhile, discrimination against women in hiring is becoming more widespread.

These problems are meeting with only an insignificant response from the parliamentary deputies of the "Women of Russia" bloc. This formation, based on women who held influential posts in the old party-state apparatus, enjoyed considerable success in the December 1993 elections for the State Duma. But in the year since then the bloc has remained virtually out of sight, except when its members have been campaigning for prestigious posts in parliamentary commissions.

The disappointment with the performance of the "women's party" was not hard to predict. The bloc's success in the elections was achieved through television advertisements, not as a result of support from the women's movement. Winning the votes of a proportion of the voters who were dissatisfied with the "official" politicians, Women of Russia went on to show that it did not differ from these politicians in any meaningful way.

Few people would now disagree that even if the Women of Russia bloc survives until the next elections, it will not be able to repeat its electoral success. Meanwhile, the real problems of Russian women demand urgent solutions. Leftists in Russia will be making a serious error if they fail to see this. □

October 26, 1994

Russian Trade Union Day of Action Demands Back Wages

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experience and that of other union leaders who have struck deals in the past few years with the Russian state authorities. In dealing with the labor movement, the regime has made shameless use of the strategy of signing agreements and then making no effort to implement them.

Today's promises from these politicians are worth no more than yesterday's.

There is no sense in which the Russian government represents the interests of workers, and workers have no reason to want it to stay in office. Until the FNPR leaders recognize this, there will be large numbers of union members who

are angry and potentially combative, but who will not take the federation's calls to action seriously.

Meanwhile, the workers who turned out on October 27 are entitled to ask, What is the union movement going to do next? With their refusal to draw up even a medium-term program of struggle, the FNPR leaders will not find this question easy to answer. □

New Material on Trotsky and the Left Opposition Revealed in Russian Archives

by Alexander Pantsov

The following is an edited transcript of the author's talk at the Socialist Scholars Conference in New York City, April 3, 1994, at a workshop cosponsored by Bulletin in Defense of Marxism and Socialist Action. Other speakers at the workshop were Nadezhda Joffe, daughter of Adolf Joffe (d. 1927), who was perhaps the closest political and personal associate of Leon Trotsky outside his immediate family; in the 1920s, Joffe was a leading diplomat of the Soviet government and one of the most important figures in the anti-Stalinist Left Opposition. Also speaking at the workshop were Marilyn Vogt-Downey and David Weiss, both members of the editorial board of this magazine. Pantsov's talk was transcribed for BIDOM by Lee DeNoyer.

First of all I would like to say that I am very grateful to Marilyn [Vogt-Downey] for inviting me to this conference, and thank you to everybody at this session. I am very pleased to be here.

Unlike Nadezhda [Joffe], I belong to the generation that was born in the 1950s in the Soviet Union who didn't know anything about Trotsky and Trotskyism. We only knew some slanders about Trotsky. We knew from the universities and the schools that Trotsky was an "enemy of the people" and that all members of the Left Opposition were "betrayers."

In 1972 I graduated from the Asian and African Countries Institute of Moscow University, and I became a Sinologist, a specialist in Chinese history — particularly Chinese revolutionary history and more specifically the history of the Chinese Communist movement. In 1987 I got my first chance to visit China, to work in Chinese libraries, and I came there to do research on the history of the promulgation of Marxism in China. For the first time in my life in these libraries, in Chinese — it's peculiar but true — I found Trotsky's writings.

Previously I had no chance to read Trotsky's writings in Russia because they were kept secret in the special sections of the libraries and archives, and so on. It's a funny story, but anyway I found writings of Trotsky and of the Left Oppositionists in Chinese, because at the time people were already publishing Trotsky's writings in Chinese, and I found Trotsky's writings in Russian. I read *My Life* and many other books. I must tell you frankly that I didn't become a Trotskyist and I am not now a Trotskyist. I am not a politician, you must know that. I am a historian, and my main task is to understand the process. Not to blame, not to praise, but to keep my research objective.

When I began to research Trotsky and Trotskyism I found that I had nothing to rely on in Russia. In order to understand the Chinese Trotskyists, I needed to understand who the Trotskyists were in Russia. So I stopped my research in Chinese history for a while and devoted myself to Russian history. For a few years I concentrated my emphasis on researching the Russian revolution and the origins of Bolshevism, and the problems of Leninism and Trotskyism in Russia. I did this in order to understand clearly what Trotskyism was. Then

I found the conjunction of my interests and now I am completing a huge book entitled *Leon Trotsky and the Chinese Revolution*. It is a history of the Chinese Trotskyist movement. I've already written about 700 pages of this book, but I came only to the period when the Chinese Trotskyists were expelled from the Chinese Communist Party, so I will try to do more about it. I began from 1917, from the beginning of the promulgation of Bolshevism, hence Trotskyism, in China.

When I began to study Trotsky, right after I came back from China at the end of 1988, I wrote a paper entitled "Leon Davidovich Trotsky." It's a political biography of Trotsky, and I tried to publish this article for a year and a half. Nobody accepted it. Because I tried to explain Trotsky, I tried to understand him. The main conclusion was that he was a great proletarian revolutionary and that he struggled not against the Soviet Union but against the bureaucracy, the bureaucratization of the party, the dirt on the face of the apparatus, and so on. I also described Trotsky's role during the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations. You must know that almost everybody in Russia since the Stalin era believes Trotsky was completely stupid to suggest the formula "No peace, no war." I tried to show that in that concrete situation, at that particular time, this formula was absolutely correct, but many people didn't understand me.

Finally in May 1990 I managed to publish my article in the magazine *Voprosy istorii* ("Problems of History"). At that time the situation had changed and I managed to publish some more articles. One of them was on the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty. One was called "Preobrazhensky and Trotsky," and another, "New Light on Leon Trotsky," and some other articles on Trotsky. Some of them were translated and published in America, including "Leon Davidovich Trotsky." This article was published in the *Journal of Soviet Studies in History* in 1991. Also my article "The New School of Falsification" was published in the book *The USSR, 1987-1991: Marxist Perspectives*, edited by Marilyn Vogt-Downey.

When I was publishing these articles I also read some articles and books by other historians who had researched Trotsky, and some of them I regarded as my cothinkers. For instance, Vladimir Billig, Vitaly Startsev, and some other

people, but there are only a few of us. In most publications there was the same old slander about Trotsky. Now you see, if we speak of the Russian historiography of Trotsky and of the Russian revolution, it looks like the same falsification as before, but from another angle. Recently many of our historians of the Russian revolution have continued to do their best to praise Lenin and the Bolshevik revolution while continuing to blame Trotsky and so on.

Now I find there are two new trends. (And this is true not only in historiography but in the general consciousness which is affected by what people read in the newspapers.) One group of so-called historians belong to the nationalist patriotic trend, and they try to show that the Russian revolution was a plot by Jews — that the Jews supposedly organized the revolution in order to kill Russians. But there is another trend that I regard as an official trend now, because the main representatives of this trend are advisers to Yeltsin. For example, General Dmitry Volkogonov, who wrote the book *Triumph and Tragedy*, a biography of Stalin, then he wrote a book on Trotsky, and now he's finishing a book on Lenin. If you were to read these works by Volkogonov or some of his subordinates, you would probably think that Bolsheviks came from Mars! Because they portray Russia as so beautiful before the October Revolution; there were no contradictions; everybody was enjoying life; then suddenly came the October Revolution. Why? Because these stupid Bolsheviks came from another planet to organize this coup d'état, and so on. It's so ridiculous! But you see it is very popular now in Russia, and if you look at some newspapers and magazines in Russia, or some movies about the Russian revolution, you'll see it is easy to find this kind of explanation of these events.

So my first task is to show the real history as I understand it. A history based on documents. My second task is to try to expose this falsification, to show the methods of those who are writing official history now. That's why I wrote the article entitled "The New School of Falsification" — about Volkogonov; he's the main figure. But there are some other people, among them Nikolai Vasetsky, who wrote many articles and books about Trotsky and who is really an anti-Semite and absolutely reactionary. So I

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Setting the Record Straight: Who Trotsky Was, What Trotskyism Represents Today, and What We Can Do

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

The following served as the basis for a presentation at the first-ever conference in Russia on Trotsky and his work, entitled "International Scientific Conference on the Legacy of Leon Trotsky: Its Historic and Contemporary Significance." The conference, held in Moscow November 10–12, was sponsored by an international association called Scholars for Democracy and Socialism and by the Center for Problems of Democracy and Socialism of the Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences. There were approximately 60 participants, both scholars and political activists, including some from the United States, England, Scotland, France, and elsewhere.

The conference adopted a proposal to establish a Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy, which has already begun to launch a number of projects, including some of those proposed below. In the next issue of BIDOM we hope to carry a report on the conference and the proposals adopted there.

Let a brief history of some highlights of Trotsky's life explain who he was, as well as the current significance of the movement he led.

Born in 1879, Leon Trotsky became involved in workers struggles in 1897, when he was only 18 years old. For this he was arrested and spent two and a half years in prison and then was sent for a four-year term to Siberia. There he also participated in the creation of an illegal workers organization, before escaping after two years.

From Siberia he made his way to London, where he collaborated with Lenin and Plekhanov on the revolutionary socialist newspaper *Iskra* in 1902. In 1903, there was a split in the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), the Russian affiliate of the Second International. Trotsky broke with Lenin over Lenin's conception of the nature of the revolutionary party and for a short time aligned himself with the RSDLP minority, the Mensheviks. But he broke with the Mensheviks in 1904 and during the next decade tried to reunite the party.

At the beginning of 1905, Trotsky illegally returned to Russia, where he became a member of the first workers council, or soviet, in Saint Petersburg, then a member of its Executive Committee, and finally its chairman during the 1905 revolution. At that time, he was also the editor of two workers newspapers. As a result of the experiences of the 1905 Russian revolution he developed the theory of permanent revolution that is so critical to understanding the dynamic of the revolutionary process not only of the Russian revolution but of the world revolution in general, especially the relationship between the former colonial world and the advanced capitalist countries. Trotsky was arrested with all the members of the St. Petersburg Soviet when the revolution was suppressed and after a year and a half in prison was exiled again to Siberia. He remained there only eight days before escaping to Austria, where he founded a workers paper called *Pravda*, which he and his collaborators put out for seven years.

On the eve of World War I, Trotsky was expelled with other Russians from Austria and went to Switzerland. There, as he put it himself in his testimony before the Dewey Commission in Mexico in 1937, with his book *War and the International*, he "began a campaign against [the] chauvinism which [had] invaded the Second International at that time."



Trotsky left Switzerland for France, where during 1914, together with other Russian exiles, he published a daily newspaper and devoted his efforts to a fight against the world war.

In 1915, with several dozen other delegates from warring and neutral nations, he attended the Zimmerwald Conference in Switzerland to oppose the inter-imperialist slaughter of World War I that had been supported by the mass socialist parties of the Second International across Europe. Trotsky himself wrote the Manifesto the conference issued. The Zimmerwald Con-

ference was a precursor of the new Third, or Communist, International, formed in Moscow in 1919 on the strength of the Russian Revolution.

Trotsky was expelled from France at the end of 1916 and went to Spain, where he was arrested and deported to the United States. He arrived in the United States in January 1917. In New York, he participated in the activities of the American Socialist Party and in publishing a newspaper where he continued his fight against the war and the chauvinism that was destroying the Second International as a revolutionary organization.

After receiving word of the February 1917 revolution in Petrograd, he left for Russia but was arrested by the British authorities en route and detained for a time in Canada.

He arrived in Russia in May 1917 and collaborated with the Bolsheviks as a member of a workers organization that was in basic agreement with the Bolshevik party, which he joined in August 1917. At that time he was elected to the Bolshevik party's Central Committee. In September 1917 he was elected chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, and played a key role in organizing the October insurrection that established the Soviet state.

His first government post was commissar of foreign affairs, one of the most important responsibilities of the time, negotiating the Brest-Litovsk treaty, which ended Russia's participation in the inter-imperialist slaughter.

As the counterrevolution organized with imperialist backing, he became the commissar of war and organized from scratch the Red Army which through the three years of civil war pushed back the imperialist intervention and defeated the White forces.

Soon thereafter, realizing the dangerous anti-democratic and bureaucratic practices and layers that were coming to dominate the Russian Communist Party and the Soviet government, he formed the Left Opposition in 1923. For the next ten years he and thousands of other Marx-

ists and worker leaders fought the Stalin faction to return the Soviet Union and the Communist International to an internationalist perspective and to the method of functioning based on proletarian democracy. For this, they were among the first victims of the Stalinist repression.

The Stalinist faction was able to defeat the Left Opposition, and Trotsky was expelled from the CPSU in 1927 and exiled to Turkey in 1929. In 1933, after continued political struggle, he abandoned the perspective of trying to reform the Communist Party after observing the lack of criticism in the party's ranks concerning the disastrous results of the Kremlin's policy in Germany, which divided the working-class opposition to Hitler, thus helping make it possible for Hitler to come to power.

From 1933 on, Trotsky concluded that the Stalin faction was a barrier to progress toward socialism both in Russia and internationally. The Stalin faction represented the political counterrevolution that was stifling the potential offered by the nationalized means of production and rational economic planning. Despite all the social gains that the workers had achieved as a result of the overthrow of capitalism in the Soviet Union — and they were significant — the weight of the parasitic bureaucratic caste that had usurped political power would remain a barrier to further social progress. In fact, the longer this bureaucratic layer survived and the longer the Soviet Union had to hold out waiting for help from a revolution in one of the advanced capitalist countries, the more likely that reactionary forces within the apparatus would pull the Soviet Union back toward capitalist restoration. This privileged caste of rulers had to be overthrown through a political revolution by the workers. This required the building of new revolutionary Marxist workers parties and a new revolutionary international.

It was for these goals that Trotsky worked tirelessly and selflessly from 1933 until his assassination in Mexico by an agent of Stalin's in August 1940.

Considering all the achievements and struggles of Trotsky's life, it is significant that he considered the formation of this new, Fourth, International, to be the most important work of his life. This was accomplished in October 1938, on the eve of the outbreak of the World War II. The founding document of the Fourth International (drafted by Trotsky), *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International: The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, remains key to an understanding of the situation in today's world and how to change it.

What is Trotskyism?

Because of the dominance of imperialism and its anti-Marxist media and the decades-long prevalence of Stalinist ideology, a great many people have never heard of Trotsky or Trotskyism. Among those who have, there are many misconceptions. Some think of Trotskyism as only the struggle between Stalin and Trotsky in the 1920s, as something of little importance

except to historians and with no relevance to today's world.

Others, who come from a background in the Communist Party or among the Maoists consider Trotsky and Trotskyism to be counter-revolutionary, betrayal of socialism, capitalist restorationist, "wreckers," etc. These conceptions have their roots in the Stalin school of falsification, which began in earnest in 1924 with the aim of discrediting Trotsky and the Left Opposition and the revolutionary outlook they represented. The Stalinist falsification of history was codified in the official *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: Short Course*, a compilation personally overseen by Stalin, which totally rewrote history to eliminate any acknowledgment of positive contributions by Stalin's opponents; at the same time, in the Moscow show trials, the Kremlin bureaucracy led by Stalin fabricated cases against all the Bolshevik leaders (except Stalin). Trotsky — who had already been expelled from the country a decade before — was featured as the main target of these trials, he and others were convicted on the basis of forced and false confessions, after which all the defendants were executed, along with millions of others.

During the Stalin and post-Stalin periods, there were apparatchik writers who devoted their entire lives to promoting these abominations of history. Their names should live in international infamy. Instead, one of the chief such individuals, a certain N.A. Vasetsky, referred to as a "doctor of historical science" (and he certainly did "doctor" historical science!) was actually allowed to write the introduction to, and allegedly assemble, a collection of Trotsky's writings entitled *K istorii russkoi revoliutsii* (Toward a History of the Russian Revolution). This was produced by Politizdat (Political Literature Publishing House) in Moscow in 1990.

There are others, among the anarchists and liberals, who consider Trotskyism and Trotsky to be the same as Stalin and Stalinism — both equally repressive, such people say. They can select quotes and events — e.g., the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion by the Soviet government in 1920 — either falsified or taken out of context to try to back up their claims.

All these anti-Trotsky views are promoted by new, post-glasnost, schools of falsification perpetrated by such pseudo-historians as General Dmitry Volkogonov in his recent weighty volumes, whose multitude of inaccuracies and deliberate falsifications have been documented by historians Pierre Broué of France and Alexander Pantsov of Russia.

But all of these conceptions just mentioned are misconceptions. After Lenin, Trotsky is the most outstanding Marxist of the 20th century. There have been many thousands of great fighters for social and working-class justice in this century, but no one since Lenin's death has approached Trotsky's stature as a universal Marxist educator and practitioner. It was Trotsky who explained the causes underlying the degeneration of the Russian revolution, the de-

feats of the working classes in China, Germany, Spain, England, France and elsewhere in the 1920s and '30s, as well as the workers' partial victories in many struggles — that is, the most important developments determining the fate of the world proletariat in those decades after Lenin's death. Trotsky alone of the Bolshevik leaders who survived did not give up the battle against the degenerating Soviet bureaucracy and for returning the revolution to the path of serving the interests of the vast majority of workers. He applied the Marxist method: he learned the method of Engels and Marx and Lenin and he learned his own lessons and applied them.

Trotskyism is Marxism. These lessons are contained in his writings, which are indispensable to understanding the world today and the tasks of our time. What became of this heritage?

It is important to consider the international scope of the problem, for it contributed immeasurably to the present crisis of the revolutionary movement, including in the United States.

In the U.S., most people of my generation left school without knowing who Trotsky was or even what the Russian revolution was. Few of Trotsky's writings were available at that time (the early 1960s). That is not true today thanks to the worldwide radicalization of the 1960s, the efforts of the Socialist Workers Party, Pathfinder Press, and Monad Press in the 1970s, and the work of individuals like George Breitman, Naomi Allen, and George Saunders who collected, translated, edited, and published in English almost all of Trotsky's writings of the 1920s and '30s, with all the necessary introductory materials and annotation.

However, the high school seniors I work with today are no better informed than I was. Some of them know of Lenin as "a Russian dictator" but nobody ever heard of Trotsky — never. Where do people learn who Trotsky was or what he did? As is the case with most authentic history, you learn about it only on your own, after you leave school, through your own independent reading and experience, if you happen to meet someone who can direct you toward this material. The job of Marxist education is very difficult today, as it always had been.

But it is even more difficult since the degeneration of the Russian revolution because the ruling class in the imperialist countries, as well as the bureaucratic rulers in the Soviet Union, equate Marxism with Stalinism. That has immensely complicated the matter.

The establishment historians in the bourgeois academies created entire institutes that promoted Washington's Cold War ideology, feeding on the Kremlin's own propaganda that its totalitarian regime was Communism, Leninism, Marxism. And the Stalin school of falsification, aimed at wiping out the history of the Marxist opposition, was tolerated or overlooked by most of the establishment academicians in the bourgeois world. All they had to do was repeat the Kremlin's claims and this sufficiently discredited Marxism in the eyes of almost anybody who was curious enough to read about it. It is

not surprising, then, that people “learned” that Leninism led to Stalinism or the corollary, that Lenin was a “dictator” like Stalin and passed these lies along to the new generation today.

Equating Marxism with the abominations of the Stalin period — the purge trials, the 20 million who were shot or perished in the forced labor camps, the forced collectivization, the mass deportations during the war, the totalitarian repression — was not only the work of the Kremlin and the bourgeois academics and politicians. *This ghastly equation was also promoted by the degenerated Communist Parties all around the world, who represented this to masses of radicalizing workers and peasants for decades.*

The official Communist parties not only discredited Marxism to many millions of people, but they purged their own ranks of opposition voices, which is how the Trotskyist movement in the United States got started. A few people in the U.S. Communist Party found out about the ideas of the Soviet Left Opposition, tried to defend them, and were expelled in 1928. James P. Cannon, one of the founders of American Trotskyism, was one of them. In many parts of the world local Communist parties worked with the Kremlin’s police to hunt down and assassinate Trotskyists and other revolutionaries who resisted policies dictated by the Kremlin.

Thus, the process of Marxist education must first begin by explaining not only what it is but also what it is not and why, that is by dispelling all the misconceptions that have been consciously promoted by the most powerful forces in the world for many years.

The problem is made even more complicated by the course of current events in the former Soviet Union itself. Even some who considered themselves Trotskyists have begun to lose heart as a result of the current crises. We hear from them, for example: “But Trotsky said that the workers would not allow the restoration of capitalism and would, on the contrary, organize a revolution to overthrow the Stalinists and take back the resources. But the workers aren’t doing that! Doesn’t that mean that Trotsky was wrong and that the Fourth International has been wrong all these years?”

No, the fact that the workers have not mobilized in a massive, organized way in their own defense does not prove that Trotsky, or Marx for that matter, was wrong.

It only means that the Stalinist apparatchiks, who are in the process of trying to become capitalists, and the ruling class in the capitalist world, and the bourgeoisie on a world scale with all their resources and institutions, have been in a much better position to take advantage of the crisis than the workers have. It still boils down to the crisis of leadership in the workers movement as discussed in the Transitional Program of 1938, a problem which, unfortunately, has not markedly improved since then.

So that is part of the problem that we confront on a daily basis. How do we begin to undo this process? Where, with our tiny forces, do we even begin?

Considering the historic process outlined above, it should not be too surprising that this crisis of leadership has not been solved, not only internationally, but inside Russia. Along with disorienting the Soviet masses through the repression and the falsification of history, equating themselves with Marxism and Communism, the Stalinists also isolated the mass of the population from the outside world for decades so that the real developments in the capitalist world were fundamentally unknown to them or known only in a distorted way. Many people in the former Soviet Union still don’t comprehend that the bulk of the people in the capitalist world live in dire poverty. The terror, the repression, the lack of organization, the lack of organizational experience, the loss of historic continuity, and the fact that there was no proletarian revolution in any advanced capitalist country that could help the Soviet workers — all this has deepened the problem. Can it be turned around? That is the big issue. And, of course, the answer is yes, it is fully possible.

Two Important Tasks

There are two important tasks of the day: One is to build a revolutionary Marxist cadre organization in every country and area of the world, based on the Transitional Program. That is beyond the scope of this conference but can be discussed.

The second task is to ensure that Trotsky’s works are published and readily available in Russia. This has been a priority for nearly a decade, and helping to guarantee this is well within the scope of the work we can accomplish here.

It has been nine years since Gorbachev came to power and there have been seven years of glasnost. In that time, there were many opportunities to get the material published, and there were times when it was very cheap to do so.

Here is a list of the works of Trotsky’s that have been published in Russian since 1985 *that I know of*:

- *Stalin*, in two volumes, 150,000 copies published by “Terra” publishers and Political Literature Publishers in Moscow in 1990.
- *The Trotsky Archives, Communist Opposition in the USSR 1923-27*, four volumes of opposition documents collected by Yuri Felshtinsky from the Harvard archives; 100,000 copies also by “Terra” publishers — in collaboration with Walnut Publishers in the United States and Socialist Action.
- *Toward a History of the Russian Revolution*, a volume of around 450 pages which includes 100 pages from Trotsky’s *History of the Russian Revolution*, and including materials like *The New Course*, a key document of the 1923 Left Opposition; 150,000 copies printed, with an introduction by the notorious Vasetsky mentioned above, by Political Literature Publishers in 1990.
- *The Stalin School of Falsification* — 200,000 copies printed by “Science” publishers in Moscow, with a positive and honest introduction, in 1990.

- *Literature and Revolution* — 100,000 copies were printed by Political Literature Publishers with a negative introduction by Yuri Boryev in 1991.
- *The Revolution Betrayed* — 50,000 copies printed by a publishing house associated with the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation and the Academy of Sciences of the USSR — in collaboration with Fortress Books in London — in 1991. Another edition was printed in 1993 by Iskra Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts. (I do not know the number of copies printed in this case.) Iskra Research indicates plans to print a number of other works.
- *Diaries and Letters* — 5,000 printed by Humanitarian Literature Publishers in Moscow with a *malicious* preface by A.A. Avtorkhanov and edited by Yuri Felshtinsky in 1994.
- *The Crimes of Stalin* — 5,000 copies with a malicious preface by Yuri Felshtinsky published by Humanitarian Literature Publishers in Moscow in 1994.
- *Draft Program of the Communist International* — recently printed in Russian by the Spartacist League in the U. S. This is Trotsky’s critique of the Stalin-Bukharin Comintern program of 1928.

All these efforts represent considerable advances over the decades of suppression of Trotsky’s ideas and writings in the USSR, when he was never mentioned except with vile epithets attached to his name. As a result of these publication initiatives, some 1.2 million volumes of Trotsky’s writings have gone into circulation in the former Soviet Union, not a small achievement. But this can hardly undo or correct nearly 70 years of deliberate slander and suppression.

Continuing Falsification

In the meantime, the suppression and falsification continue.

On August 18, I visited the Central Museum of the Revolution in Moscow. A tour of its exhibits showed how far from complete is the process of reestablishing historic truth, despite all the progress:

- Regarding the 1905 Revolution: Trotsky is included only in a group photo captioned something like the following: “People leaving to serve a term in exile after conviction by the government in connection with the 1905 uprising. Second from left, L.D. Trotsky.” That’s all. Nothing about his leading role in the St. Petersburg Soviet.
- Regarding the October Revolution of 1917: nothing about Trotsky’s role. There is the usual photo montage of the Bolshevik party central leaders. The caption under Trotsky’s picture is the same as during the first glasnost years when he first began to be included in history at all. The caption went something like this: “L.D. Trotsky, member of the Bolshevik party Central Committee, leader of the Petrograd Soviet. At first, he opposed the October uprising

and felt it should be postponed.” Nothing about his central role as a leader of the revolution.

- Brest-Litovsk Peace: No mention of Trotsky’s role. There is only a picture of Chicherin.
- Civil War: Trotsky’s photo is in the center of a photo montage with his name and title. Nothing about his role in organizing the Red Army or leading it to victory.
- Intraparty struggles of the 1920s: In a section on the 1920s, there is a photo montage of book covers which includes Trotsky’s *New Course* with no explanation of its significance.
- Moscow Trials and Purges: Another photo montage shows the headlines announcing some of the monstrous verdicts and showing pictures of Vyshinsky, Stalin, and some of the victims. No explanation of the meaning of it all. Were the verdicts justified? Or was it all a frame-up? The viewer has no way of knowing.

Two schoolteachers from St. Petersburg were accompanied by a museum guide and listened attentively to the guide’s presentation of what she later admitted was “their version” of history.

Several days later, I also visited the Lenin Library to check out the progress in the availability of Trotsky’s works there, keeping in mind that access to the public library is, as far as I understand, far from general. You apparently need credentials from an academic institution justifying your need to use the materials. However, the library collection still reflects to a large extent what such people are able to read even today.

There had been considerable progress since I last checked in 1990 when the only work I found, as I recall, was *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism*, in English.

In 1994, the cards listing available works of Trotsky was about 4.5 inches thick. Trotsky’s *Sochineniya* (Works) published by the Soviet government until 1927 had been made accessible. However, nothing that Trotsky wrote after 1926 was listed there as available in Russian, not even the works listed above that have been published in Moscow since the glasnost policy began.

I thought to buy and donate to the library *The Crimes of Stalin* and the *Diaries and Letters* that were in the bookstores while I was there. But after reading the mean-spirited introductory materials, I could not in good conscience do that.

Despite all the depressing features of the current period in the former Soviet Union, there are many opportunities for Marxism and Trotsky’s ideas. In fact, the ideas, theories, and methodology of Marxism are absolutely vital to assessing, analyzing, and understanding the unprecedented historic process that is taking place in the former USSR. The way forward for the workers in the factories and mines and on the land can only be found by a conscious Marxist

revolutionary cadre who are organized and involved in struggles of the workers and their allies and who are simultaneously immersed and infused with a Marxist understanding of the dynamic of the conditions they are living in and the nature of the process they are a part of.

It is an additional crime against history that even today — seven years into glasnost — the publication of Trotsky’s writings is largely left to his detractors!! But they can hardly be blamed for doing what comes naturally to them. What is needed is a united, joint effort by those who appreciate the historic importance of Trotsky’s writings to undertake an international campaign to collect funds for and expedite the publication of all of his works in a format that does not simply recapitulate the old lies and slanders.

A Proposal for Adoption by the Conference

Whereas historic truth is indispensable to human progress; and

Whereas restoration of historic truth in the former Soviet Union necessitates the obliteration of all the falsifications promoted and cultivated by Stalin and his supporters and successors;

Whereas an essential part of this process involves the total rehabilitation of the historic truth about Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition and their struggle;

Whereas we must break the wall of silence about Trotsky’s contribution to an understanding of why the Russian revolution degenerated and his work in exile building revolutionary cadre organizations and assessing and analyzing the intrigues of imperialism and its allies *and* the results of the corrupt policies of Stalinism and the devastating affects of those policies on the world revolution;

Whereas the isolation of the Soviet working class from the world working class struggles as a result of the totalitarian repression and falsification of history during the Stalin and post-Stalin regimes must be ended and the lessons contained in Trotsky’s writings of the late 1920s and the 1930s must at long last be made widely accessible to the working masses of the former Soviet Union, so that the lessons can be absorbed;

Whereas to date, this process has been seriously impeded by the uneven progress in the publication and accessibility of his works;

Whereas the vital work of publishing Trotsky’s writings must not be left to his enemies, who continue the slander campaigns initiated against him by Joseph Stalin and his supporters and successors;

Be it resolved that:

This International Conference on Leon Trotsky in Moscow shall initiate an international campaign to raise funds and assist in seeing to the publication and distribution of all of Trotsky’s major political works in Russian, including the *Biulleten Oppozitsii* published during Trotsky’s last exile from Russia, 1929–1940.

An international committee shall be organized to carry out this work.

A statement shall be drafted to outline the purpose of the campaign and to serve as the basis for soliciting support and broadening participation and to attract the cooperation and financial support of all who can be mobilized in the Trotskyist movement and among concerned historians and civil libertarians in the United States and Russia and internationally.

Priority place in this project should be given to the publication of the hearings of the Commission headed by John Dewey — the Dewey Commission hearings — organized by the American supporters of Trotsky in Mexico in 1937: *The Case of Leon Trotsky and Not Guilty*. The material in these two volumes, totalling nearly 1,000 pages (excerpts from the introductory material have been made available), shall be translated into Russian and published and made available at last — after 57 years!! — to the Russian audience.

We have approached the original publisher of these two volumes, Harper & Brothers (now Harper-Collins), proposing that it undertake the project. The text of the letter to them is available to you. However, if they refuse, we will need to undertake the project ourselves.

As this letter points out, these volumes not only contain the definitive refutation of the monstrous charges fabricated against Trotsky and the other leading Bolshevik victims, but present the complexities of Trotsky’s role in the history of social and political theory and the fate of socialism in the former Soviet Union in a highly dramatic courtroom confrontation. They will go a long way toward clearing away the debris of monstrous lies and serve also as an introduction to Trotsky’s indispensable works covering all sectors of the ongoing world revolution.

The international committee outlined above shall see among its tasks an organized approach to such institutions as the Central Museum of the Revolution in Moscow to address and correct the continuing falsifications of history not only of Trotsky’s role, but the roles of countless others who heroically defended the proletarian democracy and revolutionary internationalism represented by the revolution against the grave-diggers of the revolution represented by Stalin and the apparatus supporting him.

This committee shall also seek to ensure that the major libraries in Russia have accessible to readers all the works of Trotsky in Russian and that these include the works published abroad after Trotsky’s expulsion from the USSR in 1929 and those published in Russia since the onset of glasnost.

The goal of this effort is that the works of Leon Trotsky shall be readily available to anyone who has an interest in reading them. The existence of an international committee with a focus on restoring Trotsky’s works and ideas in Russia will help inspire such interest.

I hope you will support such an ambitious but fully feasible undertaking. □

October 1917: A Genuine, Popular Movement from Below

by Morris Slavin

The following are introductory remarks to the conference on "The Russian Revolution and its Aftermath," held at Youngstown State University May 6 and 7, 1994.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has accelerated popular suspicion of all revolutions. A few months ago, for example, speaking in the French department of the Vendée, Solzhenitsyn called the French Revolution a mistake. Liberty, equality, and fraternity were contradictory, he proclaimed, and he repudiated the Russian Revolution as well. I assume that Ivan Denisovich was convinced by him, and as a result he voted for Zhirinovskiy.

A letter by an Ohioan in the *Columbus Dispatch* last summer, written by a man who claims kinship with Louis XVI, excoriates those he calls "the rabble" because they had inflicted "injustices" on Louis and on Marie Antoinette. Until I saw this letter I did not believe our state harbored any monarchists. A few years ago, when American historians of the French Revolution were commemorating the bicentennial of that event in Los Angeles, the film to which we were treated was entitled "Marie Antoinette" with Norma Shearer and Tyrone Power. Needless to say, our sympathies were to be focused on the poor queen and her consort.

The meaning of the Russian Revolution is even more contradictory. The *American Historical Review* last October carried a critique by Harvard's Vladimir Brovkin of a book entitled *Revolution in Russia, Reassessments of 1917*, published in honor of Israel Getzler, biographer of Julius Martov. The reviewer condemns many of the essays because he insists that the Bolsheviks took power by a *putsch*, a coup, a plot behind the backs of the Second Congress of the Soviets. Since the Bolsheviks had only 50 percent support in the Soviets and only 25 percent in the country, "the weakness of the revisionist interpretations is obvious," he writes. The "revisionists" in this case are those who do not accept the view that the October Revolution was a coup.

In contrast to Brovkin, the April issue of *The Russian Review* published an evaluation of the same book by Tsuvoshi Hasegawa of the University of California at Santa Barbara. Hasegawa writes that this collection of essays "is an important contribution," and he points out that the historians in this collection "reject the notion that the October Revolution was a conspiracy by a handful of revolutionaries led by Lenin." After analyzing the debate, Hasegawa adds that "the argument presented in this volume by the social historians is persuasive..." In short, the so-called revisionists "re-soundingly reject [the] interpretation that the October Revolution was a conspiracy engi-

neered by Lenin," he concludes. Thus, the issue is joined.

Anyone interested in the question of whether the Bolshevik Revolution was a genuine, popular movement from below or as some historians argue, a coup, should examine the many histories, biographies, and diaries of this event. It is true, of course, that unlike the February Revolution, the October uprising was planned and led by the Bolsheviks, who had won over the majority of the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets. Observers in Petrograd have testified to the popular nature of the uprising, however. Louise Bryant, for example, wrote that, "The Bolsheviks are in power because they bow to the will of the masses," and John Reed added, "If the masses all over Russia had not been ready for the insurrection it must have failed." The Menshevik diarist of the Revolution, Nikolai Nikolaevich Himmer, better known as Sukhanov, asked, "Did the Petrograd proletariat sympathize or did it not with the organizers of the October insurrection?" And he replied, "There are no two answers here. Yes, the Bolsheviks acted on the mandate of the Petrograd workers and soldiers."

Lenin agreed, of course, and explained that

we achieved victory in Russia, not only because we had the undoubted majority of the working class on our side (during the elections in 1917 the overwhelming majority of the workers voted for us and against the Mensheviks), but also because half the army — immediately after we seized power — and nine-tenths of the masses of the peasantry — within the course of a few weeks — came over to our side.

Trotsky, who as president of the Petrograd Soviet, planned and carried out the insurrection in its name, wrote that an insurrection cannot be successful if there is no revolutionary situation. "A revolution takes place only when there is no other way out," he argued. "And an insurrection, which rises above a revolution like a peak in the mountain chain of events, can no more be evoked than the revolution as a whole." Furthermore, the act of making a revolution wins over the majority, thus, "the difference in level and mood of different layers of the people is overcome in action...the majority is not counted up, but won over." Later, he wrote: "In revolutionary situations statistics alone are not enough; the coefficient of living action is also essential."

I cite these observers not to demonstrate the virtue of the October insurrection but rather the indisputable event itself. Let me add that a work

like Alexander Rabinowitch's *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, published by Norton, which in my opinion is one of the best studies by an American historian, argues forcefully that the October insurrection was, indeed, a popular uprising; or take a recent publication by Donald Raleigh entitled *Revolution on the Volga: 1917 in Saratov*, which demonstrates the growth of Bolshevik popularity in this provincial town almost from day to day. Most of our speakers are convinced it was a popular revolution. Since my own conclusions are in line with this view, I invite you to read some of the works published by our conferees.

There is one other problem that must be mentioned. During the Cold War, many American historians of the Soviet Union argued that Stalin was a true heir of Lenin, or as Richard Pipes insists in his latest book, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime*, the seeds of Stalinism were sown under Lenin. To protect his dictatorship, writes Pipes, "Lenin insured that the man who controlled the party apparatus controlled the party and through it, the state. And that man was Stalin." Richard Pipes is a Harvard University professor and in 1981–82 served as President Reagan's National Security Council Adviser on Soviet and East European affairs. I need hardly remind you that this was still during the Cold War, a fact that need not necessarily have made him less objective as an historian, but, nevertheless, a factor that must be taken into consideration.

Richard Pipes's thesis cannot be dismissed out of hand, but before we accept his argument we should be aware of Lenin's famous document on the eve of his death, called his "Testament." Writing on December 25, 1922, Lenin analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the Bolshevik party leaders and suggested means to avoid the party's degeneration. Less than two weeks later he added a "Postscript," in which he characterized Stalin as "too rude," and proposed his replacement by another person "who in all respects differs from Stalin only in superiority — namely, more patient, more loyal, more polite, and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc. This circumstance may seem an insignificant trifle, but...it is not a trifle, or it is such a trifle as may acquire a decisive significance," Lenin warned.

More important, Professor Pipes and his cointerpreters cannot explain the river of blood that separates Stalin from Lenin. I mean the blood of Lenin's comrades that Stalin shed in consoli-

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The Bolshevik Revolution Did Not Create a Totalitarian State

by Paul Le Blanc

The longer version of this paper includes a theoretical discussion of totalitarianism — drawing especially from the unlikely duo of Hannah Arendt and Leon Trotsky — and presents some material indicating the horrifying nature of the Stalin regime in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics during the 1930s. In what follows, I argue that the Bolshevik Revolution led by Lenin did not bring about the totalitarian reality of the Stalin regime of the 1930s. The key is what happened in the 1920s.

Eyewitness reports as well as recent scholarship indicate that Russia's revolution of October/November 1917, inspired by the slogans of "peace, bread, land" and "all power to the soviets" (that is, all power to the democratic councils of working people), was a popular upsurge of urban workers, as well as soldiers and sailors of peasant and proletarian origin, with support coming from the peasant masses of the countryside. "In Russia, where the proletariat is armed, the proletariat becomes the only real influential body," wrote American reporter Louise Bryant in 1918, adding: "The Bolsheviks are in power because they bow to the will of the masses." In his classic account of the revolution, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, John Reed noted:

Not by compromise with the propertied classes, or with other political leaders; not by conciliating the old government mechanism, did the Bolsheviks conquer the power. Nor by the organized violence of a small clique. If the masses all over Russia had not been ready for insurrection it must have failed. The only reason for Bolshevik success lay in their accomplishing the vast and simple desires of the most profound strata of the people, calling them to the work of tearing down and destroying the old, and afterward, in the smoke of falling ruins, cooperating with them to erect the framework of the new.

In the effort to build this framework of the new society, however, the Bolsheviks and other supporters of the revolution found themselves surrounded by powerful and murderous enemies, and also overwhelmed by economic and social chaos generated by the First World War, by foreign military interventions (led by Britain, France, and the United States, and involving fourteen different countries), by a devastating civil war, as well as by an economic blockade of a hostile world capitalism. All of this had an overwhelmingly destructive impact on the radically democratic political structures and functioning to which the Bolsheviks had committed themselves. What's more, their revolutionary political allies — the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party and most of the anarchist groups — were quickly dissatisfied with early compromises the Bolsheviks had made to end Russian involvement in World War I and to prevent economic dislocations. They joined other left-wing opponents of the revolutionary regime, the various Menshevik currents and the Right Socialist Revolutionary Party, leaving the Bolsheviks isolated in the government. Some of these left-wing opponents even took up arms against the new government, and a wave of assassination attempts resulted in the severe wounding of Lenin and the deaths of some prominent Bolsheviks.

A repressive apparatus to defend the new state was quickly brought into being, the Red Army organized by Leon Trotsky and

the Cheka, or secret police, organized by Felix Dzerzhinsky. By the autumn of 1918 an utterly ruthless "Red Terror" had been unleashed against actual and potential (and, in some cases, imagined) enemies of the revolution. Under desperate conditions of foreign invasion and civil war, sweeping and premature nationalizations brought the entire economy under the control of a government that was ill-equipped to oversee it, creating a massive bureaucratic apparatus to deal with problems of production and consumption. In the face of famine, brigades were sent out to the countryside to force the peasants to turn grain over to the government. Opposition newspapers and publishing houses were regularly censored and periodically closed down. Opposition political groups were often restricted and sometimes banned — permanently by 1921–22 (although some believed this to be a "temporary expedient"). Even by 1919 the soviets had been transformed from democratic councils to rubber stamps that would approve the decisions of Lenin's central government and the Communist Party (as the Bolsheviks renamed themselves). Far-reaching theoretical justifications were put forward to equate the "dictatorship of the proletariat," that is, the political rule by the working class, with the narrow dictatorship of the Communist Party. Uprisings of peasants and even of workers were dealt with through repression and military violence.

Within the party, the vibrant and sometimes tumultuous democracy previously characteristic of its internal life was evaporating. "The state of siege had now entered the Party itself," the Bolshevik militant Victor Serge later recalled, "which was increasingly run from the top, by the Secretaries." He added:

We were at a loss to find a remedy for this bureaucratization: we knew that the party had been invaded by careerist, adventurist and mercenary elements who came over in swarms to the side that had the power. Within the Party the sole remedy of this evil had to be, and in fact was, the discreet dictatorship of the old, honest, and incorruptible members, in other words the Old Guard.

Such fateful precedents under Lenin, some have argued, led inexorably to the totalitarian order over which Stalin was to preside after Lenin's death in 1924. Victor Serge himself suggests this in his recollection of the period of what was called "war communism," which lasted from 1918 to 1921:

"Totalitarianism" did not yet exist as a word: as an actuality it began to press hard on us, even without our being aware of it... What with the political monopoly, the Cheka, and the Red Army, all that now existed of the "Commune-State" of our dreams was a theoretical myth. The war, the internal measures against counter-revolution, and the famine (which had created a bureaucratic rationing-apparatus) had killed off Soviet democracy. How could it revive and when? The Party lived in the certain knowledge that the slightest relaxation of its authority could give the day to reaction.

One problem with seeing this as the beginning of a totalitarian order is that the situation shifted dramatically away from the "war communism" described by Serge. One can argue that the early Communist regime had adopted policies that were authoritarian,

but *totalitarianism* (total and repressive control of the country's political and cultural life) did not arise until the 1930s. Numerous accounts indicate that in the 1920s the pendulum had swung back — in a manner consistent with Lenin's own orientation — in the direction of relative freedom.

An essential aspect of the shift away from "war communism" was the adoption of the New Economic Policy (NEP), which involved the development of small-scale private enterprise in the countryside and the adoption of market mechanisms and commercial capitalist practices throughout the economy. This — along with the end of the foreign invasions and civil war — also facilitated the regeneration of industry. There were serious problems with NEP. There are many accounts of profiteering, corruption, and debauchery among NEPmen and sectors of the government bureaucracy. Workers were especially hurt by inflation and inequality, speed-ups at the workplace, shortages of consumer goods, periodic unemployment. Among the lower classes, the peasants benefitted most from the flourishing market, but this introduced what was to become a fatal tension between their well-being and the anticapitalist commitments of the regime. Nonetheless, the NEP brought a relative prosperity and a loosening of restrictive and repressive government policies, also allowing for the economic rebuilding of Soviet Russia and the meaningful development of social policies — involving such things as health, education, family life, culture, transportation, housing, and so on — beneficial to millions of people.

One of the essential developments at the beginning of this period involved the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1923, which gave larger nationality groupings of the old Russian Empire equality with the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic in a federation that allowed for considerable cultural and administrative autonomy of non-Russian peoples, including the formal right to secede if desired by a majority. There was a commitment to overcome the heritage of the Russian empire as "a prison-house of nations" in which "Great Russian chauvinism" sought to obliterate the cultures and aspirations of non-Russian peoples. Instead there was a policy of "nativization," designed to promote in the non-Russian republics the training and development of native (as opposed to Russian or Russified) personnel, along with policies promoting local languages, education, and culture — as opposed to those of the previously-dominant Russians — in the new republics. Multilingualism and multiculturalism were encouraged among the ethnically diverse population of Russia, as well as in the federation of Soviet Republics. In some cases, in the Central Asian republics, new alphabets had to be created to facilitate this process among what had been non-literate peoples. Combined with this was a genuine commitment to facilitate the economic development of the less-developed regions, which was especially beneficial for improving the economic well-being and education of indigenous peoples in the Central Asian republics.

The pluralism of this nationalities policy, of which Lenin was the architect, is consistent with a general pluralism that was fostered with the elimination of "war communism." In late 1924, after a month-long tour of the Soviet Union, a sympathetic but not uncritical delegation, officially representing the Trade Union Congress of Britain, commented that "as to the persistent assertions in the Press that the present regime in Russia is a 'reign of terror,' the Delegation would wish to put on record its conviction that this could not be honestly believed by any unprejudiced person travelling within the [Soviet] Union and talking to its citizens."

The earlier civil war period itself, however, involved more than simply Bolshevik repression. Certain freedoms and democratic opportunities existed which would be unthinkable in the 1930s.

There were mass demonstrations organized at the funeral of Plekhanov in 1918 and Kropotkin in 1921 respectively by Menshevik and anarchist opponents of the regime. Their newspapers and other publications were at first fully legal, though quickly ran into Bolshevik censorship and suppression as soon as the civil war began in earnest. Their oppositional literature and activities (and also those of the SRs, particularly the fragment of the Left SRs that renounced violence against the regime) often exercised visible influence throughout this period, although this had become increasingly difficult as the country's crises deepened.

The aftermath of the tragic 1921 Kronstadt revolt included the outlawing of all opposition parties. And yet both contemporaries and later scholars have documented the persistence of considerable intellectual and cultural freedom in early Soviet Russia up to the late 1920s. Independently published material, some of it critical of official ideology, and the free circulation of foreign publications were not uncommon. There was considerable free expression and controversy among artists and writers, philosophers, social and natural scientists, and others both inside and outside of the Communist Party; some of this involved far-reaching social and political criticism of a kind that would not be allowed in later years. Despite continuing political restrictions, many who had formerly identified with non-Bolshevik political groupings (as well as dissident Bolsheviks) were able to find some outlets for their "unorthodox" views.

What of those who were not among the narrow layers of the intelligentsia? Many contemporary observers, especially after the violence of the civil war period, believed that for working people there was *more* freedom. According to William H. Chamberlin: "In general, the common man in Russia today has a sense of release, of social liberty, that comes with the disappearance of classes which are visibly above him in wealth and opportunity, culture, and social status." For example,

the worker does not have to cringe before the [so-called] "red dictator" of the Soviet factory as, in pre-war times, he cringed before the private owner of the factory. He can write letters to the press complaining of conditions in the factory and suggesting changes, something which a worker would scarcely do with impunity even in democratic capitalist countries, where factories are private and not public concerns.

Chamberlin added other considerations, such as "greater freedom for women, more humane treatment of the soldier in the Red Army, recognition of racial minorities to use freely their own languages, greater liberty for children in the schools," concluding: "I should think it probable that the number of people in Russia who consciously feel liberated as a result of the Revolution probably exceeds the number who feel more oppressed than they were under Tsarism."

There were many critical-minded observers who commented in the 1920s on the improvements in the conditions of the masses, the flourishing of diversity and critical-mindedness within the population, the existence of some important liberties and outlets for popular expression, and the country-wide popularization of egalitarian and socialist ideals. John Dewey, for example, wrote: "The people go about as if some mighty and oppressive load has been removed, as if they were newly awakened to the consciousness of released energies." Closely observing what he called "the faces and gestures of the folk," he added that, having

seen the common people of other countries... I find it impossible to believe that the communicated sense of a new life was an illusion.

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How Trotsky Foretold the Collapse of the Soviet Union

by Jim Miles

This is the English-language text of a paper presented to the International Scientific Conference on the Legacy of Leon Trotsky: Its Historic and Contemporary Significance, held in Moscow November 10–12, 1994. The author is a member of the Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy, which was established at that conference.

One must never exclude from political calculations the factor of time. If you grant that capitalism will continue to exist in Europe for another century or half a century and that Soviet Russia will be driven to adjust herself in her economic policy to capitalism, then the question resolves itself automatically. [Trotsky, speaking in 1922; see *First Five Years of the Communist International*, Vol. 2, p. 254.]

The inevitable collapse of the Stalinist political regime will lead to the establishment of Soviet democracy only in the event that the removal of Bonapartism comes as the conscious act of the proletarian vanguard. In all other cases, in place of Stalinism there could only come the fascist-capitalist counterrevolution. [Trotsky, "The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism," *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1934–35]*, pp. 182–183.]

Trotsky's prescient analysis of 60 years ago sharply posed the question that the collapse of Stalinism in the Soviet Union would result in either a historic victory or a historic defeat for the world working class. The urgency of evaluating the rich theoretical lessons of this defeat boils down to whether there will remain a core of revolutionary Marxist cadre able to analyze material reality with the quality of Trotsky's method. The question of the state is the central question facing the working class.

Due to the demoralization of the masses and the absence of a revolutionary Marxist alternative, the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in the consolidation of an openly capitalist counterrevolutionary government. This government, utilizing the bourgeoisified bureaucratic apparatus of the degenerated workers' state, has finalized the destruction of state planning and boldly moved ahead with the privatization (theft) of state industry. Although plans for a move toward a "market economy" were initiated under the Gorbachev regime, his timorous Stalinist government balked at completing these measures. From the point of view of Yeltsin and the restorationist bureaucracy, that is precisely why it had to be overthrown.

Trotsky clearly saw that the survival of the Soviet workers' state rested not only upon a state plan but the survival of revolutionary consciousness among the proletarian masses. As he pointed out nearly sixty years ago in *The Revolution Betrayed*, the bureaucracy "has ceased to offer any subjective guarantee whatever of the socialist direction of its policy. It continues to preserve state property only to the extent that it fears the proletariat" (*Revolution Betrayed* [written in 1935–36], New York: Pathfinder, 1972, p. 251).

While the collapse of "real existing socialism" that began with the *anschluss* absorption of East Germany by the Federal Republic in 1990 has thrown most of the world's left into crisis and demoralization, it should have come as no surprise to revolutionary Marxists. Over 50 years before it actually occurred, Leon Trotsky outlined the economic and political dynamics that would lead to a collapse of "socialism in one country" if the Soviet workers'

state was not rescued in time from political and economic isolation by socialist revolutions in Western Europe and North America.

The Dual Nature of the Workers' State

Trotsky's analysis of the degeneration of the Soviet state was rooted in the theoretical insights on the state in the transition to socialism developed by Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Marx first developed the theory of an unavoidable continued operation of bourgeois economic law in regard to the distribution of consumer goods in the transition from capitalism to communism. From the continued operation of this bourgeois law Lenin extrapolated the continued existence of a bourgeois state in the transition to communism. Trotsky then further developed and applied Lenin's theoretical insight under the conditions of the political degeneration of the first workers' state, deriving the theory of the *dual nature* of every workers' state: *proletarian* insofar as it defended public ownership or state property in the means of production and *bourgeois* insofar as it of necessity defended inequality in the distribution of goods and services. It is the bourgeois side of the workers' state that has to "wither away" in order to make the transition to communism; if this does not occur, then capitalist restoration is inevitable.

Trotsky viewed the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy as Bonapartist (balancing between the workers and the imperialists), politically counterrevolutionary, and thus the consummate expression of the bourgeois tendency within the Soviet workers' state. Stalinist rule (if not overthrown by the workers) would in time guarantee the destruction of the economic foundation of the workers' state, nationalized industry.

For Trotsky, the resolution of the struggle between these two tendencies, proletarian and bourgeois, within the degenerated workers' state could only be *ultimately* resolved on a world scale. Either the timely triumph of the socialist revolution in at least the main imperialist centers would ensure the renewal of the advance toward socialism, or else capitalism would be restored in the Soviet Union through direct military intervention or the pressure of the world market (higher labor productivity of world imperialism). Thus, contrary to the assertions of bourgeois ideologists, the so-called "collapse of Communism" gives striking confirmation of the profound scientific validity and continued relevance of Marxist theory.

Capitalist Restoration vs. Political Revolution

Trotsky did not just passively observe the degeneration of the Russian revolution. Between 1923 and 1933 Trotsky and the Left Opposition first put forward a program of political reforms, indus-

trialization, and democratic economic planning to combat bureaucracy and reinvigorate the working class. When the unopposed triumph of fascism in Germany in 1933 failed to produce in the Stalinist-led Comintern any reassessment of the passive sectarianism that led to defeat for the capitalist world's most organized working class, Trotsky saw the necessity for a political revolution to overthrow the counterrevolutionary Soviet bureaucracy and return the workers to political power in their own state, so as to resume the advance of the world socialist revolution. Unlike a social revolution which overthrows the state and property forms of one ruling class and replaces them with the state and property forms of a new ruling class, a political revolution would only overthrow the government of the bureaucracy while preserving the property forms of the workers' state.

But today, after 70 years of Stalinist rule, it is social counter-revolution, not political revolution, that is under way in Russia, Eastern Europe, and China. A transitional program in Russia and Eastern Europe today would have to first of all take up the defense of the remaining state industries against closure or privatization. Such a program would also have to explain and popularize the necessity of workers winning direct political power to re-establish a state monopoly of foreign trade and re-institute economic planning on a democratic basis in order to prevent further social collapse and the complete imposition of a semi-colonial type of capitalism.

Economically Unconsolidated Capitalist States in Russia and Eastern Europe

The fall of the Stalinist governments throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that began in 1989 led to the *political* collapse of the workers' states, since only capitalist governments replaced the Stalinist governments. The bureaucratic regimes that once used state power to guard and defend proletarian state property by insufficient and even reactionary means were replaced by regimes committed to using state power to expropriate the state property of the workers and thereby consolidate the rule of a new capitalist ruling class out of the ruins of the old Stalinist bureaucracy.

The collapse of these deformed and degenerated workers' states means the resolution of the *political* side of the contradiction of their dual character in favor of capitalism. Only insofar as these states have not yet succeeded in resolving the remaining vestigial economic contradiction between the market and what remains of the former planned economy (nationalized state industry) through massive privatization or plant closures, do these new states remain *economically unconsolidated capitalist states*. These new capitalist states in Russia and Eastern Europe are ruled by *capitalist governments that are actively engaged in privatizing the remnants of the postcapitalist economies*.

Productivity of Labor Was in the Long Run Decisive

The collapse of the Soviet Bloc was accelerated by the Cold War in which despite occasionally impressive technological achievements, Soviet labor productivity remained about 40 percent of that of the U.S. The Soviet Union was thus forced to spend 25 percent of its GNP on defense compared to 7 percent in the U.S. (See *The USSR 1987-1991*, Marilyn Vogt-Downey editor, footnote p. 21, and *The Impoverished Superpower*, Rowen and Wolf editors.)

In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky summed it up this way: Reduced to its primary basis, history is nothing but a struggle for an economy of working time. Socialism could not be justified by the

abolition of exploitation alone; it must guarantee to society a higher economy of time than is guaranteed by capitalism. Without the realization of this condition, *the mere removal of exploitation would be but a dramatic episode without a future* (p. 78; emphasis added).

Trotsky understood that the fate of the Soviet Union was inextricably tied to the world revolution and that "the Stalinist bureaucracy is nothing else than the *first phase of bourgeois restoration*" (*Writings of Leon Trotsky [1939-40]*, New York: Pathfinder, 1973, p. 66).

The collapse of Stalinist Bonapartism and its replacement by the openly capitalist government of Yeltsin is the second phase of bourgeois restoration, a transition in which Trotsky predicted that

should a bourgeois counterrevolution succeed in the USSR, the new government for a lengthy period would have to base itself upon the nationalized economy. But what does such a type of temporary conflict between the economy and the state mean? It means a *revolution or a counterrevolution*. The victory of one class over another signifies that it will reconstruct the economy in the interests of the victors. ["Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?" in *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1937-38]*, New York: Pathfinder, 1976, pp. 63-64.]

In 1936 Trotsky predicted with startling clarity what the replacement of the Stalinist government by an openly capitalist government would mean for the Soviet economy.

A collapse of the Soviet regime would lead inevitably to the collapse of the planned economy, and thus to the abolition of state property. The bond of compulsion between the trusts and the factories within them would fall away. The more successful enterprises would succeed in coming out on the road of independence. They might convert themselves into stock companies, or they might find some other transitional form of property — one, for example, in which the workers should participate in the profits. The collective farms would disintegrate at the same time, and far more easily. The fall of the present bureaucratic dictatorship, if it were not replaced by a new socialist power, would thus mean a return to capitalist relations with a catastrophic decline of industry and culture. [*Revolution Betrayed*, pp. 250-251.]

But the consolidation of a capitalist government would mean not only the destruction of the planned economy but the destruction of the bureaucratized workers' state.

The inevitable collapse of Stalinist Bonapartism would immediately call into question the character of the USSR as a workers' state. A socialist economy cannot be constructed without a socialist power. The fate of the USSR as a socialist state depends upon that political regime that will arise to replace Stalinist Bonapartism. [Writings of Leon Trotsky [1934-35], New York: Pathfinder, 1971, pp. 181-182.]

These quotations and others below will reveal that contrary to a widespread myth, Trotsky's conception of the state in general and the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular, remained profoundly political and was not socio-economic reductionist. Trotsky's point was that so long as Stalinist Bonapartism still defended the planned economy, even by reactionary means, it remained a weapon of proletarian dictatorship. It is important to remember in the quotes that follow that for revolutionary Marxists *all* states are *social* dictatorships of one class over another. This social dictatorship may be administered by a government that is relatively democratic or by one that is despotic. It was because of nearly 70 years of rule by reactionary Stalinist governments that the Russian working class became demoralized and depoliticized, so that the collapse of Stalinist Bonapartism simultaneously resulted in the political collapse of the degenerated workers' state.

It is hoped that the following review of Trotsky's prophetic insights into the counterrevolution now under way, will serve to stimulate further study and discussion among revolutionary socialists. Extensive quotations from Trotsky's works are utilized for the very same reason that Lenin remarked in *State and Revolution* that

the distortion of Marxism being so widespread, it is our first task to resuscitate the real teachings of Marx on the state. For this purpose it will be necessary to quote at length from the works of Marx and Engels themselves.

Marxism and the State

Trotsky, like Lenin, was well grounded in the theoretical views of Marx and Engels on the state. A brief review of some of the key insights developed by the two founders of scientific socialism on the state and the transition to socialism will facilitate an understanding of Trotsky's theory of the dual nature of the workers' state.

Engels viewed the state as "a product of society at a certain stage of development." Unlike primitive communal organization "the state first divides its subjects *according to territory*." Next, it establishes

a public power which no longer directly coincides with the population organizing itself as an armed force. This special public power is necessary, because a self-acting armed organization of the population has become impossible since the cleavage into classes... This public power exists in every state; it consists not merely of armed people but also of material adjuncts, prisons and institutions of coercion of all kinds...

[The] state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but as it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class. [Engels, *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, New York: Pathfinder, 1972, p. 159-160; emphasis in original.]

However, Engels took care to point out that during key junctures the state can achieve an historically temporary but relatively high degree of autonomy from its own ruling class;

By way of exception, however, periods occur in which the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power, as ostensible mediator, acquires, for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both. Such was the absolute monarchy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which held the balance between the nobility and the class of burghers; such was the Bonapartism of the First, and still more of the Second French Empire, which played off the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. [*Ibid.*, p. 160.]

That is why Engels emphasized that

the state... in all typical periods is exclusively the state of the ruling class, and in all cases remains essentially a machine for keeping down the oppressed, exploited class. [*Ibid.*, p. 164; emphasis added.]

In 1872 Engels summed up the class functions of feudal absolute monarchy and bourgeois Bonapartism in Prussia as follows:

We therefore find here, alongside of the basic condition of the old absolute monarchy — an equilibrium between the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie — the basic condition of modern Bonapartism — an equilibrium between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. But both in the old absolute monarchy and in the modern Bonapartist monarchy the real governmental authority lies in the hands of a special caste of army officers and state officials... The independence of this caste, which appears to occupy a position outside and, so to speak, above society, gives the state the semblance

of independence in relation to society. [Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Moscow: Progress, 1969, Vol. 2, p. 348.]

As both the theoretical analysis of Lenin and Trotsky and the historical experience of Stalinism was later to confirm, the transitional regimes of semifeudal absolutist monarchy and revolutionary bourgeois Bonapartism are not the only types of states that can, temporarily, take on a dual class character, but also the workers' state during the entire transition period from capitalism to communism. To understand why, we need to first comprehend the different functions of state bureaucracies in bourgeois and proletarian revolutions.

Bourgeois Bureaucracies vs. Proletarian Revolutions

Marx and Engels, writing the *Communist Manifesto* in 1847, observed that, compared with all previous revolutions in the world, the Communist revolution "is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations." (See the Pathfinder edition [New York: 1970], p. 33; all subsequent references to the *Communist Manifesto* are to this edition.)

This is because, unlike previous ruling classes, the proletariat is by its very nature a dispossessed, not a property-owning class prior to the revolutionary seizure of political power. Capitalist society is characterized by the absence of proletarian socialized property forms, which can only be created by working people *after* they have seized state power.

By contrast, bourgeois private property, and therefore bourgeois political influence over the state bureaucracy, matured within the womb of the old feudal society. The bourgeoisie at first helped make the monarchy independent of the nobility by financing the state power, but with the growth of the economic might of the bourgeoisie, and the absolutist state's indebtedness to them, the monarchy "blocked" with the defeated nobility against the new and greater threat to its independence: the bourgeoisie. From this point bourgeois revolutions begin.

Engels summed up this particular dialectic of bourgeois revolutions in *Anti-Dühring*:

Originally an oppressed estate liable to pay dues to the ruling feudal nobility, recruited from serfs and villeins of every type, the burghers conquered one position after another in continuous struggle with the nobility, and finally, in the most highly developed countries, took power in its stead: in France, by directly overthrowing the nobility; in England, by making it more and more bourgeois, and incorporating it as the ornamental head of the bourgeoisie itself. And how did it accomplish this? Simply through a change in the "economic order," which sooner or later, voluntarily or as the outcome of struggle, was followed by a change in the political conditions... [The] decisive weapon of the burghers in this struggle was their economic power, constantly increasing through the development first of handicraft industry, at a later stage progressing to manufacturing industry, and through the extension of commerce. During the whole of this struggle political force was on the side of the nobility, except for a period when the Crown used the burghers against the nobility, in order that the two 'estates' might keep each other in check; but from the moment when the burghers, still politically powerless, began to grow dangerous owing to their increasing economic power, the Crown resumed its alliance with the nobility, and by so doing called forth the bourgeois revolution, first in England and then in France. [*Anti-Dühring*, New York: International, 1939, p. 182.]

Thus, the classical bourgeois revolutions were basically a matter of the bourgeoisie taking advantage of a state financial crisis

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The Labor Struggles of 1919— Interview with a Participant

In 1916 I started to work on the railroad, and I worked on the railroad then from that time up until 1922. First when I started I was more or less of an inspector for the Pullman Company, inspecting, checking all of the interior of the Pullmans, the material and so on and so forth. Blankets and other equipment that the Pullman cars contain. I made a regular check of that once a month and then I had to supply the Pullmans with the various things that were needed for the running of the cars. I worked at that for about a year at very small pay, I think it was 17¢ an hour, if I'm not mistaken. Then I became a mechanic for the Pullman Company. So it happened that I became a mechanic just a little bit before the United States declared war on Germany in the First World War and, as we

all know, the government took over the roads, including the Pullman Company, and they raised the wages. I received then \$85 a month, and I worked any hours the company wanted me to work. You had to sign the "yellow dog contract." That means you had to promise that as long as you were employed by the Pullman Company you were not going to engage in organizing unions or any activity that is detrimental to the company. You had to sign that in order to receive employment...

During the period from 1916 to 1922 I worked in the same railroad yard where Oscar Coover, Sr., was employed by the Great Western as chief electrician. At the time I met him he was a staunch supporter of Woodrow Wilson. I met him when the U.S. entered the war. He had been



Carl Skoglund in the 1920s

Introduction to Interview with Carl Skoglund

In the following excerpts from two unpublished interviews conducted in the 1950s, Carl Skoglund (1884–1960) talks about his participation in labor struggles in and around the explosive year of 1919. Skoglund was born in Sweden, where he was a paper-mill worker and a member of the Social Democratic Party. After immigrating to the United States in 1911 and settling in Minneapolis, he became active in the Socialist Party (SP) and its Swedish-language affiliate, the Scandinavian Socialist Federation (SSF), until the formation of the Communist Party (CP) in 1919.

In the years 1916 to 1922, while he was employed as a railroad worker, he met many of the revolutionary workers with whom he would be politically associated for the remainder of his life, including in the formation of the CP in 1919 and the American Trotskyist movement after expulsion from the CP in 1928, as well as in the leadership of the great Minneapolis truckers strikes and the formation of the Socialist Workers Party in 1938. These workers included Oscar Coover, Sr., an electrician employed by the Chicago and Great Western railroad at the Boom Island shops in Minneapolis, where Skoglund worked on Pullman cars (sleeping cars that were attached to passenger trains but were separately owned by the Pullman Company); C.R. Hedlund and P.G. Hedlund, locomotive engineers on the Chicago and North Western railroad; and Vincent Raymond Dunne, at that time a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Arne Swabeck, another founding leader of the Trotskyist movement, was a nationally prominent leader in the SSF prior to World War I, although Swabeck, unlike most of the membership of the SSF, was Danish.

As Skoglund says, the U.S. government took over the operation of the 100 or so privately

owned U.S. railroads at the beginning of American entry into World War I in April 1917 and adopted a conciliatory policy toward labor. The director general of the U.S. Railroad Administration issued the famous General Order No. 27, establishing the eight-hour day and raising wages. When the roads were turned back to their private owners in 1920, a sustained take-back campaign began, culminating in the defeat of the six-month shopcraft strike in 1922. Factors leading to the defeat included the failure of the operating unions, such as the engineers, trainmen, and switchmen, to honor the picket lines, the separate peace signed by the strike leaders with the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, and the most restrictive nationwide anti-strike legislation ever issued by a federal court, exceeding even the draconian federal court injunction issued during the 1894 Pullman strike. (For more on the Pullman strike, see Jean Tussey's article on its centenary elsewhere in this issue).

Nevertheless, the cost of the 1922 strike was so high that it led to the passage of the Railway Labor Act in 1926, still in effect today, which along with creating an elaborate legal mechanism for avoiding rail strikes, gave the rail unions legal standing and required the railroads to recognize and bargain with them.

After the defeat of the 1922 strike and the blacklisting of Skoglund from railroad employment, he worked at various jobs, including operating a gas station for a while. After the expulsion of the Trotskyists from the CP in 1928, Skoglund, along with Miles Dunne and another comrade, Martin Soderberg, bought a few secondhand trucks and began hauling coal for home deliveries, using this occupation to seek entry into the small Teamsters General Driver Union Local 574, trying to win the local over to the perspective of organizing all truck

drivers in Minneapolis. The effort culminated, as is well known, in Local 574's successful coal yard strike in early 1934, and in the two victorious general drivers' strikes in May and July.

Skoglund refers at one point to efforts to combine the rail unions into a single organization, a long-standing goal of class struggle-minded railroad workers. The outstanding example, of course, is the 1894 strike by the American Railway Union against the Pullman Company. Other attempts included the Amalgamation movement of the early 1920s, led by the CP, and the United Rail Operating Crafts (UROC) of the early 1950s. The continuing need for unification was shown earlier this year, when the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers' international leadership urged their members to go back to work during the strike by the United Transportation Union against the Soo Line Railroad, although only a handful of engineers responded.

Also of interest is Skoglund's description of the IWW's sectarian attempt to capture the rail labor movement during the 1919 strike. If there is one dominant thread that runs through all the political experiences of Skoglund and his comrades through the decades, it is their profound understanding of the united front strategy and their refusal to subordinate the real needs of the workers to sectarianism or opportunism. It is this understanding that led them to oppose the adventurism of the American CP in the 1920s and enabled them to guide the 1934 Teamsters strikes to victory.

The interviews have been combined and slightly edited for continuity and standardized language.

— David Jones

a member of the Socialist Party before, but dropped out. He thought Wilson was a good liberal. He went for the slogan that the war was to make the world safe for democracy.

The Great Western section of the yard was organized into AFL craft unions. But the Pullman Company was not and had not been since 1894, when the union had suffered a defeat and had operated under a "yellow dog" contract ever since.

When the United States government took over the railroads, they recognized the unions and promoted the organizing of all workers on the railroads because it was necessary to avoid any trouble during the war. The government negotiated a contract with the international officers of the railroad brotherhoods covering the entire railroad industry, including Pullman — the Pullman System Federation. Each craft was under the jurisdiction of a railroad craft. I was under the carmen.

I was one of those instrumental in getting the meeting called to get the men in Pullman into the union. We set up grievance machinery. I was president of the local (Local 299, Brotherhood of Railway Carmen) which included the Pullman workers in Minneapolis and St. Paul, about 400 members.

We had an illegal strike in 1919, when all the railroad companies — that is, after the war ended and the roads were turned back to the companies — proceeded immediately to cut wages. In this so-called illegal strike, all of the six shopcraft organizations went on strike, that is, they all went on strike against the officialdoms of the national unions. About half a million workers were on strike on a national basis.

The July 1919 illegal strike was promoted by the Chicago shopmen to prevent a wage cut. We went back to work under a guarantee by Wilson that there would be no reprisals and no wage cut. He sent a representative to a meeting at the St. Paul Auditorium, filled to capacity with 5,000 workers. He [the representative] was an official of the railroad machinists. He was there to urge the workers to go back to work. He was sitting on the platform, and as soon as he made a move to speak everyone rose and shouted him down. He couldn't speak. The meeting was adjourned without his saying a word. This was before the settlement. It was this spirit that forced the settlement.

President Woodrow Wilson ordered, or recommended, that we all go back to work and there be no cut in wages, and that everybody be returned without discrimination. I was then slated to be given the skids, but due to this instruction they couldn't, so I returned to work.

At the same period a Socialist, J.O. Bentall [SP candidate for governor of Minnesota, also a member of the Scandinavian Socialist Federation and later a prominent member of the CP] was sent to prison for two years for making a speech against the war, a violation of the Espionage Act. He served it in Leavenworth. During

the process of the case, I acted as secretary of the J.O. Bentall Defense Committee. We organized a big mass meeting and sold tickets for \$1. We went to the Soo Line [railroad] shopmen's union meeting, with a membership of about 1,800. A motion from the floor was made that the union take out of the treasury \$1 for each member and present it to the Defense Committee. I received \$1,800 from that meeting for his defense.

When Bentall was released, we organized a reception for him. We went to the [Minneapolis] city council, where the city council, with some socialist members, voted to present the Key to the City to Bentall, with a delegation from the council present. This was arranged by the Scandinavian Socialist Federation. You can imagine what the papers had to say about it: "The most shameful thing ever to take place in the history of any city," etc., etc.

So we organized the Pullman Company at that time into unions, and of course I became very active in it, and I became one of the officials of it. That union remained up until 1922.

It is a natural thing for all workers during a strike to look for support from as many unions as possible. As a result, the organized mechanism had to be set up where all of the various unions could participate. Such an organization was set up called the Twin Cities Railroad Council, to which all the railroad crafts elected delegates to represent them. The purpose of the organization was not only to support the shopmen's strike, but it was also visualized to become a permanent organization on the railroads for the purpose of overcoming the old craft union separation. This council met once a week, and most of the various railroad unions were represented by official delegates. Most of the meetings were very well attended, and great enthusiasm was demonstrated for this type of organizational set-up.

Most of the meetings were attended by between 200 and 250 delegates. The IWW was mainly responsible for the leadership of the strike, and, as a consequence, was prominent in the Council. The policy of the IWW was to take this railroad council over, not ideologically, but more or less physically, by bringing the Council into the IWW. In two or three meetings, the entire time was taken up with the discussion of the preamble of the IWW, whether or not to adopt it and make the Council a so-called branch of the IWW. In the debate, a big opposition developed to this policy, which was to be expected. It was led by C.R. Hedlund, who was a representative of the railroad engineers.* His main position in this debate was that all the railroad unions of various crafts could not be united under the IWW program. But in spite of the opposition, the IWW more or less captured the Council and adopted the preamble.

Hedlund's position was that it was impossible to bring all of the unions and membership into the organization on such a program, that the

problem was a united front around the question of uniting the crafts. He was one of the leaders of a new union, at the time led by and organized on a national basis, a Chicago group. It was a dual union, roughly analogous to the UROC (United Rail Operating Crafts, an attempt to combine rail unions in the late 1940s and early 1950s) but much more extensive, involving all 21 different crafts.

It was about three months until the IWW captured it. It lasted about six months altogether. In fact, after the smoke cleared and the IWW had control, the only thing left in the Council was the small number of actual members of the IWW, about fifteen. As a natural consequence, it died.

I had been a member of the IWW for a couple of years. I was never in agreement with their nonpolitical policy or their position in regard to tactics. I reluctantly went along with the policy in the Council. The IWW was very dominant in the Scandinavian sections. I went into them to recruit out of them into the Socialist Party and to try to show them that they were wrong. This was all individual action, there being no discipline in the Socialist Party. I was not in the IWW as part of a Socialist Party fraction. I just thought it was a good place to work.

In 1920 the Pullman Company started a national campaign to install the company union in their industry, and they had a constitution written up by the general office in Chicago. The central office in Chicago and six vice-presidents of the company were the national leaders, and then they had it divided into zones composed of, I think, six or seven states. That means there were as many states as zones. And on these zone committees the company had four against three, picked by the company to sit on this zone committee. The national committee selected the zone committee, but it was obligatory to pick three employees and four employers on that committee.

Then we had an election on the local committee, and that was composed of three company men and three workers. The election was held, and I ran for office on that committee by instruction of my union — that I should run for the purpose of busting it up. We received all the votes except one, of the workers, so I was now part of the committee. When the superintendent of the company called the committee, the first meeting of the committee, we issued a resolution and we resigned stating the reason for it, that we resigned because we were opposed to the company union and pointed out the make-up of it and what it meant, and that we didn't want to serve in this capacity.

The superintendent got mad, infuriated, fumed, called the foremen in the various yards to come in and told me to stay there in his office. This meeting was held during working hours. He told the other two committeemen to go to work. They had resigned with me, but I was told

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*Hedlund was a member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen — *Ed.*

The Pullman Strike Centennial Conference: Labor, Politics, and Government, 1890s and 1990s

by Jean Tussey

The Pullman Strike Centennial Conference, held at Indiana State University in Terre Haute last September 23–24, was attended by about 200 people from 26 states. The call to the conference stated:

It has been 100 years since Terre Haute native Eugene V. Debs led the Pullman strike which precipitated a national crisis by shutting down much of the nation's rail system. The strike helped define the agenda of 20th century American politics by posing new issues including industrial unionism, collective bargaining, progressive reform, and socialism. The Pullman Strike Centennial Conference seeks to reassess the strike and the relation of labor to the American political system in the 1890s in the light of recent trends in scholarship and contemporary concerns. It is intended to meet the needs of labor historians, students, trade unionists, teachers of social studies and history, and interested members of the local community.

The 2-day agenda included 13 sessions involving the reading and discussion of papers by, and primarily for, academic labor historians. Only a few trade unionists and African Americans attended. No one could hear all of the papers, since difficult choices had to be made between two different sessions scheduled for most of the time slots on Friday and on Saturday morning. For example, we had to choose between "Origins of Progressivism: Politics and Ideology in the 1890s" and "The Pullman Strike and the 1922 Railroad Shopmen's Strike: A Comparative Perspective"; between "New Perspectives on the Pullman Strike" and "The Pullman Strike and the Crisis in Class Relations in the 1890s"; between "Race and the Late 19th-Century Labor Movement" and "Teaching and Researching the Pullman Strike."

It would be a real service to the audience that the Conference Committee intended to reach if all of the carefully prepared papers were published and made available (at cost) to those who registered and to other interested persons.

Labor Speakers

Fortunately some of the sessions of broader interest did not involve time conflicts. These included a Friday luncheon address, "The Relevance of the Debs Legacy to the Contemporary Labor Movement," by Jack Sheinkman, president of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) and of the Debs Foundation. Citing Debs as his inspiration, Sheinkman described the problems labor faces in the "new global marketplace," while at home "we have the most repressive labor laws of any of the industrialized nations." Noel Beasley, ACTWU vice-president, expanded on the same theme at the banquet that evening.

The Saturday afternoon session opened with a slide show and commentary on the Pullman strike by Larry Peterson, managing editor of *Comparative Politics* and a descendant of a Pullman worker.

The highlight of the conference was the public address by David Montgomery on "The Pullman Boycott and the Shaping of Modern America," which was followed by a lively debate.

"Democracy and the Free Market"

Montgomery, a history professor at Yale University, spoke on the same challenging themes he addressed in his 1993 book, *Citizen Worker: The Experience of Workers in the United States with Democracy and the Free Market during the Nineteenth Century*. Concluding the introduction to that excellent scholarly study (which should be read by all serious students of labor history), Montgomery wrote:

Finally, wrestling with the meaning of citizenship to the nineteenth-century worker may also shed some light on contemporary issues, which have been made murky by the discourse of the 1990s. No two phrases come coupled together more often today than "democracy" and "a market economy." A front-page article in the *New York Times* even referred to Czechoslovakia's pending transition to a "democratic market economy." How an economy can be democratic, or what a market economy is like in the age of multinational corporations, we are never told. Both notions are employed in a manner that is deliberately vague, and just how they are related to each other is even more so. We can only rest assured that they are both Good Things. As Judge Anthony M. Kennedy wrote in his judgment against Washington State's comparable worth statute: "Neither law nor logic deems the free market system a suspect enterprise."

There is much in the experience of workingmen and women in this country that should lead us to think more carefully and precisely about these two notions and the historical relationship between them. In important ways the meaning of citizenship and the freedom of economic activity from state control did expand together, though neither one turns out to have been a simple logical consequence of the other. Over the course of the century, however, both the contraction of the domain of governmental activity and the strengthening of government's coercive power contributed to the hegemony of business and professional men, which was exercised through both governmental and private activity. It was the working people who sought to preserve the community welfare through both spheres.

Since Montgomery's study of the development of the contradictions of "free market democracy" is important not only for academic

labor historians but for all workers in today's global market, I find the concluding paragraph of *Citizen Worker* worth quoting as well:

The most urgent question facing workers' movements in both North America and Europe as the new century dawned, therefore, was whether democracy could be rescued by extending its scope into the forbidden gardens of the market itself. Henry Demarest Lloyd defined that issue precisely in a widely circulated speech to a trade union picnic on July 4, 1889. The "mission of the labor movement," he declared, was "to free mankind from the superstitions and sins of the market, and to abolish the poverty which is the fruit of those sins." To achieve that goal, he argued in a clarion call to the 1893 AFL [American Federation of Labor] convention, was to extend the principles on which the polity was based to the direction of the economy as well. "It is by the people who do the work that the hours of labour, the conditions of employment, the division of the produce is to be determined," Lloyd proclaimed. "It is by them that the captains of industry are to be chosen, and chosen to be servants, not masters. It is for the welfare of all that the coordinated labour of all must be directed... This is democracy."

Differences Debated

What developed in the discussion that followed Montgomery's talk were sharp differences, implied in earlier sessions, that indicate a retreat

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Eugene Victor Debs

The Great Strike of 1919: A Watershed in American History

by Jonah McAllister

We are grateful to be able to publish this slightly edited account of a recent conference on the 1919 steel strike, written by a high school student in the Pittsburgh area.

The old Carnegie Library auditorium in Braddock, Pennsylvania — a former steel town near Pittsburgh — was the location of a 3-day conference entitled “The Great 1919 Strike, A Watershed in American History,” held on September 23–25. A flyer for the conference explained the history:

The steel strike of 1919 — the culmination of the most explosive industrial conflict in America up to that time — was a turning point in history that did not turn, a tremendous unionizing effort that failed. There were great issues and, with the concurrent Red Scare, the entire country became involved in the crisis.

What became known as the “Great Steel Strike” would involve more than 350,000 workers who left the mills on September 22, 1919 — the largest single work stoppage in American history at that time. The fury which those workers and their committees met from the steel companies, virtually all of the uniformed police, and the press, constituted an assault on the Bill of Rights itself. This symposium will examine those events on the 75th anniversary of this watershed event in the story of 20th century America.

The symposium was sponsored by: United Steelworkers of America (USWA); the Philip Murray Institute of Labor Studies; Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Penn State University; Pennsylvania Labor History Society; and the Great Steel Strike Symposium Committee. There were about 200 participants — including many union members, community residents, and students, as well as political and religious activists.

The conference opened Thursday evening, with remarks by George Becker, president of the United Steelworkers of America, on the present situation and how it has changed since he began working in the mills. This was followed by a keynote address by David Brody, a labor historian from the University of California and author of *Labor in Crisis: The Steel Strike of 1919*. Brody, in his talk “The Great Strike After Seventy-Five Years,” said that the conditions of organized labor at that time, and many of the views held then regarding unions, are surprisingly similar to those that are common now. Organized labor then was seen as bad and unpatriotic, and that feeling is coming back, especially on the part of state and national governments. There was a visual presentation and reading entitled “Voices from the Great Strike.”

Session I: “The Great Steel Strike and the American Promise”

On Friday, the second day, there were two sessions. The 1919 steel strike was led by William Z. Foster, an organizer for the American Federation of Labor (AFL), so the first session began with Edward Johanningsmeier (author of *The Forging of American Communism: The Life of William Z. Foster*) discussing “The Great Strike and the Making of an American Communist: The Case of William Z. Foster.” Johanningsmeier, who teaches history at the University of Delaware, talked about how the strike shaped Foster as a Communist and a person. He also talked about how Foster shaped the strike and how his becoming a Communist was used in the anti-union and anti-radical Red Scare.

David Demarest, professor of English at Carnegie-Mellon University, gave a talk entitled “Writers Explore the Great Steel Strike,” which indicated what writers (such as Thomas Bell in *Out of This Furnace*, John Dos Passos in *U.S.A.*, and William Attaway in *Blood on the Forge*) had said about the great strike, and also how what has been said about it has changed with the times. This speaker focused on how the role of women was portrayed, and he added information that he had obtained in interviews with people who had lived through the strike.

Eric Leif Davin, a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh, spoke on “The Littlest New Deal: How Democracy and Unionism Came to Western Pennsylvania.” He focused on how — 15 years after the 1919 strike — changes in views and laws came from the national government, then the state, and finally the county and local governments. This was largely a result of successful labor struggles in the 1930s. The “littlest New Deal,” created on the level of local politics, allowed for a greater balance between workers and employers, for unionization and collective bargaining.

Session II: “Multiculturalism, 1919: Conflict and Cooperation in Ethnicity and Race”

The second session began with Joe W. Trotter, a professor of history at Carnegie-Mellon University, discussing “The Black Industrial Migration and the Great Steel Strike.” He talked about how Black workers, recently arrived from the South, were used by employers for purposes of strike breaking and how racist attitudes of

white workers caused divisions in the working class that contributed to the defeat of the strike.

Mark Stolarik, a professor of history from the University of Ottawa, then spoke on “Slovak Americans: Reluctant Radicals in the Conflict.” He discussed the activities of Slovak Americans in the 1919 strike, because they were among its most solid supporters. Most Slovak groups and newspapers supported the strike, unlike many other ethnic organizations and papers.

Peter Oresick, a poet who edited an anthology of working-class writers entitled *Working Classics*, gave a talk entitled “Voices from the Rank and File: Recollections of the Great Strike Generation.” He discussed how rank-and-file workers felt about the strike then and now.

That night there was a dramatic reading of a play written by David Demarest, “Voices from the Great Strike,” performed by a local theater group, The Iron Clad Agreement. This told the story of the 1919 strike and focused on Pittsburgh, using quotes from William Z. Foster, the famous labor agitator Mother Jones, radical journalist Mary Heaton Vorse, Father Adalbert Kazincy (“the labor priest”), strike martyr Fannie Sellins, Mary Jones (an African American woman who had lived through the strike and was interviewed by Demarest), and the African American novelist William Attaway.

Session III: “On the Front Line: Women in the Crucible of Strike and Conflict”

On the third day there were two more sessions. The first session of the day began with Dee Garrison, professor of history at Rutgers University (and author of *Mary Heaton Vorse: The Life of an American Insurgent*). Her topic was “Mary Heaton Vorse: The Writer as American Insurgent and Voice of the Strike.” Vorse was a talented writer whose book *Men and Steel* is one of the best on the 1919 strike.

The next speaker was Carl Meyerhuber, professor of history at Penn State University (and author of *Less Than Forever: The Rise and Fall of the Labor Movement in Western Pennsylvania, 1914–1948*). His presentation, “The Assassination of Fannie Sellins as a Prologue to the Strike,” discussed the circumstances of this talented union organizer’s death and what effect she might have had on the strike if she had not been murdered.

The final speaker, Lois McLean (a local West Virginia writer), gave a talk entitled “Mother Jones Strikes Again: This Time for the Steel Workers.” This talk was accompanied by a visual presentation. McLean talked about Mother Jones’s activities in the strike, before the strike, and after the strike.

Session IV: “Red Scare and Intimidation: Repealing the Bill of Rights”

The second session on Saturday began with Charles McCollester, associate director of the Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Labor

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The Seattle General Strike, February 1919

by George Saunders

The extraordinary significance of the Seattle general strike of 1919 lies in the fact that it is the only U.S. general strike in which the strikers sought not only to shut down an area, but then to "open it up" under their own direction...

...a "revolutionary spark did exist in Seattle in February 1919" since the use of workers' self-management to run the city during the strike — even as a demonstration — dramatically departed from the traditional role of trade unions within a capitalist framework.

— From Rob Rosenthal,
"Nothing Moved But the Tide:

The Seattle General Strike of 1919,"
Labor's Heritage, Fall 1992, pp. 37–53.

During World War I Seattle had become a major industrial city, "largely based on the tremendous growth of the shipbuilding industry in response to wartime need" (Rosenthal, p. 37). It also experienced unionization to a unique extent. According to Robert L. Friedheim in *The Seattle General Strike* (Seattle, 1964), there were more union members in the city than there were industrial workers.

Union members in Seattle were united around their Central Labor Council (CLC), and although they were affiliated with the craft unions of the AFL, they practiced their own kind of industrial unionism, with allied trades seeking to bargain jointly throughout a particular industry. This was called "Duncanism," after Jimmy Duncan, a progressive local leader of the CLC. Within the Seattle labor movement there was widespread support for radical political groups and sympathy with the Russian revolution. The movement also boasted the first labor-owned daily newspaper in the U.S., the *Union Record*.

There were three currents within the Seattle labor movement, the conservatives, the radicals, and the progressives. This is how they are described by Rob Rosenthal (much of this article being based on his account of the strike):

The conservatives, drawn largely from the most skilled workers, supported the patriotic sentiments of the day and the policies of the national AFL. The radicals, often less skilled workers and overwhelmingly concentrated in the expanded shipyard unions, favored industrial unionism and the Russian revolution and felt the national AFL was too timid and conservative. In the middle were the progressives [like Jimmy Duncan], supporters of socialism and workers' power but suspicious of revolution, who kept the competing wings together for many years and provided most of the movement's leaders (p. 38).

The rebels and revolutionaries of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) were also an important influence in Seattle. Their role in organizing the timber industry in the region and participation in numerous free speech fights

earned them respect. Despite some strains, the IWW was generally accepted by the Seattle labor movement. Evidence of this was the support the local AFL gave them whenever they were hit by vigilante or government repression, as in the Centralia massacre later in 1919.

The local legislature, courts, and police began cracking down on radicals as World War I ended, but

most alarming to the vast majority of Seattle workers were the obvious preparations [by] national and local employers...for a *postwar open shop offensive* to roll back the gains unions had made in the preceding five years. [Emphasis added. — G.S.]

Even Hotel Maids Vote to Strike

The initial cause of the strike was the refusal by the federal government's Shipbuilding Labor Adjustment Board to approve the postwar wage increases it had promised. The shipyard workers, seeing that shipbuilding would be curtailed with the end of the war, perceived the need for something more than just a traditional strike in order to make their demands effective. On February 1 they asked the CLC to call a general strike to support them. The results were amazing. Even in the more conservative, highly skilled unions workers voted by an overwhelming majority to shut the city down. "The house painters voted 6 to 1 in favor, the plumbers over 8 to 1, the plasterers unanimously. [Even the] newest, weakest unions...voted to join the strike. The CLC recorded... that the hotel maids 'voted 7 to 1 to strike but many know full well they will not get back in again when they walk out' (Rosenthal, p. 40).

One reason for the overwhelming support for the strike was the widely held belief, as Jimmy Duncan put it, "that an attempt was being made by certain enemies of labor through governmental agencies to destroy our labor movement, beginning with the shipyard workers' organization" (p. 40).

But there was also a changing view of the world — coming "on the heels of 'the war to save democracy' and the Russian revolution," to quote Rosenthal. "Looking around them, workers saw a world in which people everywhere were fighting for a new way of life, often through the use of the general strike" (p. 42).

The Work of the Rank and File

One of the most significant aspects of the strike, according to Rosenthal, was that it was "the work of the rank and file, rather than their leaders." When the proposal for a general strike was made and the overwhelming vote in support of it began, most of the acknowledged leaders were in Chicago. One of them was Anna Louise Strong, who reported:

The strike would probably not have happened at all if the "labor leaders" had been in town... They were terrified when they heard that a general strike had been voted... Yet we could not repudiate action taken by sixty thousand workers.

The strike was run by a general strike committee (GSC), also known as the "Committee of 300," as approximately 100 supporting unions sent three delegates each to this central body. The GSC was made up mostly of rank and filers, although they elected an Executive Committee (EC) of 15, who were mainly well-known union officials.

Setting a strike deadline of February 6, the GSC and EC began planning on how to provide for essential public services during the shutdown, including food, hospital care, and police.

Anna Louise Strong's Editorial

The revolutionary potential implied in this workers' takeover of public administration was expressed in an editorial in the *Union Record* two days before the strike began. It was written by Anna Louise Strong and became "easily the most famous document to come out of the strike" (Rosenthal, p. 43). It said in part

We are undertaking the most tremendous movement made by LABOR in this country, a move which will lead — NO ONE KNOWS WHERE.

We do not need hysteria.

We need the iron march of labor.

LABOR WILL FEED THE PEOPLE...

LABOR WILL CARE FOR THE BABIES AND THE SICK...

LABOR WILL PRESERVE ORDER...

NOT THE WITHDRAWAL OF LABOR POWER, BUT THE POWER OF THE STRIKERS TO MANAGE WILL WIN THIS STRIKE...

The closing down of Seattle's industries, as a MERE SHUTDOWN, will not affect these eastern gentlemen much...

BUT, the closing down of the capitalistically controlled industries of Seattle, while the WORKERS ORGANIZE to feed the people, to care for the babies and the sick, to preserve order — THIS will move them, for this looks too much like the taking over of POWER by the workers.

Labor will not only SHUT DOWN the industries, but LABOR will REOPEN, under the management of the appropriate trades, such activities as are needed to preserve public health and public peace. If the strike continues, Labor may feel led to avoid public suffering by reopening more and more activities.

UNDER ITS OWN MANAGEMENT.

And that is why we say that we are starting on a road that leads — NO ONE KNOWS WHERE.

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The Winnipeg General Strike, Then and Today

The following are excerpts from brief contributions accompanying a photo display published earlier this year in the magazine *Canadian Dimension*. We have made some slight changes for reasons of style.

The Legacy of 1919

by Doug Smith

For six weeks in [May–June] 1919 over half of the working people in Winnipeg went on strike. They were striking in support of the metal trade and building trade workers, whose employers were refusing to negotiate with them. Half the people on strike were not even members of a union.

The Winnipeg establishment thought this was a revolution in the making. They convinced the Federal government of this, and the strike was crushed by the police and the militia. One died when the Mounted Police fired into a demonstration following the arrest of the strike leadership. Some strikers were imprisoned, others were deported, and thousands more lost their jobs.

Why commemorate the Winnipeg General Strike? Why not let its 75th anniversary pass as unnoticed as its 73rd and 74th?...

There are many answers to these questions... But I have a short list of reasons why the strike is worth remembering.

It makes us (meaning people who feel part of what used to be known as the Left) feel good...

It is worthwhile remembering because it is so hard to do. Several years ago Manitoba historians Nolan Reilly and Gerry Berkowski put together an excellent walking and driving tour. It takes people through many historic Winnipeg neighborhoods and provides a real sense of what the strike was about.

But sometimes I like to take people on an unstrike tour, visiting historic locales where there is no sign of the strike. There's a police station [now on] Old Market Square, where socialists, evangelist, and social reformers once used to hold open air meetings; a steam plant was built on the site of Victoria Park where the strikers held their monster rallies; and people aren't allowed to even walk across the street at Portage and Main where they once attempted to mount a parade to protest the arrest of the strike leaders.

It is worthwhile to remember a thing that our "betters" have gone to so much trouble to obliterate.

Remembering the General Strike is another way of helping to win it. For as long as it is not forgotten, the strike isn't over... Labour history, the history of the struggle of all exploited groups, is important because it represents a struggle against conformity. To quote Walter Benjamin... "even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not yet ceased to be victorious."

The Left's historical calendar is marked by key years, 1789, 1848, 1870, 1917, 1919... years that flash and flare with the promise that the wretched of the earth have gotten their act together and are about to blast history apart...

To celebrate the strike is to celebrate that promise, and to remember a moment of solidarity and sacrifice.

The Significance of the Strike

by Patrick Martin

Patrick Martin, business agent of the Carpenters Union, is a vice-president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour.

The Winnipeg General Strike continues to be a source of pride and inspiration for union activists. Labour historians point out that the strike planted the seeds of industrial unionism that reached well beyond Manitoba's border and ultimately grew into the Canadian labour movement that we know today.

It is mistake, however, to view the strike in isolation or as a single event. The class struggle existed before and after 1919 and while the event itself was significant, it was neither the origin nor the culmination of the movement. It exists instead as a part of a continuum that is as relevant and practical today as it was then.

While the conditions that compelled working people to stop the world in 1919 have improved, what was difficult to achieve has proven even harder to maintain. The goal of complete social and economic justice in a classless society has never been achieved. In fact, a rise in neo-conservatism has caused a backward slide in terms of the fair distribution of wealth.

The Winnipeg General Strike reminds us... that collective action by organized labour is the most reliable vehicle for achieving social change...

Comments by a Winnipeg Nurse in 1949

I still cling stubbornly to the belief that the Winnipeg General Strike served a useful purpose. It made the people of Winnipeg realize that no modern community can function without the workers who carry on the... tasks which make a city safe and healthy to live in. It drew attention to social and economic abuses which have since been remedied, at least in part.

Comments by Marla Neikamp

Marla Neikamp is a Labor Relations Officer with the Manitoba Nurses Union and

a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 832:

The Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 was clearly a pivotal event in labour history. The years immediately preceding 1919 set the stage for the strike. Strikes were numerous and largely unsuccessful throughout the industrial heartland of Canada. Labour was unable to make significant gains in the Canadian political forum. The world watched as the Bolsheviks overthrew the tyranny of the Romanov regime and the corrupt middle class regime that followed. Strikes and disruption marked 1918 and reflected the despair and desolation felt by Labour in Canada. The success of the Bolsheviks in Russia undoubtedly made Labour's "hope for change" become a battle cry.

In Winnipeg the Labour community grew substantially as immigrants arrived to answer the call of industrial capitalists. thousands of people settled in neighborhoods surrounding the CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway] Station. Their tiny homes were pressed together on small lots, the air was full of smoke, their possessions covered with factory soot and grime. Many families shared homes, overcrowding was the norm. People froze to death in winter and suffered the diseases of the marginalized (typhoid, tuberculosis, pneumonia). They turned to labour unions and socialist politics. The General Strike commenced on May 15. This struggle ended on June 26 — one worker was dead, many were injured, and many lost their jobs. Their leaders were arrested and some were jailed.

What did they gain? Premier T.C. Norris agreed to appoint a royal Commission specifically to investigate local labour conditions as well as all the issues that led to the General Strike. Labour came out with a renewed commitment to confront their issues through collective bargaining and in the political arena. They began to see some success. In the following civic elections, seven aldermen were labour representatives. In 1920, labour elected eleven members to the legislature, four of whom were strike leaders. (Three of them were still in jail.)

J.S. Woodsworth was arrested for his participation in the strike and elected to the House of Commons one year later. The workers of 1919 provided us all who have followed in the labour movement, a glimpse of our own power as a group. We need to use our power to build a just society for all. □

A Salute to Women's Role in the Labor Movement

by Evelyn Sell

This article does not attempt to describe the rich history of women's involvement in labor struggles stretching back to the unions organized by female wage earners in the early 1800s, the 1824 joint strike of women and men workers fighting wage cuts and long hours in Pawtucket, Rhode Island; the all-female strike of "the Tailoresses of New York" in 1825; the 1828 strike of women mill workers in Dover, New Hampshire; and the numerous battles carried out by nineteenth-century female factory workers, who confronted not only the bosses but the overwhelming prejudices against women engaged in public activity. Writing about New England factory women during the 1830s, Vera Shlakman explained:

It required some spirit for Yankee "young ladies" to brave public opinion in order to develop strike tactics at this early period... It was felt that young women should not march about the streets, making a spectacle of themselves. And yet, in spite of disapproval, they were prepared to do this in order to protect their standards, whether it was conventional or not. [*Economic History of a Factory Town*, pp. 62-63.]

The material which follows is limited to briefly highlighting the role of women in some of the labor battles commemorated in this issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.

1919 Steel Strike

A virtual tidal wave of strikes flooded the country after the close of World War I, when prices continued to be outrageously high and workers' wages remained low. Women played prominent roles in the record-breaking number of labor actions that year, especially in: the New England telephone operators' strike; the Paterson, New Jersey, strike of 15,000 silk workers; the Seattle, Washington, general strike; New York City strikes by 35,000 women's clothing workers and 20,000 cigar makers; the second great strike of Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile workers; and, the general coal strike, where women were aggressive pickets.

Because of its long-term effects on working-class struggles, the 1919 steel strike had unusual significance. Women participated in the picketing — rejecting the anti-labor and red-baiting attacks by community leaders such as the Rev. P. Molyneux (pastor of St. Brendan's Roman Catholic Church at Braddock), who preached in his sermon the day before the strike began: "In case this strike should take place, and there is a riot, I want to give you people a solemn warning: smother your curiosity. Let the women keep off the streets with their children, and give the men a clear field, and we will show these hoodlums what we are." Samuel Yellen, in his book *American Labor Struggles*, reports how such threats were carried out against both women and men:

Besides the suppression of their civil liberties [by order of local public officials], the strikers suffered daily brutality and violence at the hands of police, deputy sheriffs, detectives, strikebreakers, and vigilantes. In Pennsylvania the State Constabulary, which had been sent to the steel districts before the strike began, rode into crowds at meetings and clubbed men and women alike with unwarranted brutality. Mill guards and detectives made unprovoked attacks against strikers, often entering homes to do so.

Grace Hutchins, in *Women Who Work*, wrote:

...over 300,000 were out and the women stood by their men on the picket lines. Mother Jones was in the strike and was among those frequently arrested. Fannie Sellins, an active organizer, was shot and killed, August 26, 1919, by deputy sheriffs near the Allegheny Coal & Coke Co. mine at West Natrona, Pa. Her head was battered in. The picture taken after her death...remains as a witness of the steel magnates' bestial attacks upon unarmed and defenseless workers.

In her autobiography, Mary Harris Jones — best known by the name Mother Jones — devotes a chapter to her activities in the 1919 steel strike. Here are some excerpts:

I traveled up and down the Monongahela River. Most of the places where the steel workers were on strike, meetings were forbidden. If I were to stop to talk to a woman on the street about her child, a cossack would come charging down upon us and we would have to run for our lives. If I were to talk to a man in the streets of Braddock, we would be arrested for unlawful assembly....

I spoke often to strikers.... I was speaking in Homestead. A group of organizers were with me in an automobile. As soon as a word was said, the speaker was immediately arrested by the steel bosses' sheriffs. I rose to speak. An officer grabbed me.... We were taken to jail.... During the strike I was frequently arrested. So were all the leaders.

Mother Jones described how strikers were physically terrorized.

Organizers would come in [to strike headquarters] with bandages on their heads. They had been beaten. They would stop a second before the picture of Fanny Sellins, the young girl whom the constabulary had shot as she bent protectively over some children. She had died. They had only been beaten.

The fighting spirit of the women is captured in this passage from Mother Jones's autobiography. The wife of a striking steel worker explained:

"The worse thing about this strike, Mother, is having the men folks all home all the time. There's no place for them to go. If they walk out, they get chased by the mounted police. If they visit another house, the house gets raided and the men get arrested for 'holding a meeting.' They daren't even sit on the steps. Officers chase them in. It's fierce, Mother, with the



Mary Harris "Mother" Jones

boarders all home. When the men are working, half of them are sleeping, and the other half are in the mills. And I can hang my clothes out in the yard. Now I daren't. The guards make us stay in. It's hell, Mother, with the men home all day and the clothes hanging around, too. And the kids are frightened. The guards chase them [into] the house. That makes it worse. The kids, and the men, all home and the clothes hanging around."

That was another way the steel tyrants fought their slaves. They crowded them into their wretched kennels, piling them on top of one another until their nerves were on edge. Men and women and babies and children and cooking and washing and dressing and undressing. This condition wore terribly on the women.

"Mother, seems like I'm going crazy!" women would say to me. "I'm scared to go out and I go crazy if I stay in with everything lumped on top of me!"

"The men are not going back?"

When I asked the women that question they would stop their complaints. "My man go back, I kill him!" You should see their eyes!

1934 Teamster Strike

Women's involvement in labor battles — both as workers and as activists — persisted during the 100-year period beginning with the early unions established in the 1830s through the intense actions of the 1930s. The 37½-hour week was won by striking needle trades workers in 1933. Miners' wives marched in picket lines during coal strikes in Illinois, Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, and other states.

Anna and Stella Rasefske were among the workers arrested for picketing during the 1931 coal strike in Pennsylvania-Ohio; the two women were in prison for over a year for their union militancy. Six women, representatives of the Workers International Relief and of the International Labor Defense, were charged with criminal syndicalism and jailed for four months because of their participation in the 1932 Kentucky strike. Martha Roberts, wife of the organizer of the National Miners Union, was arrested during the 1933 coal strike in Gallup, New Mexico, when she led workers' wives in a "Dawn Patrol" of the mines in defiance of armed soldiers. Miners' wives were attacked along with the men during the 1933 strike against Peabody Coal Company in Illinois. Company representatives strung barbed wire across the road as a barrier to the men and women marching together in the picket line, threw gas bombs, and then clubbed those who were caught on the wire and blinded by the gas. "The women took the tear gas and then took it again," an eyewitness reported. A strong organization of Women's Auxiliaries was established in the Illinois coal fields to continue championing union goals.

Significant strike activities were carried out by the Women's Auxiliary in the 1934 Teamster strike in Minneapolis. One dramatic event featuring women's militancy took place in May, when cops attempted to protect scabs. In *Teamster Rebellion*, Farrell Dobbs reported:

As warfare raged in the market, 700 members of the women's auxiliary, led by Marvel Scholl and Clara Dunne, marched on city hall. Crowds gathered on the sidewalks to watch them pass with their Local 574 banner at the head of the column, and many onlookers joined the procession. When they got to city hall their way was barred by nervous cops with guns. Finally, a small delegation was allowed to go in to present their demands upon Mayor Bainbridge. Meanwhile, the rest of the women carried on a protest demonstration outside the building. Bainbridge refused to see the delegation, but the evening papers reported their demands: that the mayor fire [Police] Chief Johannes, withdraw all deputies, and stop interfering with the pickets.

In the "Acknowledgments" to his book, Dobbs immediately credited Marvel Scholl with the following words:

Although as author of this work I bear sole responsibility for its contents, it is in large measure a team project. Foremost among my collaborators has been Marvel Scholl, who shared with me the experiences recorded in this story. I have drawn extensively from a diary she kept during the Teamster strikes in 1934. She has also supplied valuable information about the role of women involved in these strikes. In more general terms Marvel has helped to recall the circumstances surrounding the various events I have described.

(After Dobbs's book was published in 1972, I urged Marvel to have her diaries published. A fine writer in her own right, Marvel's day-to-day record of the historic strike was not only an invaluable source of information but, in my opinion, could have been an inspiration to women in the labor and socialist movements. Unfortunately, her diary has not been published, and it is primarily through her husband's books that we can catch glimpses of her insights and the exciting details she noted.)

The women's march on city hall was described in *Labor's Giant Step* by Art Preis, who presented this general picture of the scope of the activities undertaken by the women: "A 574 Women's Auxiliary, with a large membership, plunged into the strike, doing everything from secretarial work and mimeographing, to running the huge strike kitchen and manning [sic] picket trucks."

The auxiliary's responsibility may appear "sexist" to today's younger generation, but the tasks carried out by the women provided essential keys to developing the strikers' self-confidence and mobilization. The following passages from *American City* by Charles Rumford Walker demonstrate the importance of the union's central kitchen and headquarters:

Between four and five thousand persons ate at strike headquarters and slept in or near it for the strike's duration. Fourteen or fifteen hours of the day they were on the picket line, while at night they listened to the news of the strike, the status of negotiations, the bosses' latest moves, etc., which were reported in detail over the

microphone. It is hard to find a strike in which the two strike fundamentals, food and morale, were more carefully provided for by the leaders than in the truck strikes in Minneapolis. The main interior of the garage became an auditorium, with a platform erected for speakers and musicians. About two thousand men and women assembled nightly inside, and as high as twenty to twenty-five thousand in adjoining streets to listen to the loud speaker.

In an elongated near-extension were located a kitchen, eating counters, hospital, and auto-repair shop. The kitchen was the car-wash section of the garage, whitewashed now and with a dozen stoves and boilers and a sink in it. A crew of 120 women under the direction of two chefs from the cooks' and waiters' union worked in two twelve-hour shifts for eleven days. Food was served day or night. It was estimated that at the peak of the strike as many as ten thousand people, men, women, and children — most strikers brought their families — ate in strike headquarters in a single day.

Three years after the great victory of the Minneapolis workers, the campaigns by Michigan auto workers to gain union recognition registered more successes — and, once more, women played outstanding roles. Emergency brigades were organized by women during the battles to establish the United Auto Workers. In 1937, for example, wives armed themselves with planks and placards and stood guard outside Chevrolet Plant No. 9 in Flint, Michigan, to defend their husbands' sit-down strike from company guards as well as to keep strikebreakers from entering the factory. The Women's Auxiliary of Ford Local 600 was instrumental in winning the battle to organize the huge River Rouge plant. About a dozen years after this 1941 conquest, I became a member of the Auxiliary, and was inspired by the female founders who told me about their experiences in distributing recruiting leaflets for the union, physical confrontations with Ford goons, picketing, and other activities. I hope this short article helps to commemorate what they and other women have done to build unions. By knowing our own history, today's female unionists can be fortified in their efforts to strengthen and expand the organized labor movement. □

October 28, 1994

The Great Strike of 1919: A Watershed in American History

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Relations at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. His talk, "From Socialism to Bolshevism: The Evolution of the Red Scare in the Turtle Creek Valley," discussed how fear of socialism and Bolshevism, and the charge that they were "un-American," were used to break the strike. He also described how the steel companies used the fear of Communism to alienate groups that took part in the strike.

He was followed by Robert S. Barker, professor of law at Duquesne University, whose topic was "The Steel Strike of 1919 in Constitutional Perspective." He talked about how

many of the laws used against the workers in the strike were unconstitutional by today's standards, and even according to the standards of that time. He focused on three cases where people were charged with violating unconstitutional laws and how they were eventually released on appeal or were not convicted.

The third speaker at this session was Irwin Marcus, professor of history at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, with a talk entitled "The Palmer Raids Come to Johnstown: The Struggle for Unionism and Civil Liberties." He compared and contrasted the 1919 strike in Johnstown and Pittsburgh, noting that the strike

was at first more successful in Johnstown. He explained that the strike was part of a worldwide wave of working-class and radical insurgencies against which the national government responded — inside the United States — with the anti-radical Palmer Raids (named after U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer). This helped to crush the strike in Johnstown.

The conference was closed by Russell Gibbons, director of the Philip Murray Institute of Labor Studies. □

Editors' Note: A World Affected by the Russian Revolution

Continued from page 1

what they really were, and as working people felt emboldened by the Russian example to speak up and act for their own needs. There were socialist revolutions in Hungary and Bavaria in 1919, although both were short-lived. They came in the wake of revolutionary situations in Austria and in all of Germany, which were contained largely because of the efforts of the moderate and reformist leaderships of the Social Democratic parties in both countries. In fact in Germany, the right wing of the Social Democratic Party was responsible for the assassination of the revolutionary leaders of the Spartakusbund, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, in January 1919, following a failed attempt at an insurrection in Berlin.

The year 1919 was one of upheaval almost everywhere in Europe. It was the year when French forces mutinied against their capitalist government's intervention in the Russian civil war. A year when the British Labour Party emerged as a major force in the politics of that country and huge demonstrations opposed British intervention on the side of the counterrevolutionary Whites in the Russian civil war. (Meanwhile the U.S. government had troops in northern and eastern Russia, supporting the "Contras" of those days.) And in Latin America there were general strikes in Argentina, Chile, and Peru.

Communist International and American Communist Party

The year 1919 also saw the founding of the Third, or Communist, International, under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky. And in the United States, the Communist Party was begun (though it was divided and remained underground for some time). Participating in that historic effort were figures like James P. Cannon, Vincent Raymond Dunne, and Carl Skoglund, who later became founders of the American Trotskyist movement with which our magazine identifies. (We print in this issue an interview with Skoglund that largely focuses on the 1919 rail strike and gives a first-hand feeling of what that turbulent year was like for worker

militants facing the employers' postwar "open shop" drive against the unions.)

The 1919 Steel Strike

It was also the year of the "Great Steel Strike," about which we are pleased to carry a report by a Pittsburgh area high school student "75 years after." In the steel mills most of the unskilled and semi-skilled workers were recent immigrants, especially from Eastern Europe. As Samuel Yellen explains in his book *American Labor Struggles, 1877-1934*, this part of the workforce, the so-called "hunkies," walked out "almost solidly in protest against its chronic grievances" (the 12-hour day, the 7-day week, wages below the subsistence level, stubborn company resistance against any attempts at unionization, and harsh company reprisals for such attempts).

As Yellen further notes: "The response to the strike call by the immigrants...lent itself easily to the propagation of the idea that the strike was 'alien' rather than 'American'; for the public was victim to the after-war hysteria against everything alien." This frame of mind of course was whipped up by the media, government officials, and all other agents and agencies of the employing class, with some of the clergy (like the "religious Right" of today) being among the most vicious.

Postwar Hysteria Against "Aliens"

Yellen describes the atmosphere of 1919 this way:

With strikes among the railroad workers only recently smothered, with the strikes of the Boston police in September 1919, and of the bituminous coal miners in November, with a Labour government threatening in England and Bolshevik rule actually existing in Russia, the popular mind was panicky and peculiarly receptive to any charges of "un-Americanism," "radicalism," or "revolution." (*American Labor Struggles*, p. 270.)

A Strike Wave of 4 Million Workers

Philip Foner devoted an entire volume to the period right after World War I, focusing mainly on 1919. In the preface to that volume, the

eighth in his multivolume *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, Foner made the apt observation that

rarely has labor in the United States exploded with such fury as in the aftermath of the Great War [sic]. In 1919 American workers staged an unprecedented series of uprisings which, if only temporarily, vigorously challenged employers' control of the workplace. During 1919 labor unrest swept across the United States as *four million* workers walked off the job in order to consolidate wartime victories and win new gains. *The "strike craze" affected more workers than during any previous period in American history* [emphasis added — Eds.]. The scale and intensity of the labor struggles reflected not only the wartime growth of union strength but also the determination of employers to wipe out labor's wartime gains and to set the pattern for postwar relations on an entirely different basis...In this determination they were most often fully supported by the authorities...and a media which most often backed the industrialists and joined them in disseminating anti-Bolshevik propaganda that denied the legitimacy of labor's protests.

Among the strike struggles and other events of 1919 reflected in Foner's table of contents, aside from those we have already mentioned, were the Seattle general strike, the Boston telephone strike as well as the Boston police strike, streetcar strikes in Chicago, Denver, Knoxville, and Kansas City, clothing and textile workers' strikes, including the Lawrence strike (in Massachusetts), the Palmer raids, the arrest of Sacco and Vanzetti, and the employers' open shop drive.

Setting the tone for the year, as it opened, were two general strikes whose character was virtually unprecedented in North America — in Seattle and in Winnipeg, Canada. George Saunders gives a description of the Seattle general strike, largely based on an article by Rob Rosenthal from *Labor's Heritage*, Fall 1992. We are grateful to the left socialist publication *Canadian Dimension* for permission to reprint excerpts from its coverage about the Winnipeg general strike. □

Nigerian Oil Strike Ends, Political Crisis Continues

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Abacha, the current military ruler, has promised a new process leading to a democratic government.

The oil workers' strike was a direct response to the SAP and the military's failure to honor the elections. While the strike was broken, the workers still desperately need international solidarity. Many of the strike's leaders are still being held by the military. You can take two immediate actions to support them. First, you

can write to the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1333 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 10036, and demand the release of all political prisoners, especially the democratically elected leaders of Nupeng and Pengassan. Second, you can contribute to the Nigerian Labor Union Solidarity Fund (NLUS FUND). The fund was started by the World Union of Nigerians, a Twin Cities-based group that supports the pro-democracy struggle within Nigeria. You may contact the group (or mail them your do-

nation) at World Union of Nigerians, 2147 University Ave., Suite 101, P.O. Box 14266, Saint Paul, MN 55114. You may also call them at (612) 776-4997.

The crisis in Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa and Latin America, is due to imperialism and the barbarism of the capitalist world system. The need for a revolutionary Marxist program and organization has never been greater. □

A New Low in Capitalist Politics — Opportunity for a Labor Party Greater Than Ever

Continued from page 3

never work, and ultimately the Republicans may not have done their class a service by refusing to enact it. Now the struggle for universal national health insurance will continue unabated, and working people have seen in practice that the Democrats are unable to provide it.

The Bankruptcy of the Twin Capitalist Parties

Some reactionary journalists, such as George Will and William Buckley, are interpreting the 1994 election as continued evidence that the American people agree with their racist, sexist, anti-worker ideas. However, the victorious Republican politicians themselves, including Speaker-to-be Gingrich and Robert Dole of Kansas, who will be majority leader in the Senate, recognize that ideology played a very small role in the GOP sweep, and that the most popular Republican politicians are those who are perceived as less ideological and more pragmatic — such as Christie Whitman and New York City Mayor Rudolf Giuliani (who endorsed Mario Cuomo's unsuccessful bid for re-election).

Actually, the notion that there is a fundamental ideological difference between the Democratic and Republican parties does not hold water. Historically each of the twin capitalist parties in the U.S. has contained a wide spectrum of views. There began to be a change in the mid-1960s, when Barry Goldwater attempted to drive liberals such as then-New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller out of the Republican Party, so that the GOP would offer "a choice, not an echo." (At the same time some social democratic elements in the labor bureaucracy, and later the McGovernites, raised again the hopeless prospect of "reforming" the Democratic Party, of trying to make it a vehicle for more progressive politics.) To the extent that any change occurred at all, the Southern segregationists, beginning with Strom Thurmond in 1964, moved to the Republican Party as African American elected officials from both Northern and Southern cities rose to prominence in the Democratic Party. Prior to the 1960s, however, the Republicans were, if anything, less hostile to African Americans than the Democrats.

Though some ideological polarization was necessary to include African Americans and

other people of color within the capitalist political framework, the most astute capitalist politicians recognize that the inclusion of a broad spectrum of ideological opinion in each party insures political stability, regardless of who holds a congressional majority or who sits in the White House. In spite of Newt Gingrich's rather silly comments about Bill and Hillary Clinton being "countercultural McGovernicks," Clinton's opinions and actions show him to be little different from his Republican predecessor. He has been no slower than George Bush to use military force; not only does he support capital punishment, as governor of Arkansas he signed several death warrants. On issues affecting working people, Clinton has clearly shown which side he is on — management's. He saw to it that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was put into effect, and he is now pushing for approval of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, a NAFTA on a world scale. He made no special effort to push legislation through Congress that would have banned the use of scabs, or "replacement workers," in labor disputes.

Voters Reject Far-Right Oliver North

The most extreme reactionary candidates fielded by the Republican Party did not share in their party's overall success in 1994, and a number of the labor officialdom's favorite Democrats were re-elected. We have mentioned Frank Lautenberg, but also Dianne Feinstein of California and Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York were re-elected to the Senate. Like Lautenberg, they are liberals — politicians who mask their pro-business policies with pro-labor rhetoric. In Virginia, super-reactionary Oliver North was unable to defeat Charles Robb, Lyndon Johnson's son-in-law, in spite of Robb's well-deserved reputation as a corrupt politician.

Clearly, working people are looking for answers, and they know that they cannot find them in the false ideologies of liberalism and conservatism, nor in the twin parties of capitalist "stability," the Democrats and Republicans.

A poll taken about six weeks before the election revealed that a majority of voters are willing to consider voting for a "third party." Indeed in 1992 nearly one out of five cast a ballot for Ross Perot.

A Labor Party Can Fill the Vacuum

Since it has become clear that Perot has no more to offer than the Democrats or Republicans, a political vacuum exists — the question is, what will fill it? This is the challenge facing the labor movement and the opportunity facing Labor Party Advocates.

If the 1994 elections proved anything, they proved the utter futility of continuing to work within the Democratic Party. Democratic politicians no longer even *promise* positive change for working people, let alone deliver on their promises. If the labor leadership continues to hitch its wagon to the dead horse of the Democratic Party, it will lose whatever shreds of credibility it continues to enjoy. As the trade unions fail to organize the unorganized — and therefore continue to lose members — and as rank-and-file trade unionists refuse to follow their officials' political recommendations, the unions can no longer deliver the votes to the Democrats, and the Democrats feel even less of an obligation to organized labor than before. They adopt more and more reactionary policies, thinking that labor has no other political alternative. That will prove to be a fatal error.

The labor party message is reaching a receptive audience in all parts of the country. While the Democrats are busy trying to prove how pro-Big Business they are, taking the votes of workers and people of color for granted, rank-and-file workers, prominent officials, and whole union locals are signing up with Labor Party Advocates. They understand that we need a party which will not take us for granted, that will not talk down to us, that will not make empty promises to us, because it will *be* us. Some officials may argue that a labor party may be a nice idea, but voting Democratic is *realistic*. What November 8, 1994, proved beyond any and all doubt is that voting Democratic is *not* realistic. If our needs, hopes, and concerns are going to be addressed in the political arena, we will have to do it ourselves. And, to borrow a phrase from Tom Golisano, Independent-Fusion candidate for governor of New York, there are a lot more of us than there are of them. □

November 13, 1994

Convención Nacional Democrática Opts for Civil Insurgency

Continued from page 7

to the roof of the palace looking down upon a carpet of hats, and bright colors. The plaza next to the main cathedral filled with plastic bags, fruit peelings, newspapers, and tamale husks. People crouched or sat on the floor, clapping and craning their necks to see the podium.

The speeches began with a ceremony by an indigenous religious leader. All the speakers, except for two, Rosario Ibarra de Piedra and Amado Avendaño, were indigenous people. They spoke of the many years of humiliation and suffering. They spoke of prophecies, and the fulfillment of a prophecy that their sun would rise again.

II

There was a long communique from the EZLN to the marchers. This time, it had the single signature of the Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee [Spanish initials, CCRJ]. Reporters had complained that at a recent Zapatista ceremony Sub-Comandante Insurgente Marcos was nowhere to be seen, and only in-

indigenous commanders addressed the crowd. (The elaborate rumor mill in Mexico said that Marcos had been bought off and awarded a huge estate in Panama with thousands of head of cattle.)

The CCRI said the following: "Since the beginning of the year the voice of a Mexican has chosen our armed path so that through him our word could be heard. The skin of this man is light and through his previous passage through these lands, he became a part of us. His heart is indigenous like that of any of our dead and his spirit is dark-skinned like the bowels of these lands. He is no longer what he was before. He does not exist. He does not have a name anchored in a past. He has no profile in history. He does not have, through his own choice, a tomorrow. In us, he is. All of us are all of us and so is he. His eyes are ours, our mouth speaks in his lips and in his steps are our steps. He does not exist, we exist. He does not live, we live. He does not speak, we speak. That is how our word decided to come to you... There are those who have white skin and the pain of the dark skin. With these skins is our struggle. And there are those who have a dark skin and the white arrogance; our fire is against them.

"Our armed walk of hope is not against the 'mestizo' (mixed blood): it is against the race of money. It is not against the color of the skin; it is against the color of money. It is not against a foreign language, but against the language of money. That is why our army is of National Liberation. We struggle for the indigenous people. But not just for them, also for the peasants without land, for the agricultural workers, for the workers in the city, for the humiliated women, for the forgotten elderly, for the children without a future, for the unemployed, for the teachers, for the students, for the housewives, for all those who have poverty for the present and dignity for the future. Ours is not the Zapatista Army of Chiapas Liberation. Ours is the Zapatista Army of National Liberation. And until there is democracy, liberty, and justice in all the corners of our nation which is Mexico, our red star with five points will continue to wave over a black flag and the Zapatistas will remain in the Mexican mountains."

II
At different points along the march, light-skinned volunteers had prepared plastic bags of fresh water. Various times, they pulled a plastic bag from a marcher who grabbed it hurriedly. "No, not them, don't give it to them." When asked, they said they couldn't tell the difference between the marchers and the dark-skinned beggars who fill the streets of San Cristóbal.

III
"502 years of resistance," said Avendaño. "The patience is unimaginable. Sunken into the deepest oppression, it was the indigenous people who shook the country awake. It is to them we owe the fact that we have finally stopped bowing our heads in shame and begun to fight... They have set an example for the entire country...for the entire world..."

October 13, 1994

The Convention delegates left early this morning for the jungle, negotiating bus fare until the last moment. San Cristóbal is silent — like the eye of a hurricane, like the eerie moments before a storm. The clouds travel down from the mountains and like huge curtains open and close the sky.

Rocky Road to Aguascalientes...

In the daylight, the road to Aguascalientes seems easier, perhaps because one can expect the bumps ahead or because the sharpness of the curves can be anticipated. The road winds high into the mountains, and perhaps for that reason there is a heightened level of concern; one can see the long fall downward.

I
Although it arrived safely, the CND was given a long hard look by the EZLN and took a fall. The heady enthusiasm and strained debate of San Cristóbal became a mute silence as convention delegates listened to Sub-Comandante Marcos take the CND to task. "You met here and decided to suspend the session at 12 noon. You did not define the Presidencial (the steering committee), you did not call for the second session, and each one of you left with your own understanding of what the Convention was. To this day in San Cristóbal there are those who ask whether the CND is an organization which is between the EZLN and the Federal Army. Others say that it is really an organization which gathers food for the EZLN. Other delegates believe it is a solidarity organization which writes leaflets and organizes marches in favor of the EZLN. It's not clear really... That is how you left here..."

"The CND should not be subordinate to a political party...it is the political parties that should be subordinate and support the CND... We believe that the peaceful struggle has not ended; the struggle for a democratic transition is not just for elections...if Cárdenas [or Clinton or Che Guevara] had won the Mexican presidency [any one of them] would have to comply with the program of the CND... The problem is no one knows what the CND wants... We want to say clearly that the EZLN will not be a card in the deck negotiated by the PRD with the government and we will do whatever is necessary so that the CND is not one as well. I want to say clearly to you that we have every right to aspire that our thoughts and our form of struggle or point of view convince more people in the state of Chiapas, convince the CND, convince the country, Latin America, the Europeans.

"We have a right to aspire that Zapatista thought be the vanguard, not just of the state, [but] of the country, the continent, the whole world. No one can deny us that right. In any case, show us with deeds, that it [Zapatista thought and the Zapatista form of struggle] is no good. With deeds... Meet together, come to an agreement. If the majority decides you are a collective reading club, be what you can be. Because everyone comes to us from all sides to ask if the Convention agreed on one thing or

another, the parties come to curse the ultra-left, and the ultra-left comes to curse the political parties. Maybe what we could do is get a peace commissioner and a mediator for you, especially for the delegation from Mexico City; so that you can come to an agreement. We believe in you, those of you who have no party. The CND cannot follow behind a party, or the EZLN. The CND should be a gathering of strong struggles, but only the forces which have commitment to the CND can direct it... take the CND, we will obey the CND..."

"The CND will not die. The great figureheads, the great leaders of the CND can leave and the CND will continue, simply because this country needs another door, and the organizations of the past are no longer that door. You can understand this now, or in three or four years, at some hour when you discover that something new must be done, something different... We have the right to this Convention being Zapatista, not armed. That it be Zapatista in the sense that it seek out a new political relationship, not just for the exterior, but within human relations. A new form of viewing the revolutionary struggle..."

II
Within the long speech was the history of how the CND was constructed, an equally strong criticism for the "ultras" ("you can be as ultra as you want, but here we are the radicals"), and a reaffirmation of the EZLN's commitment to the CND, in spite of all its problems.

Comandante Tacho followed Sub-Comandante Marcos. He acknowledged he did not have as much formal education as those in the audience but that he still had lessons to give. He talked about how the EZLN had politicized, how it was that the base made the decisions, how much time and effort it had taken. Then he waved his hand at the large number of representatives from the base communities who sat in the upper tiers of the amphitheater with bandanas over their faces.

Their numbers had doubled. Comandante Tacho explained the successful organizing techniques of the EZLN with great patience and wisdom.

III
The delegates listened quietly. One turned to the other and whispered rather loudly. "Is it possible that these indigenous people are teaching college graduates how to organize? Is it possible that we had to travel all the way to the jungle to learn how to fight?"

The other individual shook his head and kept his eyes glued to the podium.

IV
The delegates then formed a line in order to take the microphone. Some made proposals, others said clearly they accepted the criticism, many called again and again for unity. Ofelia Medina (the actress) stood up late in the night and made a dramatic call to respond with a cogent national plan for unity. Most sat quietly until Comandante Tacho took the stage again.

Of all the times people had come to visit, now was the time for a celebration, he said. We should have a dance, he said. When the vote was taken, everyone was in favor, and the session ended.

V
The dance began. There was a four or five man band on the podium now. They were called the "Transgressors of the Law," the name the PRI had given the EZLN in the early days of January. There was an accordion, a marimba, an electric guitar, and a set of drums.

The band wore ski masks. They had quite a bit of experience and were not intimidated by the now-solemn crowd of 1,000.

One delegate came and sat next to me with a deep sigh. "I think Marcos was too hard on the D.F.[the Federal District, i.e., Mexico City]," she volunteered. "Maybe not," she spoke to herself. "One thing I can say," she said as she lit a cigarette. "My conscience is clean. I've been working damned hard, everyone in my delegation has been working their butts off. The shoe doesn't fit on me, so I am at peace with myself."

She walked off later and began to dance.

VI
The new politics in Mexico had armed Zapatistas dancing with mud-covered urban dwellers to the electrical sounds of the Transgressors of the Law. Groups of 8 or 10 Zapatistas sat together in a corner of the amphitheater and craned their necks to spot potential partners across the room.

When the music began again they got up in a unified motion. Convention delegates turned their heads, believing there was something important happening.

There wasn't. The Zapatistas were trying to beat one another to the dance floor. They danced until 4 a.m.

VII
In the "posadas," the tin-roofed structures put together with cut logs, little groups of delegates met in intense conversations with the Zapatistas. They talked about the latest news in the city, and exchanged organizing news, and news about the most popular Mexican songs on the charts.

In the new politics of the Zapatistas, there is open and blunt criticism, a rejection of anti-

quoted dogma, dances, poetry, music, a call for human rights groups to monitor their activities, and civic action combined with armed struggle. There are 16-year-olds with a critique of neo-liberalism and a penchant for cumbias. Zapatista politics are politics filled with contradictions, problems, heroism, pragmatism, and a demand for more action and less rhetoric. They are politics which bite with their fervor, and inspire with their passion.

VIII
The official word of the PRI is that there is no troop movement in the state of Chiapas. When we returned to the city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, we met up with at least 8 large army trucks filled with soldiers who waved their high-powered rifles and grinned at the traffic below them. □

October 19, 1994

A New and Democratic South Africa?

Continued from page 9

working class. If that scenario unfolds, the ANC would be condemned and castigated as an elitist pro-capitalist organization that has finally seen fit to join hands with the privileged white class at the expense of the working class and the poor masses. This could lead to the further alienation of organized labor and the intensification of the class struggle. Whether that struggle would in fact take a socialist dimension and not simply focus on purely union interests is another matter.

The radicalization of organized labor in South Africa will be greatly influenced by socio-economic conditions prevailing at the time. It will also depend on the configuration of forces on the left and their organic relationship with organized labor. At the present time, the left is on

the defensive in South Africa, following the devastating collapse of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe and, not least of all major events in the history of the country, the tragic death of Chris Hani, an internationally respected socialist and committed revolutionary. When Hani, the South African Communist Party chief and ANC National Executive Committee member, was assassinated in April 1994, the left lost one of its most militant and committed advocates. This was one revolutionary individual who was ardently trying to promote a socialist agenda and in fact, just two weeks before he fell to an assassin's bullet, was in the process of canvassing for a national conference of all forces and individuals on the left to discuss and redefine the socialist program in South Africa. His revo-

lutionary dream never materialized, but the militant reaction of the workers and young comrades to his untimely death made it abundantly clear that the socialist cause he had so courageously espoused had deep political resonances and a potential for proliferation.

At the present historical conjuncture, a socialist victory is not imminent in South Africa. There is, however, a great potential for its relevance and legitimacy, because the legacy of apartheid, in the form of extreme structural inequalities and rampant institutional racism, is a reality of the South African political landscape that will inevitably call for an intensification of the struggle for a more humane and egalitarian society. □

October 1917: A Genuine, Popular Movement from Below

Continued from page 26

dating his power. How does one explain the mountain of Bolshevik party corpses over which Stalin climbed if he was Lenin's heir?

Let me draw an imaginary analogy with our own revolution. Supposing the following happened: George Washington has died during his term in office. An ambitious politician by name of Aaron Burr has assumed power. Here I must apologize to Gore Vidal, who made Burr a hero and Jefferson a villain in his novel. But bear with me. After thirty-five ballots for the vice-presidency there was still a tie between Burr and Jefferson. Burr finally persuades two delegates jealous of Jefferson to vote for him instead of for Jefferson, and for a short time these three men, called a "threesome" in English, or a "troika" in Russian, share power. Burr then

exiles Jefferson and proceeds to consolidate his power by using the Alien and Sedition Acts against his opponents. One of the weapons he employs against them is calumny. He tells the people that his personal enemies were all in the pay of George III during the Revolution. This enables him to jail all his opponents and to begin a purge of Washington's friends. He kills every member of George Washington's cabinet, all the leaders of the Federalist Party, all former delegates to the Continental Congress, every governor of the thirteen states, every senior officer who had served in the War of Independence, every signer of the Declaration of Independence and all delegates to the Constitutional Convention — and he does all this in the name of George Washington. Then we read some years later that a Polish historian by the name of

Ryszard Pipensky has just written a book arguing that Burr was a true heir of George Washington. Would we not be a bit skeptical of such a conclusion?

In addition to the Russian Revolution, our speakers will discuss its aftermath. No one can predict the final outcome of the profound changes that are taking place in Mother Russia. But one need not be a prophet to foresee the importance for all of us, of the attempted coups, the rise of Zhirinovskiy, or the raging inflation that are bedeviling the Yeltsin regime.

We are convinced this conference will make a contribution to an understanding of that past which has created the present. And, if so, we will not be doomed to repeat it. □

The Bolshevik Revolution Did Not Create a Totalitarian State

Continued from page 28

I am willing to believe what I have read, that there is a multitude of men and women in Russia who live in immured and depressed misery, just as there is a multitude in exile. But this other multitude that walks the streets, gathers in parks, clubs, theaters, frequents museums, is a reality, as is their unbowed, unapologetic mien.

His impression was that the revolution had generated among masses of people a “release of courage, energy, confidence in life,” and that although communism was nonexistent in any literal sense, “its future is of less account than is the fact of this achieved revolution of heart and mind, this liberation of a people to consciousness of themselves as a determining power in the shaping of their ultimate fate.

Consider the remarkable letter reproduced by Olga Chernov, like her husband Victor Chernov (exiled leader of the Socialist Revolutionary Party), a bitter critic of Bolshevik rule. The letter was sent to her by a friend, a young peasant-turned-worker and former SR party member named Katia. “Life is always hard,” she writes, describing difficult living conditions. She has taken her young son and left her Communist husband because she felt he was “profiting from injustice and privileges.” Katia asserts: “But we are going to do away with these new privileges as well as the old! We workers are strong. I am staying with those who work and suffer and believe in the future.” She writes that “we are destroying the past to construct the future, but sometimes the destruction gets a bit too energetic.” Specifically, she complains: “we sometimes destroy those feelings considered like the rest of the past *bourgeois* — sensibility, kindness, tenderness, and also the courage to tell the truth when it runs contrary to the dominating ideas.” Yet she remains committed to the ideals of the Bolshevik Revolution: “I cannot describe my state of mind to you in a letter, sometimes my strength is lacking for the double — the multiple — fight. For I have to fight for my life and my son’s, and I also have to fight for our class and our Party, side by side with those who — in my opinion — are turning it from the right path.” Working in a factory by day, Katia attends evening classes at the Workers’ University, studying science but also the literature of ancient Greece. Referring to the legend of the Golden Fleece and the myth of the Garden of Golden Apples, she writes:

I am not so simple as I used to be. I know that our generation will never reach the Fleece or the Apple. We thought we held it in our hands, but it rolled away into the dirt and blood. Then, still splashed and stained, we saw how it shone as it rolled along. It is the light that leads us.

Apple — red apple,
Where are you rolling?...

Do you still remember that tune which everyone used to sing? That apple is rolling towards the happiness of the whole world, dear Olga Elis-sevna, I am certain of that. Will my son live to see that day?

There were others who also had hopes for the future. The former Menshevik Simon Liberman, who worked as a “nonparty specialist” for the Soviet government from 1918 to 1926 (and then fled abroad to the freer atmosphere of France and the United States) later critically characterized “Russia’s socialists of the non-Bolshevik variety” as people who had “failed to place themselves at the head of the popular forces, which, at this juncture of history, longed above all for a firm leadership to take them onward to well-defined ends.” Only the Bolsheviks under Lenin had been prepared to do this, and many intellectuals such as Liberman decided to work with them because, in Liberman’s own words, “they realized that the new government, no matter how bad, was nevertheless a government of the people and for the people.” Also looking back after his own disillusionment, in the anti-Communist classic *The God That Failed*, U.S. journalist Louis Fischer still termed this pre-1930 period as “a churning process which ground the former ruling castes into dust and brought vital new forces to the surface,” constituting “an experiment in the interest of the downtrodden majority” which “glorified the common man and offered him land, bread, peace, a job, a house, security, education, health, art, and happiness.”

Similarly the British trade union delegation which published its findings in 1925 asserted that “the Soviet system of representation and its scheme of constitutional and civil rights, so far from being undemocratic in the widest sense of the word, gives in many respects a more real and reasonable opportunity of participation in public than does parliamentary and [pluralist] party government” existing in countries such as Britain. The delegation was, nonetheless, quite critical of the Soviet regime since — in the words of the report — “such participation is still severely restricted” because “the system has been kept under close control by its [Communist Party] originators.” The delegation added, however, that this Communist control was exercised “with the tacit consent of an immense majority of their fellow electors.” More than this, the Communist Party’s “permanence in power” did not seem a necessary feature of the Soviet system to the delegation. In fact, it predicted the eventual emergence of “a two-party system and a constitutional opposition.” In part this view was based on the development of the “independent initiative” reflected in the embryonic Left Opposition of Trotsky, representing

what the delegation called “liberal non-conformity against die-hard communism,” and attracting “the younger and more progressive elements of the party.” The report concluded that in the foreseeable future “there are certainly [in the USSR] as great — and possibly greater — possibilities than elsewhere in respect of popular government, political peace, and social progress.”

Reality unfolded in a different manner, in which the negative potential of political repression and terror triumphed over the positive potential of political pluralism and liberty. There is not enough time to offer here even a bare sketch of the economic, social, and political pressures and counter-pressures — globally as well as in the USSR — that were at play in this situation, nor is there time to review the inner-party struggles through which Stalinism triumphed over the resistance of a very substantial number of Bolshevik cadres. The simple point I have sought to make here is that Stalinist totalitarianism arose neither directly nor inevitably from the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

Summarizing the realities of the early 1920s indicated here, Hannah Arendt wrote in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*:

At the moment of Lenin’s death the roads were still open. The formation of workers, peasants, and middle classes need not necessarily have led to the class struggle which had been characteristic of European capitalism. Agriculture could still be developed on a collective, co-operative, or private basis, and the national economy was still free to follow a socialist, state-capitalist, or free-enterprise pattern. None of these alternatives would have automatically destroyed the new structure of the country.

Stalin’s victory in the inner-party struggles of the late 1920s, according to Arendt, resulted in precisely such an outcome: policies that liquidated the remnants of independent power inside the soviets, murderously liquidated vestiges of peasant autonomy, eliminated structures that could maintain solidarity and class-consciousness among the working class, ruthlessly suppressed any glimmerings of national autonomy (let alone national independence!) among the various non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union, and repeatedly sought to wipe out — politically and physically — all real, imagined, and potential opposition within the Communist Party itself. One can argue, in the manner of J. Arch Getty, that the Stalin regime was far less efficient and single-minded in carrying out this totalitarian project than Arendt suggests. But it is difficult to disagree with her insistence that we must reject the notion that “Leninism leads to Stalinism.” The reality is more tragically complex, more interesting, more hopeful than that. □

How Trotsky Foretold the Course of the Russian Revolution

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(as in England and France) in order to seize the existing state apparatus and politically consolidate their economic position as the new ruling class. The bourgeoisie did not have to radically purge the entire state apparatus because the growth of capitalist relations over several centuries had "bourgeoisified" the bureaucracy of the absolutist state. The noted Belgian Marxist economist Ernest Mandel summed it up in his recent study of bureaucracy:

To a large degree, the modern bourgeois bureaucracy developed in a straight — if "self-reforming" — line from the bureaucracy of the absolutist state. [*Money and Power*, London: Verso, 1992, p. 184.]

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx pointed out just how closely this alienated, parasitic, bureaucratic state machinery was the expression of the class interests of the bourgeoisie in France from 17th-century absolutism to the 19th-century bourgeois republic.

All revolutions perfected this machine instead of breaking it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded the possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor.

But under the absolute monarchy, during the first revolution, under Napoleon, bureaucracy was only the means of preparing the class rule of the bourgeoisie. Under the Restoration, under Louis Philippe, under the parliamentary republic, it was the instrument of the ruling class, however much it strove for power of its own. [Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 186.]

It was from comparing the historical experience of the bourgeois revolutions, in taking over and utilizing the existing state bureaucratic apparatus, with the first attempt by the workers to hold state power in the Paris Commune of 1871, that Marx and Engels drew the lesson that, unlike in the bourgeois revolutions,

the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes. [Engels, 1872 preface to the *Communist Manifesto*; Pathfinder edition, p. 13.]

Engels explained why in more detail in his 1891 introduction to Marx's *The Civil War in France*:

In order not to lose again its only just conquered supremacy, this working class must, on the one hand, do away with all the old repressive machinery previously used against itself, and, on the other, safeguard itself against its own deputies and officials...What had been the characteristic attribute of the former [type of] state? Society had created its own organs to look after its common interests, originally through simple division of labour. But these organs, at whose head was the state power, had in the course of time, in pursuance of their own special interests, transformed themselves from the servants of society into the masters of society. [Progress Publishers edition (Moscow, 1971), p. 32.]

Engels cited several measures taken by the Commune to combat what had been an "inevitable transformation in all previous states," bureaucratic domination. First, the Commune filled all posts through democratic elections subject to instant recall at any time by the workers. Secondly, it limited official salaries to no more than the wages received by other workers.

As the experience of the proletariat holding state power in the 20th century would later reveal, these initial measures of the Commune, taken by themselves, would prove insufficient to prevent consolidation of bureaucratic rule and political expropriation of the proletariat in the Russian workers' state.

Low Productivity of Labor Secured Bureaucratic Victory

The key to understanding why this was so lies in the war-ravaged and isolated Russian proletariat's inability to carry out the main task of a rapid expansion of the production of goods and services. Marx emphasized that

the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible. [Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, p. 33; emphasis added.]

Marx clearly spelled out just what he meant by growth of the productive forces a decade later,

the growth of the productive forces of labour means merely that less direct labour is required in order to make a larger product. [Marx, *Grundrisse*, New York: Harper, 1971, p. 150.]

This means above all an increase in production sufficient to shorten the workday, a precondition for mobilizing workers to run the state through self-organization.

To economize on labour time means to increase the amount of free time, i.e. time for the complete development of the individual, which again reacts as the greatest productive force on the productive force of labour. [*Ibid.*, p. 149.]

If the productive forces of society stagnate or production falls, then the resultant scarcity guarantees a new empowerment and revival of the old bureaucratic apparatus. As early as 1845 Marx was convinced that

this development of productive forces...is an absolutely necessary practical premise [of Communism], because without it *want* is merely made general, and with destitution the struggle for necessities would begin again, and all the old filthy business would necessarily be restored. [Marx and Engels, "The German Ideology," in *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 49.]

Nearly a century later Trotsky spelled out precisely just what "the old filthy business"

was that revived in the isolated Russian workers' state.

The scarcity in consumer goods and the universal struggle to obtain them generate a policeman who arrogates to himself the function of distribution. Hostile pressure from without imposes on the policeman the role of 'defender' of the country, endows him with national authority, and permits him doubly to plunder the country. [*In Defense of Marxism*, New York: Pathfinder, 1973, p. 7.]

Survival of the Law of Value vs. the Withering Away of the State

It is a fundamental tenet of scientific socialism that (aside from nature) human labor is the creator of all wealth, and that the value of commodities is, on the average, equal to the value of the labour-time necessary to create them. Commodities are exchanged, on the average, on the basis of equal amounts of labour-time embodied in them. This is the law of value. It was Marx who first noted in his 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Programme* that the law of value would necessarily survive in the immediate lower phase of the transition to communism. It was the continued world dominance of the law of value and its survival in the not-yet socialist Soviet Union that ultimately caused the collapse of the workers' state.

Engels summarizes the operation of the law of value under capitalism in his Supplement to Vol. III of Marx's *Capital*:

[The] concept of value in its material definiteness in Marx is nothing but the economic expression for the fact of the social productive power of labour as the basis of economic existence; in the final analysis the law of value dominates economic processes in a capitalist economic system, and for this economic system quite generally has the following content: the value of commodities is the specific and historical form in which the productive power of labour, in the last analysis dominating all economic processes, asserts itself as a determining factor. [*Engels on Capital*, New York: International, 1974, pp. 103-104.]

The law of value originated prior to capitalism, as much as seven thousand years ago, with the origins of commodity exchange. The operation of this law is modified by capitalism but continues to function in the distribution of consumer goods in post-capitalist societies like the former Soviet Union. It continues to operate as long as commodity production exists. As Marx's analysis in both *The Critique of the Gotha Programme* and the chapter in *Capital* on "The Fetishism of Commodities" points out, even under socialism when money has been replaced by certificates of labor-time, a form of the law of value will continue to determine distribution of consumer goods. But if post-capitalist societies are to move forward to socialism and communism, the law of value has to begin, like its political counterpart, the state, to wither away as productivity rises. Marx was

the first to outline these characteristics of the socialist transition period.

What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has *developed* on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, as it *emerges* from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges. Accordingly the individual producer receives...a certificate from society that he has furnished such and such an amount of labour [after deducting his labour for development, research, administration, social services, etc.], and with this certificate he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as the same amount of labour costs.

Here obviously the same principle prevails as that which regulates the exchange of commodities, as far as this is exchange of equal values.

What is different from capitalism is that

nothing can pass into the ownership of individuals except means of consumption. [The means of production have been socialized.] But as far as...the individual producers are concerned, the same principle prevails as in the exchange of commodity-equivalents, so much labour in one form is exchanged for an equal amount of labour in another form. Hence, equal right here is still in principle — *bourgeois right*.

But this bourgeois equal right is inherently unequal since the equality consists in the fact that measurement is made with an *equal standard*, labour, of individuals with an unequal capacity for labour and unequal needs. The survival of bourgeois right is a direct inheritance of bourgeois society, a low productivity of labor and resultant scarcity of consumer goods (relative to the abundance of communist society).

This inherently unequal bourgeois right will survive until the productive forces have grown sufficiently and human beings have so transformed themselves that

the narrow horizon of bourgeois right [can] be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability to each according to his needs! [Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, New York, 1938, pp. 8–10.]

In his 1917 work *State and Revolution*, Lenin summed up the implication of the survival of bourgeois right or law in the transition to communism and drew the following conclusions:

In its first phase, or first stage, communism *cannot* as yet be fully ripe economically and entirely free from traditions and traces of capitalism. Hence the interesting phenomenon that communism in its first phase retains “the narrow horizon of *bourgeois right*.” Of course, bourgeois right in regard to distribution of articles of *consumption* inevitably presupposes the existence of the *bourgeois state*, for right is nothing without an apparatus capable of *enforcing* the observance of the standards of right.

Consequently, not only bourgeois right, but even the bourgeois state for a certain time remains under communism, without the

bourgeoisie! [Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2 (Moscow, 1977), p. 310.]

It is precisely this *bourgeois* side of the state, the policeman overseeing the distribution of goods and wealth, and serving as the administrator of persons, that has to “wither away” in the transition to communism. Lenin cited Engels:

The first act by which the state really comes forward as the representative of the whole of society — the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society — is also its last independent act as a state. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies down of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not “abolished.” *It withers away.* [Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 1939 edition, p. 307.]

Only a rapid increase in the productive forces coupled with a conscious decision to politically draw working people into democratic participation in the administration of the state could begin a process of withering away. But only a few years after the 1917 revolution, in 1921, Lenin observed:

What we actually have is a workers’ state with this peculiarity...that it is a workers’ state with bureaucratic distortions. [Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 48.]

By 1924 the bureaucracy won its first political victory over the Communists. This victory was consolidated by the purges of 1936–37. By 1937 Trotsky noted that

the monstrous growth of state coercion in the USSR is eloquent testimony that society is *moving away* from socialism. [Trotsky’s introduction to the *Communist Manifesto*, Pathfinder edition, 1970.]

Roots of The Dual Character of the Workers’ State: Bourgeois Distribution and Proletarian Production

Essential to Trotsky’s understanding of Stalinism was his study of Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Programme* and Lenin’s *State and Revolution*, where the concept of the dual character of the workers’ state was at first implied by Marx and then more explicitly developed by Lenin. It received its highest application under Trotsky, who thereby bequeathed to us the tools to analyze the particular stage of capitalist restoration we are now witnessing in the former USSR. Trotsky began by carefully pointing out the inevitable dual character of *all* workers’ states in the transition to communism. In a chapter in *The Revolution Betrayed* called “The Dual Character of the Workers’ State” he wrote:

A socialist state even in America, on the basis of the most advanced capitalism, could not immediately provide everyone with as much as he [or she] needs, and would therefore be compelled to spur everyone to produce as much as possible. The duty of *stimulator* in these cir-



cumstances naturally falls to the state, which in its turn cannot but resort, with various changes and mitigations, to the method of labor payment worked out by capitalism. It was in this sense that Marx wrote in 1875: “Bourgeois law ... is inevitable in the first phase of communist society, in that form in which it issues after long labor pains from capitalist society. *Law can never be higher than the economic structure and the cultural development of society conditioned by that structure.*”

In explaining these remarkable lines, Lenin adds: “Bourgeois law in relation to the distribution of the objects of consumption assumes, of course, inevitably a *bourgeois state*, for law is nothing without an apparatus capable of compelling observance of its norms. It follows (we are still quoting Lenin) that under Communism not only will bourgeois law survive for a certain time, but also even a bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie!” This highly significant conclusion, completely ignored by the present official theoreticians, has a decisive significance for the understanding of the nature of the Soviet state — or more accurately, for a first approach to such an understanding. Insofar as the state which assumes the task of socialist transformation is compelled to defend inequality — that is, the material privileges of a minority — by methods of compulsion, insofar does it also remain a “bourgeois” state, even though without a bourgeoisie. These words contain neither praise nor blame: they merely name things with their real names. [Revolution Betrayed, p. 53–54.]

A Bourgeois Bureaucracy Rules a Workers’ State

Trotsky clearly asserted the *bourgeois* character of the ruling Soviet bureaucracy.

The assertion that the bureaucracy of a workers’ state has a bourgeois character must appear not only unintelligible but completely senseless to people stamped with a formal cast of mind. However, chemically pure types of state never existed and do not exist in general. The semifeudal Prussian monarchy executed the most important tasks of the bourgeoisie, but executed them in its own manner, i.e., in a feudal, not a Jacobin style. In Japan we observe even today an analogous correlation between the bourgeois character of the state and the semifeudal character of the ruling caste. But all this does not

hinder us from clearly differentiating between a feudal and a bourgeois society...

This bourgeois character of the bureaucracy is not accidental but tied up with the continued economic necessity of coercion, with the existence of a state itself.

But a workers' state does not create a new society in one day. Marx wrote that in the first period of a workers' state the *bourgeois* norms of distribution are still preserved... One has to weigh well and think this thought out to the end. The workers' state itself, as a *state*, is necessary exactly because the bourgeois norms of distribution still remain in force.

For this reason it is not just the Stalinist bureaucracy that is bourgeois, but even the revolutionary bureaucracy under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky had a bourgeois aspect.

This means that even the most revolutionary bureaucracy is to a certain degree a *bourgeois organ* in the workers' state. Of course, the *degree* of this bourgeoisification and the general tendency of development bears decisive significance. If the workers' state loses its bureaucratization and gradually falls away, this means that its development marches along the road of socialism. On the contrary, if the bureaucracy becomes ever more powerful, authoritative, privileged, and conservative, this means that in the workers' state the bourgeois tendencies grow at the expense of the socialist; in other words, that inner contradiction which to a certain degree is lodged in the workers' state from the first days of its rise does not diminish, as the "norm" demands, but increases. [Trotsky, "Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?" in *Writings... [1937-38]*, pp. 66-67; emphasis in original.]

As early as 1933 Trotsky outlined concretely what the growth of the bourgeois side of the workers' state would mean for the planned economy. The bureaucracy

by squandering an ever-bigger portion of the national income and by disrupting the basic proportions of the economy... *retards* the economic and cultural growth of the country... The further unhindered development of bureaucratism must lead inevitably to the cessation of economic and cultural growth, to a terrible social crisis and to the downward plunge of the entire society. But this would imply not only the end of bureaucratic domination. In place of the workers' state would come not 'social bureaucratic' but capitalist relations. ["The Class Nature of the Soviet State," in *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1933-34]*, New York: Pathfinder, 1972, p. 115; emphasis in original.]

The Dual Function of the Bureaucracy and the Dual Character of the Soviet Working Class

The *function* of the Soviet bureaucracy was not purely bourgeois of course. It had a duality in the interests it served, proletarian as well as bourgeois. This duality was reflected in the contradictory zigzags of its foreign and domestic policy, balancing between the imperialist world bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

As Trotsky put it, under the pressure of imperialism the

organ of the rule of the proletariat — the state — becomes an organ for pressure from imperialism (diplomacy, army, foreign trade, ideas and customs). The struggle for domination, considered on a historical scale, is between the proletariat and the world bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy is only the transmitting mechanism in this struggle.

In its capacity [as] a transmitting mechanism in the struggle, the bureaucracy leans now on the proletariat against imperialism, now on imperialism against the proletariat, in order to increase its own power.

At the same time it mercilessly exploits its role as distributor of the meager necessities of life in order to safeguard its own well-being and power. By this token the rule of the proletariat assumes an abridged, curbed, distorted character.

This meant that not only the Soviet bureaucracy had a dual character but the Soviet working class as well.

One can say with full justification that the proletariat, *ruling* in one backward and isolated country, still remains an *oppressed* class. The source of oppression is world imperialism; the mechanism of the oppression — the bureaucracy.

The recognition of the USSR as a workers' state — not a type but a mutilation of a type — does not at all signify a theoretical and political amnesty for the Soviet bureaucracy. On the contrary, its reactionary character is fully revealed only in the light of the contradiction between its antiproletarian politics and the needs of the workers' state. Only by posing the question in this manner does our exposure of the crimes of the Stalinist clique gain full motive force. *The defense of the USSR means not only the supreme struggle against imperialism, but a preparation for the overthrow of the Bonapartist bureaucracy.* [Trotsky, "Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?," *Writings... [1937-38]*, pp. 70-71; emphasis in original.]

In the same article Trotsky compared the role of the Bonapartist Stalin to the dual role of the leader of the bureaucracy of a trade union, in this case the leader of the American Federation of Labor, William Green. Trotsky noted:

The function of Stalin, like the function of Green, has a dual character. Stalin serves the bureaucracy and thus the world bourgeoisie; but he cannot serve the bureaucracy without defending the social foundation which the bureaucracy exploits in its own interests. To that extent does Stalin defend nationalized property from imperialist attacks and from the too impatient and avaricious layers of the bureaucracy itself. However, he carries through this defense with methods that prepare the general destruction of Soviet society. [Trotsky, "Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?," p. 65.]

The fall of the last Stalinist Bonapartist in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev, also signified the collapse of the dual function of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Bourgeois Bonapartism vs. Soviet Bonapartism

Trotsky extensively utilized events in the French revolution of 1789-99 as historical analogies to comprehend the degeneration of the 1917 Russian Revolution and project possible future scenarios as a guide to action for revolutionary Marxists. From the spring of 1793 until their overthrow in July 1794, the month of "Thermidor" in the French revolutionary calendar, the radical plebeian phase of the French revolution was led by Robespierre and the Jacobins. The term "Thermidorians" referred to those conservative bourgeois revolutionary forces who overthrew the radical Jacobins and ruled from 1794 to 1799 when they in turn were deposed by Napoleon. The post-revolutionary governments headed by Napoleon were the Consulate (1800-1803) and the Empire (1803-15).

While Trotsky outlined the similarities in development between the French and Russian revolutions, he also emphasized the concrete historical differences resulting from the contrasting roles of bourgeois versus proletarian state bureaucracies.

Trotsky defined Bonapartism as

a regime in which the economically dominant class, having the qualities necessary for democratic methods of government, finds itself compelled to tolerate — in order to preserve its possessions — the uncontrolled command of a military and police apparatus over it, of a crowned 'savior.' This kind of situation is created in periods when the class contradictions have become particularly acute; the aim of Bonapartism is to prevent explosions. ["Again on the Question of Bonapartism," in *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1934-35]*, pp. 206-207.]

From the standpoint that interests us, the difference in the social bases of the two Bonapartisms, of Jacobin and of Soviet origin, is much more important. In the former case, the question involved was the consolidation of the bourgeois revolution through the liquidation of its principles and political institutions. In the latter case, the question involved is the consolidation of the worker-peasant revolution through the smashing of its international program, its leading party, its soviets... ["The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism," in *Writings... [1934-35]*, p. 181]

But this consolidation of the social bases of the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions through Bonapartist regimes has radically different implications for the future fate of the two very different economies over which these respective governments and states preside.

After the profound democratic revolution, which liberates the peasants from serfdom and gives them land, the feudal counterrevolution is generally impossible. The overthrown monarchy may reestablish itself in power and surround itself with medieval phantoms. But it is already powerless to reestablish the economy of feudalism. Once liberated from the fetters of feudalism, bourgeois relations develop automatically. They can be checked by no external force; they must themselves dig their own

grave, having previously created their own gravedigger. [*Ibid.*, p. 179.]

Trotsky effectively contrasted bourgeois productive relations, which rely on the passivity of the exploited masses, with the tentativeness of proletarian production relations, which require conscious planning and self-organization of the proletariat to achieve socialism and prevent counterrevolution.

It is altogether otherwise with the development of socialist relations. The proletarian revolution not only frees the productive forces from the fetters of private ownership but also transfers them to the direct disposal of the state that it itself creates. While the bourgeois state, after the revolution, confines itself to a police role, leaving the market to its own laws, the workers' state assumes the direct role of economist and organizer. The replacement of one political regime by another exerts only an indirect and superficial influence upon market economy. On the contrary, the replacement of a workers' government by a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois government would inevitably lead to the liquidation of the planned beginnings and subsequently to the restoration of private property. *In contradistinction to capitalism, socialism is built not automatically but consciously.* Progress towards socialism is inseparable from that state power that is desirous of socialism or that is constrained to desire it. Socialism can acquire an immutable character only at a very high stage of its development, when its productive forces have far transcended those of capitalism, when the human wants of each and all can obtain bounteous satisfaction and when the state will have completely withered away, dissolving in society. But all this is still in the distant future. At the given stage of development, the socialist construction stands and falls with the workers' state. Only after thoroughly pondering the dif-

ference between the laws of the formation of bourgeois ("anarchistic") and socialist ("planned") economy is it possible to understand those limits beyond which the analogy with the Great French Revolution cannot pass. [*Ibid.*, p. 179; emphasis in original.]

The similarities between the Thermidorian decline of the French bourgeois revolution and the Russian proletarian revolution are paralleled by a decisive difference between the collapse of Napoleonic vs. Stalinist Bonapartism. The difference would be decisive for the future of the Soviet workers' state.

The peasant revolution, as well as the bourgeoisie that leaned upon it, was very well able to make its peace with the regime of Napoleon, and it was even able to maintain itself under Louis XVIII. The proletarian revolution is already exposed to mortal danger under the present regime of Stalin; it will be unable to withstand a further shift to the right. [*Ibid.*, p. 180.]

Trotsky thus very well understood the social and economic impact that a change in government could have on the workers' state and the nationalized planned economy that the workers' state guards and defends.

Political counterrevolution, even were it to recede back to the Romanov dynasty, could not reestablish feudal ownership of land. But the restoration to power of a Menshevik and Social Revolutionary bloc would suffice to obliterate the socialist construction. [*Ibid.*, p. 180.]

Collapse of Stalinist Bonapartism Was Inevitable

Trotsky considered the rule of the bureaucracy through the Stalinist government to be a regime of crisis, one that could not long endure and whose downfall was inevitable, whether brought about by a workers' political revolution or a bourgeois counterrevolution.

Bonapartism, by its very essence, cannot long maintain itself; a sphere balanced on the point of a pyramid must invariably roll down on one side or the other. But it is precisely at this point, as we have already seen, that the historical analogy runs up against its limits. Napoleon's downfall did not, of course, leave untouched the relations between the classes; but in its essence the social pyramid of France retained its bourgeois character. *The inevitable collapse of Stalinist Bonapartism would immediately call into question the character of the USSR as a workers' state.* A socialist economy cannot be constructed without a socialist power. The fate of the USSR as a socialist state depends upon that political regime that will arise to replace Stalinist Bonapartism. Only the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat can

regenerate the soviet system, if it is again able to mobilize around itself the toilers of the city and the village. [*Ibid.*, p. 181-182; emphasis added and in original.]

A governmental "sphere" balanced for 67 years on the social pyramid of a workers' state may seem impossibly long for a human lifetime, yet in historical terms it is relatively brief. Further, as Trotsky pointed out above, while the collapse of a bourgeois governmental "sphere" can leave the class structure of the bourgeois state and its economy (social pyramid) relatively unaffected, the replacement of a Stalinist government of a workers' state with a capitalist government will result in a collapse of the workers' state and its planned economy.

The inevitable collapse of the Stalinist political regime will lead to the establishment of Soviet democracy only in the event that the removal of Bonapartism comes as the conscious act of the proletarian vanguard. In all other cases, in place of Stalinism there could only come the fascist-capitalist counterrevolution. [*Ibid.*, p. 182-183.]

If we consider the resurgence of neo-Nazis after German reunification in 1990, the genocidal war of "ethnic cleansing" in the former Yugoslavia, and the Yeltsin government's increasing attempts to curb even bourgeois democratic rights, along with the rise of fascist demagogues like Zhirinovskiy in Russia, we can see the general validity and continuing relevance of Trotsky's predictions and analysis.

In an article written a few weeks later, responding to critics challenging his use of the term Bonapartism Trotsky pointed out:

In the era of Lenin, Soviet Bonapartism was a *possibility*; in the era of Stalin, it has become a *reality*. ["Again on the Question of Bonapartism," in *Writings...[1934-35]*, p. 208.]

Paraphrasing, we can now say that in the era of Trotsky, the *collapse* of Soviet Bonapartism was a *possibility*, in the era of Yeltsin it is a *reality*. The successive Stalinist Bonapartist regimes of Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev have been replaced by the *capitalist* Bonapartist, Boris Yeltsin.

Productivity of Labor Decisive in the Struggle Between Capitalism and Socialism

Why did Trotsky believe that a mere change of government would be sufficient to overthrow the workers' state? Because unlike the proletarian revolutions of the 20th century, all the *successful* bourgeois revolutions from the 16th to the 19th century *began in countries that were already the most economically advanced of their day*. At the time of the French Revolution the productivity of labor of already existing capitalist private property was so vastly superior to the semi-feudal world around it, that the counterrevolution of the Restoration in France that overthrew Napoleon was forced to maintain bourgeois private property in production so as to maintain a competitive edge with other na-



tions, including those Napoleon had revolutionized from above through military conquest.

But in the 20th century the proletarian revolution began not in the nations of most advanced capitalism, but rather in *the most backward imperialist power* in the world, Russia. This difference meant that unlike 18th century bourgeois revolutionary France, 20th century proletarian Russia was surrounded by imperialist nations possessing a *higher* productivity of labor than the revolution. Stalin postulated raising Russia to a higher productivity than imperialism through autarky, relying solely on Russia's resources to build "socialism in a single country." Trotsky defended the Bolshevik perspective that survival of the revolution was only possible through its extension to the imperialist centers.

Trotsky summed up the contradictions of Soviet production in *The Revolution Betrayed*:

Itself born of the contradiction between high world productive forces and capitalist forms of property, the October revolution produced in its turn a contradiction between low national productive forces and socialist forms of property...

The juridical and political standards set up by the revolution exercised a progressive action upon the backward economy, but upon the other hand they themselves felt the lowering influence of that backwardness. The longer the Soviet Union remains in a capitalist environment, the deeper runs the degeneration of the social fabric. A prolonged isolation would inevitably end not in national communism, but in a restoration of capitalism. [*Revolution Betrayed*, pp. 300-301.]

World Division of Labor and World Revolution

In a 1922 speech to the Comintern on the New Economic Policy of the Soviet Union, Trotsky posed the question of where the NEP policy of markets, free trade, factory competitions, leases, and concessions was leading the infant Soviet workers' state, toward capitalism or toward socialism? After citing the proletariat's retention of state power, a monopoly of foreign trade and state ownership of the land and factories as key anticapitalist weapons, Trotsky took up the main point.

There remains, however, a question which is important and fundamental for determining the viability of a social regime which we have not touched upon at all. This is the question of the economy's productivity, not alone the productivity of individual workers, but the productivity of the economic regime as a whole. The historical ascent of mankind consists in just this, that *a regime which assures a higher productivity of labor supersedes regimes with a lower productivity*. If capitalism supplanted ancient feudal society it was only because human labor is more productive under the rule of capital. And the main and sole reason why socialism will vanquish capitalism completely and definitively is because it will assure a far greater volume of products per each unit of human labor power. [*First Five Years of the Communist International*, New York: Pathfinder, 1972, Vol. 2, p. 246; emphasis added.]

Trotsky did not stop at abstract assertions about a socialist future but went on to examine the immediate concrete reality.

Can we already say that our state enterprises are operating more productively than under the capitalist regime? No, we have yet to attain this. Not only are the Americans, the English, the French or the Germans in their capitalist factories working better, more productively than we do — this was the case even before the Revolution — but we ourselves used to work better before the Revolution than we do today. [*Ibid.*, p. 246.]

Trotsky was not castigating the workers in Stakhanovite style to work longer, harder, faster, but was pointing out the technological and organizational limits of a workers' state isolated from other revolutions and the world market. Trotsky returned to this theme over and over again:

In the long struggle between two irreconcilably hostile social systems — capitalism and socialism — the outcome will be determined in *the last analysis* by the relative productivity of labor under each system. And this under market conditions is determined by the relation between domestic prices and world prices... We cannot escape from capitalist encirclement by retreating into a nationally exclusive economy. Just because of its exclusiveness, such an economy would be compelled to advance at an extremely slow pace, and in consequence would encounter not weaker, but stronger pressure, not only from the capitalist armies and navies ("intervention"), but above all from cheap capitalist commodities. [*Challenge of the Left Opposition, 1926-27*, New York: Pathfinder, 1980, p. 334; emphasis in original.]

Thus Trotsky was able to accurately predict that the abolition of the state monopoly of foreign trade in Russia

would mean an accelerated shift of the economy onto the capitalist track and the growing economic and political subjugation of the Soviet Union to world capital. The dictatorship of the proletariat could then last only for a short time, a period to be measured not in years, but in months. Renewed dependence on foreign capital would mean the direct or indirect division of Russia into spheres of influence, its incorporation into imperialist world politics, and military upheavals — with the prospect of ruin and decline after the pattern of China. [*Ibid.*, p. 499.]

In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky summed it up this way:

Reduced to its primary basis, history is nothing but a struggle for an economy of working time. Socialism could not be justified by the abolition of exploitation alone; it must guarantee to society a higher economy of time than is guaranteed by capitalism. Without the realization of this condition, *the mere removal of exploitation would be but a dramatic episode without a future* [p. 78; emphasis added].

It was because of the inability of the Stalinists to achieve this in a single isolated country (or a number of backward countries) that the workers' states collapsed. In 1922 Trotsky took care to point out that historically capitalism was not

built in a single country but, like socialism had to be built internationally, on a world scale:

Capitalist society, so rich and so boastful of its wealth and culture, also sprang from revolution, and a very destructive one at that. The objective historical task of creating the conditions for a higher productivity of labor was in the last analysis solved by the bourgeois revolution, or more accurately by *a number of revolutions*. [*First Five Years*, p. 247; emphasis added.]

The victory of these bourgeois revolutions over several centuries in Europe, North America, and Japan which expanded the productivity of labor in a few countries thereby created a worldwide division of labor between nations, particularly producers of industry versus producers of raw materials. As Trotsky pointed out to the Stalinists who thought themselves independent of this necessary division,

The idea of the dependence of socialist economy upon world economy, the Communist International now considers 'counterrevolutionary.' Socialism cannot depend upon capitalism! The Epigones have been ingenious enough to forget that capitalism, like socialism, rests upon a world-wide division of labor which is to receive its highest expression under socialism. Economic construction in an isolated workers' state, however important in itself, will remain abridged, limited, contradictory: it cannot reach the heights of a new harmonious society... [Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, New York: Pathfinder, 1980, p. 401.]

Trotsky even foresaw that economic growth in the isolated workers' state would not necessarily ensure an advance toward socialism.

In reality the growth of the present soviet economy remains an antagonistic process. In strengthening the workers' state, the economic successes are by no means leading automatically to the creation of a harmonious society. On the contrary, they are preparing a sharpening of the contradictions of an isolated socialist structure on a higher level... The world-wide division of labor stands over the dictatorship of the proletariat in a separate country, and imperatively dictates its further road. [*Ibid.*, p. 418.]

Just as capitalism could only definitely triumph over previous modes of production on a world scale, socialism, building on the conquests of capitalism, would have to at least win in several imperialist centers, not just a few backward countries ("a dramatic episode without a future") to assure its right of world historical succession to capitalism.

The correct policies of a workers' state are not reducible *solely* to national economic construction. If the revolution does not expand on the international arena along the proletarian spiral, it must immutably begin to contract along the bureaucratic spiral within the national framework. If the dictatorship of the proletariat does not become European and world-wide, it must head toward its own collapse. [*Writings of Leon Trotsky [1933-34]*, p. 102]

This is the ABC of the theory of permanent revolution.

The Dual Character of the Workers' State Is Now Politically Resolved

In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky pointed out:

Two opposite tendencies are growing up out of the depth of the Soviet regime. To the extent that, in contrast to a decaying capitalism, it develops the productive forces, it is preparing the economic basis of socialism. To the extent that for the benefit of an upper stratum, it carries to more and more extreme expression bourgeois norms of distribution, it is preparing a capitalist restoration. This contrast between forms of property and norms of distribution cannot grow indefinitely. Either the bourgeois norm must in one form or another spread to the means of production, or the norms of distribution must be brought into correspondence with the socialist property system. [*Revolution Betrayed*, p. 244.]

So long as the bourgeois tendency inherent in the bourgeois mode of distribution "has not passed from the sphere of distribution into the sphere of production and has not blown up nationalized property and planned economy, the state remains a workers' state" (*Writings of Leon Trotsky [1937-38]*, p. 67).

However, it is precisely the passing of that contradiction into the sphere of production that we have been witnessing in Eastern Europe since 1989 and in the former Soviet Union since 1991. The state plan has been abolished in Russia and Eastern Europe. Nationalized factories in Russia are reduced to competition on the market, staying afloat as viable institutions only through a massive inflation of the ruble, reduced to barter between themselves and their suppliers. A comparison with the days of the Gorbachev regime shows that production has dropped precipitously in Russia. Many of the nationalized factories are being parceled out through shares given to the public and workers which are then resold to buy the necessities of life. The concentration of these shares in the hands of speculators has been under way for several years in the Czech Republic and is well under way in Russia.

Trotsky repeatedly stressed that preventing the detonation of the economic foundations of the workers' state was a matter of time (the governmental sphere of Stalinist Bonapartism cannot remain balanced forever):

If the proletariat drives out the Soviet bureaucracy in time, then it will still find the nationalized means of production and the basic elements of the planned economy after its victory. [*Ibid.*, p. 69.]

Trotsky made the same point in 1938:

[The] chief political task in the USSR still remains the overthrow of this same Thermidorian bureaucracy. *Each day added to its domination helps to rot the foundations of economy and increases the chances for capitalist restoration.* [*The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, New York: Pathfinder, 1973, p. 104; emphasis added.]

However, Trotsky linked the success of such a political revolution to a renewal of the world revolution in the imperialist centers: "The fundamental condition for the only rock-bottom reform of the Soviet state is the victorious spread of the world revolution" (*Writings...[1933-34]*, pp. 118-119).

The Second Phase of Bourgeois Restoration

Trotsky viewed the bureaucracy not as a class but as "the tool of classes," a "transmitting mechanism" for imperialism inside the workers' state. That is why he was convinced that defense of the USSR defense of the USSR "means not only the supreme struggle against imperialism, but a preparation for the overthrow of the Bonapartist bureaucracy" (*Writings...[1937-38]*, p. 71).

Trotsky summed up the Bolshevik perspective on this question and the bureaucracy's bourgeois character in a passing reference in 1940:

Without the aid of the proletarian revolution in the West, Lenin repeated, restoration in Russia was inevitable. He was not mistaken: the Stalinist bureaucracy is nothing else than the first phase of bourgeois restoration. [*Writings...[1939-40]*, p. 66; emphasis in original.]

Trotsky had for some time recognized that in the Soviet Union, the year 1924 "was the beginning of the Soviet Thermidor... the first stage of the bourgeois counterrevolution aimed against the social basis of the workers' state" (*Writings... [1934-35]*, p. 174-173).

The first phase of capitalist restoration in Russia lasted from 1924 to 1991. We are now in the second phase of bourgeois restoration in Russia where the bureaucracy has resolved the old political contradiction of the workers' state being forced to simultaneously defend bourgeois norms of distribution and proletarian production property forms entirely in favor of a bourgeois state apparatus. The inherently bourgeois nature of the bureaucracy allowed this transition to take place relatively peacefully in 1991 with the passive acquiescence of the proletariat, demoralized by decades of Stalinism. *The third and final phase of bourgeois restoration will be complete when a capitalist ruling class is economically consolidated by the bourgeois state's privatizing or shutting down the remaining nationalized industry.* It is important to note that Trotsky believed that this could not be done "democratically," that the fall of Stalinist Bonapartism would give way to fascist-capitalism if the workers were unable to make a socialist political revolution.

Has the Bureaucracy Become a Ruling Class?

Trotsky defined the nature of the Soviet state as a class relationship of forces.

Classes are characterized by their position in the social system of economy, and primarily by their relation to the means of production. In

civilized societies, property relations are validated by laws. The nationalization of the land, the means of industrial production, transport and exchange, together with the monopoly of foreign trade, constitute the basis of the Soviet social structure. Through these relations, established by the proletarian revolution, the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state is for us basically defined. [*Revolution Betrayed*, p. 248.]

While beginning with this simple definition, Trotsky did not thereby simply reduce the workers' state to an identity with nationalized economy.

The Soviet bureaucracy has expropriated the proletariat politically in order by methods of its own to defend the social conquests. But the very fact of its appropriation of political power in a country where the principal means of production are in the hands of the state, creates a new and hitherto unknown relation between the bureaucracy and the riches of the nation. The means of production belong to the state. But the state, so to speak, "belongs" to the bureaucracy. If these as yet wholly new relations should solidify, become the norm and be legalized, whether with or without resistance from the workers, they would in the long run, lead to a complete liquidation of the social conquests of the proletarian revolution.

However, Trotsky continued,

The bureaucracy has not yet created social supports for its domination in the form of special types of property. It is compelled to defend state property as the source of its power and its income. In this aspect of its activity it still remains a weapon of proletarian dictatorship. [*Revolution Betrayed*, p. 249; emphasis added and in original.]

This is precisely what has changed in Eastern Europe since 1989 and in the former Soviet Union since 1991, the bureaucracy is no longer "compelled to defend state property," and is no longer even a blunt "weapon of proletarian dictatorship." It is instead utilizing the state apparatus to consolidate a new economic base for itself through both privatization and closure of factories and social services. The capitalist governments are using state power to further the creation and consolidation of a capitalist ruling class out of sections of the old nomenklatura and former black marketeers.

State And Economy: Politics Is Concentrated Economics

There is a pervasive myth in the Trotskyist movement that Trotsky had to redefine the Marxist concept of the workers' state as the dictatorship of the proletariat because of the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union. This misconception centers on the idea that the experience of Stalinism forced Trotsky to redefine the dictatorship of the proletariat as primarily, if not exclusively, a socio-economic, and not a political category.

In a December 1928 article, Trotsky contrasted the bureaucrats' economic reductionist, in reality idealist, view of the workers' state to

the political and materialist perspective of revolutionary Marxism.

What is the dictatorship of the proletariat? It is an organized correlation between classes in a certain form. These classes, however, do not remain immobile but change materially and psychologically, consequently changing the relationship of forces between them, that is, strengthening or weakening the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is what the dictatorship is for a Marxist. But for a bureaucrat the dictatorship is an autonomous, self-sufficient factor, or metaphysical category, that stands over and above actual class relations and bears within itself all the necessary guarantees. On top of that, every bureaucrat is inclined to see the dictatorship as a guardian angel hovering over his desk.

Erected upon this metaphysical conception of the dictatorship are all the arguments to the effect that since we have a dictatorship of the proletariat, the peasantry could not be experiencing a differentiation, the kulaks could not be growing stronger, and if the kulaks are growing stronger, that means that they will grow over into socialism. *In a word the dictatorship is transformed from a class relationship into a self-sufficient principle in relation to which economic phenomena are merely some sort of emanation.* Of course none of the bureaucrats carry this system of theirs through to the end. They are too empirical for that and too closely tied to their own past. But their thinking moves along these exact lines and the theoretical sources of their errors must be sought along this path. [Trotsky, *Challenge of the Left Opposition, 1928–29*, New York: Pathfinder, 1981, p. 393–394.]

Trotsky maintained this perspective on the predominance of the *political* relationship between classes in determining the class character of the state throughout his life, including in his last major works *The Revolution Betrayed* and *In Defense of Marxism*. Far from inventing a purely economic reductionist theory of the state as some would contend, Trotsky's conception of the state remained profoundly political.

Bourgeois society has in the course of its history displaced many political regimes and bureaucratic castes, without changing its social foundations. It has preserved itself against the restoration of feudal and guild relations by the superiority of its productive methods. The state power has been able either to co-operate with capitalist development, or put brakes on it. But in general the productive forces, upon a basis of private property and competition, have been working out their own destiny. In contrast to this, the property relations which issued from the socialist revolution are indivisibly bound up with the new state as their repository. The predominance of socialist over petty-bourgeois tendencies is guaranteed, not by the automatism of the economy — we are still far from that — but by *political* measures taken by the dictatorship. *The character of the economy as a whole thus depends upon the character of the state power.* [Revolution Betrayed, p. 250; emphasis added.]

Rather than reducing the workers' state to a mere identification with planned economy, Trotsky continued to emphasize the *political*

relationship of the state to the economy. In "normal" times of relative class peace, as long as the state is guarding and defending a given set of property relations its class nature can be determined by the social content of those property forms it is protecting. The government (political form of the state) is in this case a secondary question for determining the class character of the state.

The class nature of the state is, consequently determined not by its political forms but by its social content; i.e., by the character of the forms of property and productive relations *which the given state guards and defends.* ["Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?," *Writings...[1937–38]*, p. 61.]

Trotsky then contrasted how governments of proletarian political parties at the head of proletarian state forms (soviets) did not automatically equal workers' states precisely because of their governmental *political program* in regard to the capitalist economy.

Of course, the dictatorship of the proletariat is not only "predominantly" but wholly and fully a "political category." However, this very politics is only concentrated economics. The domination of the Social Democracy in the state and in the soviets (Germany 1918–1919) had nothing in common with the dictatorship of the proletariat inasmuch as it left bourgeois property inviolable. [*Ibid.*, p. 62.]

What does this mean? Trotsky is once again asserting, as he did throughout his political career, that *the dictatorship of the proletariat, is not merely state bodies of armed men, but armed bodies of men actively carrying out a political program committed to preserving proletarian collective property or in times of revolution overthrowing capitalist property.*

Thus, the Mensheviks' and Socialist-Revolutionaries' domination of the Russian soviets in 1917 and the Social-Democrats' domination of the German soviets in 1918 were *not* the dictatorship of the proletariat because of their mutual programmatic commitment to "guarding and defending" capitalist property relations, which they loyally carried out in practice.

In contrast, the Bolshevik government standing at the head of the armed Soviet state in October of 1917 *was* the dictatorship of the proletariat or "the first stage of the proletarian revolution" precisely because of its *political program* of overthrowing capitalist property.

A political economic program is clearly what Trotsky considered Lenin meant by the phrase "politics is concentrated economics," that is

when economic processes, tasks and interests acquire a *conscious* and *generalized* ("concentrated") character, they enter the sphere of politics by virtue of this very fact, and constitute the essence of politics. In this sense politics as concentrated economics rises above the day-to-day atomized, unconscious and ungeneralized economic activity.

The correctness of politics from the Marxist standpoint is determined precisely to the extent that it profoundly and all-sidedly "concentrates" economics; that is, expresses the pro-

gressive tendencies of its development. That is why we base our politics first and foremost upon our analysis of *property forms and class relationships*... This proposition one should think applies to the Kremlin too. [*In Defense of Marxism*, New York: Pathfinder, 1973, p. 123–124; emphasis added and in original.]

Thus Trotsky restates his 1928 definition of the workers' state as an organized relationship of class forces focusing upon the *interrelation* between classes and property forms. This interrelation is defined by the *political programs of the parties of the respective classes.*

What is decisive in a revolution or counter-revolution is the *political action program* implemented by the government leading the state. What type of property relations is it guarding and defending? Or overthrowing? The government wielding state (military/judicial/ideological) power, wields it in the interest of a given class. In moments of revolution or counterrevolution it is the government's active implementation of its political program for the property relations of the economy, preserving or overthrowing them, that defines the societal content, i.e., class nature, of the state. That is why in times of class peace,

the concentration of power in the hands of the bureaucracy and even the retardation of the development of the productive forces, by themselves, still do not change the class nature of society and its state. Only the intrusion of a revolutionary or a counterrevolutionary force in the property relations can change the class nature of the state. [*Writings of Leon Trotsky [1937–38]*, p. 63.]

What force can change property relations and how does such an intrusion take place? Only through the armed might of the state, implementing the political program of the government, as Trotsky explains below.

But does not history know of cases of *class conflict between the economy and the state*? It does! After the "third estate" seized power, society for a period of several years still remained feudal. In the first months of Soviet rule the proletariat reigned on the basis of a bourgeois economy. In the field of agriculture the dictatorship of the proletariat operated for a number of years on the basis of a petty-bourgeois economy (to a considerable degree it does so even now). Should a bourgeois counterrevolution succeed in the USSR, the new government for a lengthy period would have to base itself upon the nationalized economy. But what does such a type of temporary conflict between the economy and the state mean? It means a *revolution* or a *counterrevolution*. The victory of one class over another signifies that it will reconstruct the economy in the interests of the victors. [*Ibid.*, p. 63–64.]

This is why Trotsky emphasized once again, on the next page, that the class character of the state "is determined by its *relation* to the forms of property in the means of production" (*ibid.*, p. 65; emphasis added).

Please note that Trotsky did *not* say that the class character of the state was determined by the property forms themselves.

In *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky had already presciently outlined what a collapse of the bureaucratic regime would mean for the nationalized economy of the workers' state, a process we are witnessing today under the Yeltsin government.

A collapse of the Soviet regime would lead inevitably to the collapse of the planned economy, and thus to the abolition of state property. The bond of compulsion between the trusts and the factories within them would fall away. The more successful enterprises would succeed in coming out on the road of independence. They might convert themselves into stock companies, or they might find some other transitional form of property — one for example, in which the workers should participate in the profits. The collective farms would disintegrate at the same time, and far more easily. *The fall of the present bureaucratic dictatorship, if it were not replaced by a new socialist power, would thus mean a return to capitalist relations with a catastrophic decline of industry and culture.* [*Revolution Betrayed*, pp. 250–251; emphasis added.]

A significant wing of the bureaucracy has indeed become a capitalist ruling class. *This new capitalist ruling class is politically consolidated* having laid hands on the bourgeois side of the existing state machinery while politically dismantling its socialist side. Although it possesses a growing economic base for itself in the form of shares in former state enterprises, *it is not yet fully economically consolidated.* Unlike many leftists who view the parcelization of Soviet industry into shares as mere paper pronouncements, Trotsky thought otherwise:

The new cult of the family has not fallen out of the clouds. Privileges have only half their worth, if they cannot be transmitted to one's children. But the right of testament is inseparable from the right of property. It is not enough to be the director of a trust; it is necessary to be a stockholder. The victory of the bureaucracy in this decisive sphere would mean its conversion into a new possessing class. [*Revolution Betrayed*, p. 254.]

Why Yeltsin's Bourgeois Counterrevolution Did Not Have to Smash the State Apparatus

We have already noted that like the bureaucracy of the feudal absolutist state, the bureaucracy of the degenerated Soviet workers' state was "bourgeoisified" by the very conditions of its existence in world capitalist encirclement. For this very reason, no radical purgation of the workers' state apparatus was required by the Yeltsin counterrevolution. As Trotsky predicted, if

a bourgeois party were to overthrow the ruling Soviet caste, it would find no small number of ready servants among the present bureaucrats, administrators, technicians, directors, party secretaries and privileged upper circles in general. A purgation of the state apparatus would, of course, be necessary in this case too. But a bourgeois restoration would probably have to clean out fewer people than a revolutionary party. The chief task of the new power would be

to restore private property in the means of production...In the sphere of industry, denationalization would begin with the light industries and those producing food. The planning principle would be converted for the transitional period into a series of compromises between state power and individual "corporations" — potential proprietors, that is, among the Soviet captains of industry, the emigre former proprietors and foreign capitalists. [*Revolution Betrayed*, p. 253.]

What Remains of the Workers' States?

The concept of phases in a revolutionary struggle is central to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. We have already seen that Trotsky considered the Stalinist bureaucracy to be "the first phase of bourgeois restoration." The distinction Trotsky made in the phases of the ascending revolution can form a useful guide as the "film" of the revolution is run backward by the counterrevolution. Two American revolutionary Marxists, Diane Feeley and Paul Le Blanc, pointed out in 1983, that Trotsky

made an important distinction between two phases of the dictatorship of the proletariat: the first phase was called simply the dictatorship of the proletariat, the second was called the *socialist dictatorship*...the first stage *begins* when workers' rule (supported by the peasantry) is established. The second stage occurs with the extensive implementation of socialist policies by that selfsame proletarian dictatorship. [*Rebuilding the Revolutionary Party*, pp. 47–48, New York: Fourth Internationalist Tendency, 1990.]

That is, the *political* seizure and consolidation of state power by the proletariat is rapidly followed by the seizure and consolidation of power in the *economic* sphere. In a mirror analogous process today, the bureaucracy has resolved the *political* contradiction of the workers' states by using state power to not only defend bourgeois norms of distribution as before but to begin privatization of the proletarian nationalized economy. In other words, the restorationist bureaucracy has politically overthrown the degenerated proletarian dictatorship and is in the process of dismantling the socialist dictatorship in the economy, reducing it to its rump remnants, the nationalized factories. These as yet not privatized factories form a *rump degenerated socialist dictatorship* at the factory level, albeit without a government. If a new revolutionary wave is to arise it will have to base itself on the workers' defense of their factories, this final remnant of proletarian dictatorship, against closures and privatization.

The Necessity for a New Russian Socialist Revolution

In 1939 Trotsky framed the question of the class character of the next Russian revolution as follows: if the USSR "has *completely* ceased being a workers' state, not a *political* revolution would be required but a *social* revolution" (*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 119; emphasis added and in original).

In the face of the unfolding Russian counterrevolution, the fundamental task remains the same as Trotsky outlined sixty-one years ago, a new revolution led by the proletariat, but this time a socialist revolution to *create* a new workers' state, not a political revolution to reform the now overthrown workers' state. But even for a political revolution Trotsky considered it to be "an immutable axiom that this task can be solved only by a revolutionary party" [*Writings ... [1933–34]*, p. 117].

The construction of such a party requires two things:

First, the reconquest of class consciousness by the Russian proletariat in new struggles to defend themselves against the onslaught of capitalist restoration. Secondly, the slow and patient reassembly of revolutionary Marxist cadres into a nucleus like Trotsky's Left Opposition. The alternative is the consolidation of capitalist rule through the triumph of a fascist mass movement based on the millions of pauperized and unemployed. This would coincide with the third and final phase of capitalist restoration. The current government of the capitalist Bonaparte Boris Yeltsin is thus only a bridge between either a future fascist dictatorship or a future workers' democracy.

While the collapse of the degenerated workers' state in Russia and the collapse of the deformed workers' states in Eastern Europe do represent defeats for the world working class, it is the duty of revolutionary Marxists to assimilate the lessons of these defeats and prepare for the new battles that the 21st century will surely bring.

As Trotsky wrote shortly before his assassination,

The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property forms in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organization of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. [*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 19.]

In order to build parties capable of leading and educating the working class, we will have to be able to recognize the truth and give a scientific explanation of it. □

Glossary

Absolutism: The type of state system in several European countries between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries (especially in England and France) where centralized power was disproportionately vested in a monarch at the expense of other state organs, such as a parliament. Under feudalism, the powers of the monarch were greatly limited by the nobility. The rising bourgeoisie supported the establishment of an absolute monarchy to weaken the stranglehold of the nobility over the economy. However, with the weakening of the nobility and the states' indebtedness to the bourgeoisie, the absolutist state turned against the bourgeoisie.

Bolsheviks: Beginning in 1903, a faction led by Lenin in the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. Later, after a split, they became a separate party. Following the 1917 revolution, they changed their name to the

Communist Party. The term in Russian means "majority men."

Bonapartism: A term derived from the name of Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte I, who overthrew the parliamentary democracy of the French revolution and ruled France from 1800 to 1815. Trotsky used the term Bonapartism to describe a dictatorship, or a regime with certain features of a dictatorship, during periods when class rule is not secure; it is based on the military, police and state bureaucracy rather than on parliamentary parties or a mass movement. Trotsky saw two types — bourgeois and Soviet. See "The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism" and "Bonapartism and Fascism" in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934–35)*.

Communism: A global society operating without private property, commodity production, money, the division of labor, social classes or the state. Marx distinguished between primitive (tribal) communism in early human history (based on poverty) and a future communist society, based on material abundance where individual labour would cease to be alienating and instead be the realization of each individual's personality.

Deformed Workers' State: A term used to designate those states in Eastern Europe, China, Korea and Vietnam that came into existence after World War II. Led by Stalinist governments that economically expropriated the capitalists, they copied not only the planned economy of the Soviet Union but the methods of Stalinist rule. Unlike the Soviet state which degenerated from the revolutionary healthy norms of workers' rule of 1917, these states were deformed by Stalinism from birth.

Degenerated Workers' State: Trotsky's term for the Soviet Union under Stalinist rule where the proletariat was politically expropriated and atomized but the economic conquests of the revolution, nationalized industry, state monopoly of foreign trade and a planned economy still survived.

Dictatorship of the Proletariat: The Marxist name for the state or form of political rule by the working class that follows rule by the capitalist class (dictatorship of the bourgeoisie). Modern equivalents for the term are workers' state and workers' democracy. It begins with the smashing of the bourgeois state and the political expropriation of the bourgeoisie in favor of the political rule of workers and their allies.

Epigones: Disciples who corrupt their teacher's doctrine. This was Trotsky's derisive term for the Stalinists, who claimed to be Leninists.

Jacobins: The radical petty-bourgeois leadership of the French Revolution from May 1793 to July 1794. The leader of the Jacobins was Robespierre. After blocking with the artisans of Paris to secure military victory against the French and European aristocratic counter-revolution, the Jacobins were overthrown by conservative bourgeois forces in July 1794.

Law of Value: An economic law which determines how labor is distributed among the various branches of production in a society of private producers. Under capitalism this law operates through the exchange of

all commodities on the market at their prices of production. This determines which branches of production receive the highest capital investment. The value of the productivity of labor thus determines overall capitalist investment. This blind investment mechanism of capitalist society is counterposed to the socialist principle of conscious, collective, and democratic planning of the investment of society's material and labor resources. In the transition to communism a form of the law of value (bourgeois right) survives in the distribution of consumer goods according to the quantity of labor individual producers give to society.

Permanent Revolution: As fully developed by Trotsky, this theory postulates that in the age of imperialism, the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution (land reform, national liberation, and the overthrow of pre-capitalist ruling classes and states) can only be consistently completed by a workers' government allied with the peasantry. A workers' government coming to power as the leader of a national democratic revolution would also mean the beginning of the socialist revolution. This process of revolutionizing society cannot be ultimately successful if it remains within national boundaries or is confined to a capitalist stage of development, but can only be completed on a world scale. As Trotsky said "the socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena."

Political Revolution: A revolution which overthrows the government of a state but does not replace the state and property forms of the ruling class (as opposed to a social revolution). This means that despite the change in government the same ruling class continues to rule before and after the political revolution. Trotsky called for a political revolution of the oppressed proletarian ruling class in the Soviet Union against the government of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Post-Capitalist Societies: Societies transitional between capitalism and socialism. This is the dictatorship of the proletariat. Such societies are characterized by the continued survival of capitalism in important countries, the partial survival of commodity production and the money economy, the survival of different classes and social layers within the countries involved in this stage, and therefore of the necessary survival of the state to defend the interests of the workers against the partisans of a return to the rule of capital.

Social Revolution: A revolution in which the state and property forms of one ruling class are overthrown and replaced by the state and property forms of a new ruling class (as opposed to a political revolution). A social counter-revolution overthrows the state and property forms of a ruling class and replaces them with those of a previous ruling class.

Socialism: The stage of society transitional between post-capitalist societies and communism. Socialism can only come into being after capitalism has been abolished through out the world and the future global society has attained a higher productivity of labor than capitalism. The construction of socialism completes and is characterized by the disappearance of social classes, the withering away of the commodity and

money economy, and the state. However, under socialism the remuneration of everyone (apart from basic needs) will continue to be measured in terms of the quantity of labor given to society.

Socialist Dictatorship: The second phase of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. It begins with the extensive implementation of socialist policies (economic expropriation of the capitalists) by working people.

Stakhanovism: A system of speed-up in Soviet production named after a coal miner, Aleksei Stakhanov (1906–1977) who reportedly exceeded his quota sixteen-fold by sheer effort. This system was introduced in the Soviet Union in 1935 and led to great wage disparities and widespread discontent among the masses. Stakhanov was rewarded with special honors and privileges.

Stalinism: The theory and practice of the reactionary rule by the privileged and conservative Soviet bureaucracy over the workers. In 1924, Stalin opposed to the Bolshevik perspective of world revolution his theory of completing the building of Socialism in a single country (the USSR). The betrayal of revolutions abroad went hand in hand with the Stalinist bureaucracy's political counter-revolution against the workers and communists in Russia. Stalinist rule in the USSR was consolidated by the bloody purges of 1936–37.

State: The organ of rule of a ruling class. It is made up of relatively permanent bodies of bureaucrats, policemen and castes of career army officers who ensure the rule of the ruling class against other classes. The relatively permanent character of state personnel is distinguished from the personnel in the leadership bodies of the state, the government, which may change frequently. Every state, regardless of the political character of its government, is the political instrument of the social dictatorship of one class over others.

Thermidorians: The conservative bourgeois revolutionaries in the French Revolution of 1789–1799 who overthrew the radical petty-bourgeois revolutionaries (the Jacobins) in July, 1794 (the month of Thermidor in the French revolutionary calendar). The Thermidorians were in turn overthrown by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1799.

Workers' Government: A synonym or popular designation for the dictatorship of the proletariat (workers' state) which is supported by the poor peasantry or farmers. The government is the executive leadership body of the state. A workers' government with a revolutionary Marxist program and leadership like the Bolsheviks is identical with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Workers' State: The dictatorship of the proletariat. Ideally, the self-organized political rule of the working class exercised through their own bodies of armed people and executive/legislative representative institutions (soviets or councils) and led by a revolutionary Marxist party.

New Material on Trotsky and the Left Opposition Revealed in Russian Archives

Continued from page 21
published this article. And together with my good friend Pierre Broué, we have written an open letter to Volkogonov in which we try to show that Volkogonov was absolutely incorrect in his methods in his book on Trotsky. It has so many mistakes — you can't imagine, it's unbe-

lievable! I can't regard this book as reliable in any way.

If you open Volkogonov's book on Trotsky, you find many documents. This is one of Volkogonov's main emphases. He worked in the archives of the KGB, and so on. But I can't believe I can trust him because many times

when I had the chance to compare, I found distortion, fabrication, and slander. One example: Volkogonov wanted to show that Trotsky was so terrible during the civil war that he tried to organize repression and terror in the Red Army and so on. Volkogonov states that even Trotsky in exile, in his book *My Life*, confessed

to this. He takes this quote from Trotsky, "It is impossible to organize [an] army without repression. It is necessary to put before the soldiers the choice of death in the front or the rear," and so on and so forth. Volkogonov closed the quote there, and said, "Look, Trotsky confessed. He said it's impossible to build an army without repression. These are Trotsky's words." But what's interesting is that Trotsky had no period there; it is a comma and continues, "That was the principle of the old armies, but we built the army on the principles of the October revolution." That's one example of Volkogonov's tricks.

Another example: On October 8, 1923, Trotsky wrote a letter to the Central Committee, and Volkogonov asserts, "In this letter Trotsky again demanded the restoration of concentration camps, militarization of labor and of the economy, and so on and so on." My God, when I read it I laughed out loud. I thought, Am I going crazy? Because I have read that letter of Trotsky's many times. [See *Challenge of the Left Opposition, 1923-25* (New York: Pathfinder, 1978, pp. 51-58) for the text of Trotsky's letter.] Those words are not in that letter. Everybody knows it's about bureaucratization; it's the beginning of the discussion against the bureaucratization of the party.

There are many other examples of distortion and fabrication. Volkogonov said Trotsky was not so clever because he believed in world revolution. (Pierre Broué and I are answering that in the open letter we are now writing: the rulers of the Western countries must not be so clever either because for so many years they were struggling against world revolution! They also believed in the possibility of world revolution.)

You must analyze the person in the concrete historical situation. Anyone could say, for example, that Spinoza was a stupid man because he didn't know what a VCR is. It's amazing. Volkogonov tries to analyze Trotsky retroactively, from the perspective of today. It's not a historical approach.

So that was some of my work in the Soviet Union in history and so on. After the coup in 1991 when the archives began opening, I received a call from the new directors of the archives, because they had read my articles on Trotsky, and they invited me at the end of 1991 to come to the archives and organize a special group in the archives, to prepare a research project to publish Trotsky's documents. What are the archives? In Moscow there are many archives, but the most important for the histo-

rian who tries to analyze the Russian revolution or the world revolution are three archives: (1) the so-called Central Party Archives; (2) the archives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party; and (3) the Presidential, or Kremlin, archives.

The Kremlin archives are still closed. The archives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party are partly open, but most of the documents are still closed. I received a call from the Central Party Archives. In October 1991 it was renamed. It is now the Russian Center for the Preservation and Study of Documents of Contemporary History. I regard this center now as the biggest depository of documents on the international Communist movement in the world, and of course on the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In general it has preserved more than one and a half million written documents, 9,300 photographic materials, and 1,600 meters of movie tapes, which are concentrated in 551 collections. So it's one of the hugest in the world.

These archives began to be organized shortly after the October revolution and at the present time are divided into three departments: (a) the Department of the Social History of Europe, which contains materials dating from the beginning of the 19th century through the death of Frederick Engels in 1895; (b) the Department of the Political History of Russia, including a section of documents of Lenin and the personal files of the other Communist leaders; and (c) the Department of the International Labor and Communist Movement, including a section on the Communist International and Cominform [Communist Information Bureau].

Now I want to say a few words about my discoveries in these archives, where I have begun to study the archival documents on Trotsky and Trotskyism. I have prepared three research projects. One is my own research project, and two of them are with my friends. First, we found 288 previously unknown letters between Lenin and Trotsky. These have never before been available to scholars. The contents of these documents give us valuable information on the real history of Russian and international Communism during the crucial period of 1918-1923. They show that during the period of the civil war Lenin always supported Trotsky's concept of warfare and only because of his fear of an open split in the party, he occasionally agreed with Stalin. They show that Lenin and Trotsky and other leaders of the Bolshevik party did use terror to build the Red Army, given that

everybody, commanders and even commissars, lost their habit of discipline. It was terrible of course. There was White terror, and there was Red terror. But what was the reason why? That is the most important question. We found many documents that showed that everybody lost their head and was absolutely undisciplined. How can you build any army under these circumstances?

The documents also show — one of the most important things, I believe — that even after entering the Bolshevik party, Trotsky continued to oppose the Bolshevik principles of internal party centralization. I think it's a very important thing, because it's well known that Trotsky struggled against Lenin's plans for centralization before the October revolution. But even after the October revolution we found documents showing that Trotsky many times opposed the principles of huge centralization in the party, from the democratic point of view. (I have some documents here; I can quote some of Trotsky's ideas about this.) These documents show that the political struggle in the Bolshevik party leadership began even before Lenin's last illness. They show that Trotsky and Lenin had the same program for the New Economic Policy. They show that immediately after the revolution and throughout this period Lenin and Trotsky together tried to stir up the flame of the world revolution, including the preparation of some of the regions in the [former Russian empire for reincorporation under Soviet rule], but at the same time Trotsky had some disagreements with Lenin regarding some of the regions in the country.

The second research project which we prepared is on the United Left Opposition and the Chinese Revolution. We found 89 documents by Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek, and so-called lesser Trotskyists who took part in the discussion on the Chinese Revolution. These documents helped us to write the real story — the real truth about the position of the Left Opposition on the Chinese revolution.

The third project is my own project and is entitled *Leon Trotsky and the Chinese Revolution*. This book is based on Russian archives and Taiwanese archives of the Taiwanese Bureau of Investigation, the Taiwanese KGB, and on Trotsky archives in England and some private archives, including the archives of one of the founders of the Chinese Trotskyist movement.

And so to sum up, that is what I can tell you about my current work in Russia and some of the trends in historical writing in Russia today. □

The Labor Struggles of 1919—Interview with a Participant

Continued from page 33

to stay and when he got all the foremen in I had to sit in his office on the radiator. He didn't even furnish a chair to sit on, and he read the riot act to me, told these foremen how I looked when I came, begged for a job, how meek I was, and how I promised I was going to be a good company man, and "here he is — look at what he's

doing." I had no choice in the matter. I had to take it at the time, but he didn't dare fire me, so when he was through I asked him merely, "Is that all you have to say? Can I go back to work now?"

He said, "Yes! You go back to work, but you keep your mouth shut!" He said, "I could fire you," but he knew better that he couldn't, be-

cause he would have had trouble on the whole system of the Pullman Company.

Another election was then held, at which we, the union people, decided to boycott the election, cast blank ballots. There were only five or six voted ballots cast out of over 150. The rest were blank. The bona fide union functioned in a regular fashion after that until 1922.

The colored and women workers were barred from being members in the [Brotherhood of Railroad] Carmen, except for a phony auxiliary, which never functioned. As a result, they were discouraged and hostile to the Carmen's Union and were the only ones elected to the company union. But a meeting of that company union was never called.

No attempt was made by the company to activate the company union or to make it function, up to July 1, 1922, when the legal shopmen's strike took place. It was supported and called by the six international [shopcraft] brotherhoods over the issue of preventing a wage cut.

In 1922 [the railroads] issued an ultimatum, they were going to cut wages, so a legal strike was called on July 1, 1922. In 1919 when the illegal strike took place, the conditions were very favorable for the workers not only to prevent a cut in wages but to win improvement, or a raise in wages. But in 1922 the conditions had worsened and became such that it was almost certain of a defeat. If six shop crafts were on strike, and all the rest of the railroad unions were working, it would defeat the shopmen, but the strike took place anyway. I was then on strike for, well, seven, eight, nine months, and it was lost, and then I was never able to return to work [on the railroads].

I was chairman and Oscar Coover, Sr., secretary of the strike committee representing all shop workers on the Pullman Company, [Chi-

cago] Burlington [& Quincy Railroad], Great Western, and [Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis &] Omaha [railroad] companies in Minneapolis. The strike dragged on for over six months. In the early part of the strike, the railroad companies on a national basis through U.S. Attorney General Daugherty, came into U.S. District Court in Chicago and secured a sweeping injunction practically preventing any picketing. This injunction provided for [a limited number of] pickets at each entrance into the various yards.

The railroad companies put extra cars on the trains, hauling in scabs from various parts of the country. They lodged them in Pullman sleepers in the yards and had dining cars on the tracks to feed them, so it was not necessary for them at any time to leave the yards. At that time there existed on a national basis organizations whose purpose it was to furnish strikebreakers wherever they were needed. They furnished skilled machinists, electricians, who were paid exorbitant wages during the strike, and after the strike was over, these same strikebreakers were back on the payroll of these professional strikebreaking organizations.

Officially, I was personally on strike for one year. But the strike was lost actually after three months. The strike was lost when Burt Jewell, the president of the Railroad Employees Department of the American Federation of Labor, who had leadership of the strike, went in secret and negotiated a contract with the Baltimore

and Ohio railroad company; thereby, instead of negotiating a contract covering all railroads on a national basis, it became necessary to negotiate a contract with each individual company. As a result of this betrayal, most of the big railroads organized company unions.

The Pullman Company did not sign this contract. There was an announcement that whatever company wanted to could sign this contract and the strike would be called off against them. After this announcement, the workers became completely demoralized, and the strike was lost at the Pullman Company.

The Great Western entered into an agreement recognizing the union again and calling on everyone to return to work at their jobs according to vacancies that occurred. But the company proceeded not to comply with that condition, so most of the men were going back to work. [There was] an electrician — Oscar Coover — and a boilermaker they didn't want to take back because they were too strong union — been talking union too much — but they were the oldest and the ones with the first right to return. So I, with a committee from the union, went to the company and tied the company up again, pulled everybody off the job until such time as these two men went back to work. That lasted for two days, and they went back to work, but in the process I was out. I was done. I never got back. □

The Pullman Strike Centennial Conference

Continued from page 34

by some academic historians from an honest account of working class history, recognizing the distinct needs and interests of that class, to reformist and populist adaptations to "free market democracy."

As one speaker described the evolution, labor history has developed from the earlier "vulgar Marxist" class approach to the exploration of the issues of race and gender, and "this conference marks an emerging synthesis of placing labor history in the broader context of the history of this country."

Discussion followed about "synthetic thinking," "advocacy history vs. scientific history," etc. — all of which impelled me to express a difference of another kind, a criticism of the elitism of academic "labor historians" who speak and write for themselves and each other, publish for tenure or profit, not for workers. They have forgotten that labor history became a separate subject and discipline 15 or so years ago for the same reason that Black Studies and Women's Studies became separate fields — because they had been ignored or misrepresented in traditional American history and sections of the oppressed gender, nationality, and class were exerting pressure for change.

In some communities, like Cleveland, Ohio, trade unionists and local history teachers joined forces to form labor history societies. The Cleveland society's stated purposes, for exam-

ple, are "to promote the preservation, research, and study of the history and traditions of working people of the... area, of their unions and their cultural, social, and political organizations." The slogan adopted for our logo by a union activist was "Preparing for Our Future by Studying Our Past." Programs and publications focus on labor history for workers and students, especially histories by workers themselves.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the final session entitled "Eugene Debs, the Socialist Party, and American Politics." However, I went home and reread sections of *Eugene V. Debs Speaks* (Pathfinder Press, 1970), including an 1896 article by Debs, "The American University and the Labor Problem," and the introduction by James P. Cannon, "E.V. Debs: The Socialist Movement of His Time — Its Meaning for Today." That introduction by Cannon first appeared in the magazine *Fourth International* (winter 1956), in honor of the 100th anniversary of Debs's birth. It was originally entitled "The Debs Centennial." Both articles help place the Pullman Strike Centennial Conference in proper historical perspective.

Other Observances

In addition to the conference at Indiana State University in Terre Haute, there are at least three other recent observances of the Pullman strike centennial that deserve mention.

- The November 1994 issue of *Socialist Action* carries a full-page article, "The Pullman Strike of 1894: What we can learn from it today," by Michael Schreiber. It is a clearly written account of the events of that historic struggle. The main lessons cited involve two flaws that weakened the strength and effectiveness of Debs's American Railway Union (as well as other unions of the time) — its racist refusal to accept Black workers into membership; and "its reliance on a strategy of conciliation with the employers."
- In Chicago, trade unionists, labor historians, and others celebrated the Pullman Strike centennial with a Labor Day parade and program at the old Florence Hotel in Pullman. Reportedly it was a typical 1990s platform for election campaign speeches by capitalist party politicians and drew few useful lessons for today.
- *The Pullman Strike of 1994: Turning Point for American Labor* by Linda Jacobs Altman (Brookfield, Connecticut: Millbrook Press) was reviewed in the "Grades 3-6 Nonfiction" section of the April 1994 *School Library Journal*. Well-written and attractively illustrated, the 63-page book provides an interesting account of the strike, its background, and its significance and serves as a useful introduction to American labor history for young people. □

The Seattle General Strike, February 1919

Continued from page 36

Massive Solidarity

More than 100,000 workers struck or were idled by the strike, with similar but less complete shutdowns in nearby Tacoma and Renton. "Twenty-one great kitchens eventually served 30,000 meals a day at nominal cost. Those jobs that needed to be done, such as the collection and transportation of food, washing of hospital laundry, and collection of garbage, were exempted from the strike. All those who continued working donated their wages to a general strike fund" (p. 47).

Public order was maintained by a Labor Guard, an informal police force of workers who had fought in the war.

Refusing Mayor Ole Hanson's offer to deputize them, they patrolled the city without guns or stars, relying on their ability to convince workers that any trouble would give the mayor an excuse to begin bloodletting. But in large part, this order was due to the understanding among workers of the consequences of disorder. In all, *the police docket fell to about one-third its normal load throughout the strike* (ibid.; emphasis added — G.S.).

This power of working people's solidarity, incidentally, is the direction in which to look for a long-term solution to the problem of crime — not the building of more jails, the hiring of more cops, or the unending bloody-minded expansion of the death penalty.

How the Strike Ended

The Seattle general strike ended up being only a brief demonstration of labor's vast potential, for it was called off within a few days — owing mainly to pressure from conservative national labor officials who flooded into town, even before the strike began. A number of local unions took part in the strike despite threats by national officers that if they did, their charters would be lifted. On the third day of the strike, Jimmy Duncan and other moderate leaders passed a motion in the EC to end the strike, but the rank and file in the GSC rejected this. Nevertheless, on February 10 a second proposal by Duncan to end the strike on February 11 was adopted by the GSC, although it appealed to all who had gone back to work to resume the strike on its last day, "so that labor could end the strike as unified as when it began" (p. 48).

Rosenthal explains that "the major factor [in ending the strike] was the pressure coming from the national unions and the AFL leadership. With wartime sentiments still powerful and the first great Red Scare beginning...the AFL felt obliged to prove its patriotism...The AFL [even] took credit for ending it." The March 1919 issue of the AFL publication, the *American Federationist*, boasted: "It was the advice and counsel and fearless [sic] attitude of the trade union leaders of the American International Trade unions and not the United States

troops or the edicts of a mayor which ended this brief industrial disturbance of the Northwest."

Not a Failure

Despite its quick ending, the Seattle general strike was not a failure or a defeat. In the years after the strike, despite a severe local depression as the shipyards were closed, Seattle workers did as well as, or better than, those in the average U.S. city in terms of wages, hours, and working conditions. This reflected the employers' caution about attacking a movement willing to stage a general strike and the persistence among the workers of the attitudes behind the strike. As Harvey O'Connor said in *Revolution in Seattle* (p. 141):

For the majority of Seattle unions, there was no sense of defeat as the strike ended. They had demonstrated their solidarity with their brothers in the yards, and the memory of the great days when labor had shown its strength glowed in their minds.

The circulation of the *Union Record* rose from 50,000 to 112,000, while the anti-labor *Seattle Star* soon went out of business.

No Concessions to Red-Baiting

The different currents in the movement remained united, and did not give in to red-baiting. The Central Labor Council issued the following reply to demands from representatives of big business that labor should "clean house."

We hasten to assure the draft-slacking publisher of the *Star*, all the employers who hate labor, and all those who love to lick their boots, that we know exactly what they mean by "reds," we know exactly what they mean by "bolsheviki," exactly what they mean by "cleaning house"; that organized labor in Seattle was never so proud of itself, that it appreciates the reds more for the enemies they have made, that it has no intention of cleaning house to please its opponents, and that the general strike is permanently in the arsenal of labor's peaceful weapons.

Worker militancy increased in the period after the strike, with strike activity among the highest per worker in the U.S. Radicalism also intensified, particularly support for the Russian revolution. In September 1919 Seattle dockworkers refused to load fifty railroad cars of arms and ammunition destined for the counter-revolutionary Whites in Russia; they fought pitched battles with scabs who tried to load this cargo.

Independent Labor Political Action

After the strike the unions began to get involved in independent political action. Rosenthal relates that in the 1920 mayoral election primary, "Jimmy Duncan — ironically seen as the 'General Strike candidate' despite his actual attempts to limit the strike — finished ahead of the incumbent interim mayor running as 'business's candidate,' before eventually losing in the runoff to a moderate 'patriotic' candidate" (p. 54).

That same year a local Farmer-Labor Party was organized, and replaced the Democrats as the second strongest party in the Puget Sound area for several years.

In the years after the strike the policies of the Seattle Central Labor Council continued to be so radical that in 1923 the head of the AFL, Samuel Gompers, sent a letter threatening to revoke the CLC's charter, complaining among other things that "your central body endorses the soviet dictatorship in Russia;...has given its friendship to the I.W.W. and its endorsement to the communist doctrine."

Summing Up

Former Communist Party activist Al Richmond summed up the experience of the Seattle general strike in words applicable to all labor battles:

No strike is ever truly lost. At worst it keeps the spark of revolt alive and is part of a learning process; at the same time, as an overt reminder of the workers' latent capacity and power to revolt, it serves as a restraint upon employers. [Quoted by Rosenthal, p. 51.]

Rob Rosenthal concludes his article on the same note: "The 'steady gains of responsible unionism' are often made possible by the well remembered periods of militant and radical challenges to stability."

We would add that every major upsurge of working class struggle points in the same ultimate direction as the Seattle general strike — toward labor's powerful and productive capacity to manage society itself, not just to "restrain employers" but to create a new and better social order, not just to challenge capitalist stability, but to establish a truly stable society of human solidarity and cooperation, instead of one based on greed, competition, and "impersonal laws of the market." □



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The Manifesto of the Fourth International

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

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

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

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

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

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

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edited by Paul Le Blanc, 412 pages
(1992) — \$12.00

This book focuses on the waves of expulsions which hit the Socialist Workers Party from 1981 through 1984. It provides an inspiring record — and reaffirmation — of the revolutionary ideas and commitments of those who were being forced out of the organization to which many had given "the whole of their lives." also included are: substantial pieces by SWP leaders Jack Barnes and Larry Seigle defending the expulsions; a critique by representatives of the Fourth International; letters and a talk by pioneer Trotskyist James P. Cannon, originally published under the title *Don't Strangle the Party*. A substantial introductory essay by Paul Le Blanc, "Leninism in the United States and the Decline of the Socialist Workers Party," relates the 1981-84 experience to

broader questions of "the vanguard party" and Leninism, the history and character of American Trotskyism, the development of the U.S. working class, and the realities of world politics in the 20th century.

Volume Three:

Rebuilding the Revolutionary Party

edited by Paul Le Blanc, 148 pages
(1990) — \$9.00

This book consists of eight documents. The longest, written in 1983 by Paul Le Blanc and Dianne Feeley, is entitled "In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity" — a response to SWP leader Jack Barnes's attack on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Also included is the founding platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, a lengthy 1988 analysis of the SWP by Frank Lovell and Paul Le Blanc, and two major documents produced by the FIT when the Socialist Workers Party formally broke from the Fourth International in 1990. The volume concludes with three documents dealing with the need for unity among revolutionary socialists in the United States.