

In Defense of Marxism

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African Americans Meet in Baltimore to Discuss The State of the Race

Article by Claire Cohen, page 17



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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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Yeltsin Out of Chechnya! Condemn Washington's Complicity with Yeltsin!

by George Saunders

Many of the points that need to be made against Yeltsin's war in Chechnya are presented in the accompanying texts — a leaflet put out by Trotskyists and Anarcho-Syndicalists in the Moscow region and Renfrey Clarke's report from Moscow.

The authors of the Moscow leaflet are correct to point to the forcible conquest of Chechnya by tsarist Russia in the 19th century, and to the more than 40 years of Chechen resistance to Russian expansion, which was headed at its high point by the Dagestani leader Shamil. That resistance can be likened to the Apache wars, except that the indigenous mountain people of the Northern Caucasus held out against European capitalist expansion much longer — aided by their geography and probably the lower level of military technology of their would-be conqueror. Shamil was like the Tecumseh of the mountain dwellers, uniting many disparate peoples. Essentially it was the same struggle, having much in common with the Mayan people's resistance today (in Chiapas, Mexico, and in Guatemala) — indigenous people resisting the "delights" of civilization, which are being brought to them whether they want it or not.

Lenin often spoke with scorn of the European "great powers" and the "civilization" the capitalist imperialists brought to the colonial peoples. Great power chauvinism, the arrogance of the dominant nation attitude (the white man's burden), has become increasingly intense since the collapse of the pseudo-Leninist USSR.

Official U.S. Support for "Sanctity" of Russia's Borders

Especially at the beginning of the war against Chechnya, the U.S. press, the U.S. government, and of course the U.S. capitalist class as a whole (for which the press and government speak) expressed unconcealed *solidarity* with the Russian capitalist butchers (reincarnated from the Russian Stalinist butchers).

"These things are bound to happen," was the theme of a *Washington Post* article of December 26, 1994, with the headlines "Now It's Ethnic Strife Fueling the World's Conflicts" and "The unrest in Chechnya is part of a pattern."

And the following bald statement appeared in the midst of a "news story" in the *New York Times*: "No great power has ever suggested that this part of the world was anything but part of Russia."

In the face of this *imperialist war* of the Yeltsin government, there often seems to be a great sluggishness about defending the rights of the indigenous peoples.

There is a tacit understanding. The Yeltsin ex-Stalinist, neo-capitalist government (with an army officered by the same bureaucratic elements who officered the "Soviet Socialist" army) winked at the U.S. occupation of Haiti (which to be sure was a much more sophisticated operation — with much less bloodshed, at least so far). In return the U.S. imperialists owlishly look on, urging Yeltsin to be less bloody, but endlessly reassuring him that they recognize the "sanctity of borders."

When the U.S.-based multinationals and the government they control in Washington want their trade to expand, then borders have to be overcome. Free trade blocs are needed. But when someone wants to be free of their control, like the Mayan people of Chiapas, then the territory is "one and indivisible." Or when poor people from the superexploited parts of the globe seek some relief by trying to migrate to the "safer haven" of North America — No! That's illegal. Borders are sacred!

Continued on page 15

Attack on Malcolm X's Legacy

Editors' Note: How the U.S. Government Prepares to Observe Martin Luther King Day and Black History Month

The January 12 indictment of Malcolm X's daughter Qubilah Shabazz on charges of plotting an attempt on the life of Louis Farrakhan, head of the Nation of Islam, represents in reality one more attack by the U.S. government on the Black liberation movement. It is an attack on the legacy of Malcolm X, as well as on his immediate family.

FBI Informer

The government seems to have deliberately timed its indictment to make headlines on the eve of Martin Luther King Day. From all reports, the source of this case lies in a transparent set-up by a government-paid FBI informer, who played the familiar role of agent provocateur. This evident attempt by the government to fan antagonisms among Black activists is like a replay of the COINTELPRO provocations and attacks against the Black Panthers and other Black militants in the 1960s and '70s.

As we go to press, this government provocation seems to have been rejected by virtu-

ally all elements in the Black community, including by Malcolm X's family, by partisans of Malcolm's ideas, and by Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam themselves.

It was reported, for example, that Blacks across the country, in commenting on this case, pointed to the FBI's long history of harassing Black leaders, including tapping the phone of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

March of One Million Projected

Michael Zinzun, chairman of the Coalition Against Police Abuse, active in the Los Angeles area, summed up the situation well: "By trying to portray Malcolm's daughter as an assassin, I think they are trying, on the one hand, to discredit her and thereby Malcolm X. On the other, I also think they are trying to undermine the call by Ben Chavis and Louis Farrakhan to have one million Black males march on Washington, D.C., this summer."

We hope to carry a detailed article about these developments in next month's issue,

buttressed by historical and theoretical material about Malcolm X and the Black struggle for national self-determination.

How We Mark Black History Month

Some important related matters are addressed in the present issue — which represents *our* acknowledgment of Black History Month. Claire Cohen has an informative, first-hand report from the National State of the Race Conference in Baltimore last November, attended by some 1,500 African American grassroots activists; T. Archer reviews the important new journal *African American Nation* (founded in 1994); reviewing the film *Glory*, Vera Wigglesworth and Jim Miles look again at the crucial role of Black soldiers in winning the war against slavery, helping to gain their own emancipation, not just having it handed to them by Lincoln's proclamation; and Jean Tussey describes a local tribute in Cleveland to the contributions of Black socialist and trade unionist, A. Philip Randolph.

Moscow Protests Condemn Chechnya Bloodshed

by Renfrey Clarke

“We can no longer have as president of Russia a person who bombs peaceful populations,” Alexander Buzgalin, a leading member of the Committee for Democracy and Human Rights in Russia, declared to journalists at a picket line on December 24. “Stop Yeltsin — Stop the War!” a placard behind him demanded. “One Road to Peace — Withdraw the Troops!” argued another.

That picket, by about fifty human rights supporters and members of the local Chechen community, was typical of the almost daily protest actions that have been mounted in Moscow since columns of Russian tanks rolled into the defiant Caucasus republic of Chechnya on December 11. In some of the coldest weather for years in the Russian capital, protesters have turned out again and again to demonstrate on Pushkin Square [the traditional site for protests by human-rights activists during the last years of bureaucratic rule by the Stalinized Communist Party of the Soviet Union]; to rally in front of the towering gates of Gorky Park; or to be arrested in front of the building of the Presidential Administration.

After December 20, when Russian jets began terror bombing raids on residential districts of Grozny, the Chechen capital, the rhetoric of speakers at the protest actions took on an edge of desperation. “What is happening in Chechnya is a shameful stain on Russian history — a crime against humanity,” retired KGB General Oleg Kalugin declaimed to a 500-strong rally outside Gorky Park on December 25. A placard at the rally was more succinct: “Stop the Kremlin Butchers!”

An ironic note at several of the demonstrations was the presence on the same platform of people who had been on opposite political sides last time Russian Army artillery opened fire on civilians — during the storming of the parliament building in October 1993. “There used to be differences” within human rights groups about whether to support Yeltsin, former Gulag inmate Susanna Pechuro reportedly commented. “Now there are none.” Democratic Russia, the liberal coalition that was instrumental in bringing Yeltsin to power at the beginning of the 1990s, and which fervently supported his assault on the constitution and the parliament in 1993, is now an important force within the antiwar movement.

As images of the Chechnya carnage have filled the television screens, Russia’s liberal

intelligentsia has experienced a sort of political epiphany — a moment of agonizing self-knowledge. Terrified of a “Communist revanche,” the Russian “democrats” enthusiastically handed near-dictatorial powers to the tough former boss of the Sverdlovsk Province Communist Party machine — Boris Yeltsin.

October 1993 was something that most of the “democrats” found they could stomach. But Chechnya has finally been too much — at least partly because in the case of Chechnya, Yeltsin has stopped pretending to heed the opinions of the liberal Russian intelligentsia or to cultivate its support. On December 14 Sergei Yushenkov, chairperson of the parliament’s Defense Committee and for years a servile Yeltsin apologist, was reported to have lamented: “Yeltsin no longer listens to us. He does not need our advice, so it’s time to move into opposition.”

The Russian president, many of his former supporters now believe, has grown disillusioned with his posture as a democrat and is seeking a new base among Russian nationalists. “Yeltsin is in one camp with Zhirinovsky and Baburin,” General Kalugin declared on December 24, referring to two of the best-known leaders of the extreme nationalist forces.

According to this interpretation, Yeltsin’s invasion of Chechnya is both an attempt to do away with a compromising pointer to his regime’s weakness and a bid to win the allegiance of Zhirinovsky supporters by staging a brief, victorious war of reconquest.

Can this strategy work? Among the many brutalized, declassed Russians, there is certainly a constituency to go after. Reporting a survey of 1,600 people in Moscow on December 16–19, *Izvestia* stated recently that 30 percent of respondents supported taking decisive measures to “establish order” in Chechnya; 36 percent advocated searching for a peaceful solution; and 23 percent called for removing Russian troops from Chechnya. For Yeltsin, who was reported recently to enjoy the confidence of only 8 percent of Russian citizens, the thought of winning the hearts of 30 percent by pressing ahead with a ruthless assault on Chechnya must be alluring indeed.

But the Russian president has picked the wrong nation and the wrong war. The yearning for independence in Chechnya is powerful, and has been immensely strengthened by the latest Russian atrocities. The Caucasus is ideal guerrilla territory, and with support from other peo-

ples of the region, the Chechens promise to be able to mount a punishing struggle for decades if necessary.

Meanwhile the Russian army, in Kalugin’s words, is “demoralized and falling apart.” Its performance in Chechnya so far has been unimpressive; the ferocity of the attacks on civilians has been a reflection of the difficulties for the Russian forces of making progress against Chechen fighters. Among Russian officers with memories of Afghanistan, the idea of fighting a war in the Caucasus is reputed to be intensely unpopular.

Yeltsin’s December 26 order to the army to suspend its operations in Chechnya has not stopped the fighting, and will not do so. So long as Moscow keeps troops in Chechnya and attempts to deny Chechen independence, there will be armed resistance. As the list of Russian dead and wounded lengthens, with no victory in sight, the limited popularity of the war among the Russian population will dissolve.

For Yeltsin to abandon his invasion of Chechnya would be a humiliating “climbdown” from which his political authority would be unlikely to recover. He will not withdraw voluntarily; he will have to be forced. One way this could occur is through a wholesale military revolt, something which is far from inconceivable. Somewhat more likely is the rise of a broad and powerful antiwar movement which a weakened president could no longer resist.

In many ways, the prospects for building such a movement are highly favorable. Big capital, both in Russia and abroad, is appalled by the thought of a war blowing the Russian budget apart. The major liberal newspapers are hostile to Yeltsin’s exploit. The chastened intelligentsia is ready to polemicize and to some extent, to come out onto the streets.

But Yeltsin can only be defeated if the antiwar movement sinks deep roots among working people and the trade unions, and if its perspectives are not of token protests and parliamentary resolutions, but of mass mobilization.

The key builders of a movement of this type will not be liberals, but left radicals who are not afraid of workers becoming active and politicized. The war in Chechnya thus imposes a huge historic task on the small forces of Russia’s “new left.” □

December 27, 1994

No to the War Against Chechnya! No More Afghanistans!

The following leaflet was produced in January 1995 by Trotskyists of the Socialist Workers Alliance and anarchists of the Group of Revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalists from the city of Elektrogorsk in the Moscow region. The English-language text, sent to us from Moscow, has been edited slightly for reasons of style.

Those who rule our country are again at war. Russian forces have been thrown into battle to suppress Chechnya, where now the blood of peaceful men, women, and children is flowing, homes and hospitals are being destroyed, and Russian soldiers, too, are being killed.

In whose name?

The government and the president tell us it is necessary to liquidate the sources of conflict on Chechen territory. But who is doing everything possible to inflame that conflict? Who puts tanks, artillery, and ammunition in the hands of "oppositionists" — that is, criminals like Labazanov (a member of the Chechen opposition supported by the Russian government)? Who sent armed, trained mercenaries to Chechnya? The same ruling circle of Russia that today hypothetically pretends to the role of "peacekeeper". No, they do not want peace. Their credo is the old imperialist principle, "divide and rule" — "Let these Chechens destroy each other to make it all the easier to impose our rule."

We are told that the purpose of the military operation is to "restore democracy in Chechnya, save its economy, stop the spread of crime, etc." But who operates the blockade that condemns Chechnya to hunger, ruin, and decay? The rulers of Russia. It is really they, not the "leaders of Caucasian nationalism," who are responsible for the growth of crime in this country. When the former and present-day nomenklatura [Communist Party bureaucracy], and the new bourgeoisie, stuff their pockets at the workers' expense, when the robbery of the people is organized by the state, when the government encourages swindlers of all kinds, when the official ideology of the regime can be said to be "get rich, at all costs" — then to speak of the "Chechen roots" of crime is the height of vulgarity. And to believe it is the height of stupidity. The same could be said about all the talk of "democracy." Will democracy really be enriched in Chechnya if an Avturkhanov (leader of the Russian-backed Chechen opposition) rides in on a tank to take the place of Dudayev?

The main argument of those who have sent the armed forces to Chechnya is that it is "necessary to preserve the territorial integrity of Russia". But who says the Chechen people want to be ruled from Moscow? It was not by its own free will that it was incorporated into Russia. For more than forty years of the last century [1817–1864], Chechnya was warred

upon by the Russian autocracy in [its effort] to conquer the Caucasus. For more than four decades the Chechen mountain-dwellers resisted this [war of] occupation, and could not be subdued even when their country was transformed into a colony by tsarism and then by the "Soviet" empire. Nor have the Chechen people forgotten the brutality of the Stalinist regime, which exiled the Chechen people from their homeland.

Now the Yeltsin "democracy" shows its imperialist essence to the Chechen people. Working at all costs to prevent the Chechen people from independently determining their own fate, the "democratic" power shows itself to be the genuine continuer of the policy of autocracy and totalitarianism. Not without reason has this power united with the "patriotic opposition" [Great Russia chauvinists]. Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin now speak a language surprisingly similar to that of Zhirinovsky [the extreme right-wing Russian chauvinist and demagogue who heads the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia] and Baburin (leader of the Russian Popular Union, part of the "red-brown opposition"). Essentially, this alliance also extends to those "communists" who consider the cause of all misfortunes to be the break-up of the bureaucratic structures of the USSR, which resulted in Chechnya having "too much" sovereignty.

In this way, all the most important political groupings of the Russian ruling class have rallied together on the basis of their imperialist ambitions. It is *their* war. They need to establish political and economic power over the largest possible territory; they need a strategic foothold in the Caucasus; and finally, they need Chechen oil in order to augment their capital.

They care nothing of blood and suffering when power and money are at stake. It is not their sons and brothers who are becoming murderers, or being killed themselves, in Chechnya. Ordinary people face the bullets — the rulers divide the profits and the "spheres of influence."

All this has happened before in our history. The most recent example was Afghanistan. Then, a heavy price was paid by our people for the Politburo's attempts to expand its possessions. If we do not stop today's war, the same thing will happen.

Of course, Grozny can be taken, the Chechen forces — including the aged and the youth — can be routed, the whole of Chech-

nya can be filled with soldiers. But it would be naive to think that this would solve anything. In this case a lengthy partisan war against the forces of occupation would begin — a war which would take decades and, possibly, hundreds of thousands of lives.

Yeltsin hopes that the Chechen adventure will help him in internal politics. Firstly, by distracting people's attention from the everyday social-economic problems and by at least partially turning the growing discontent against the [scapegoat] image of a "Chechen enemy." Secondly, in the name of withstanding the "Chechen threat," it will be necessary to "tighten the screws" in Russia itself, especially in the case of unwelcome strikes or other actions by workers. Already an internal repressive force has been introduced in Moscow; the ruling powers are showing displeasure even with the limited "free speech" which exists on television, etc.

In reality, where there is war there is dictatorship.

There need be no division between us working people in Russia and ordinary Chechen people. We face the same evils and the same enemies — the bourgeois-bureaucratic state which is carrying out this war in the interests of the parasitic elite.

Today every honest person who does not want Yeltsin's terror in Chechnya to be carried out in his name must raise his voice against oppression, against war, against a new Afghanistan. The politicians are silent; the "international community" is silent — so the people must have their say!

Furthermore we must remember: this aggressive war of plunder is the inevitable consequence of the whole policy of the ruling regime and the class that it serves. In order to destroy the basis on which this senseless and criminal adventure has been mounted, the working people must create their own powerful, independent organizations, which will be capable of taking control of society into their own hands.

**No to Imperialism and Aggression!
Russian Forces out of Chechnya!
Long Live the International Solidarity of
the Working People!**

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The Zapatista Struggle and Devaluation of the Peso

by Rosendo Mendoza

Before discussing the current crisis around the fall of the peso, a review of the situation in Chiapas on the first anniversary of the Zapatista rebellion is in order.

In early December, Ernesto Zedillo was sworn in as the newly elected president of Mexico. He is of course the leader of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), which has ruled Mexico under a virtual one-party dictatorship for nearly seven decades. When Zedillo took office he tried to adopt a much more aggressive attitude toward the movement in Chiapas, to carry through on the original counterinsurgency program of his predecessor, Carlos Salinas, but in a politically more hostile way.

He made a number of statements at press conferences in which he began to blame the Zapatistas for allegedly trying the country's patience to the limit, for generating economic problems in the country. At the same time he continued to promote the Chiapas Fund, which is supposedly an investment fund that's been kicked in to by the major corporations in Mexico. It's worth about \$300 million at this point, and is supposed to be for special development projects and investment projects in the Chiapas region.

Also, in regard to the possible resumption of talks between the government and the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional), rather than recognize the accepted and logical mediators, namely, Bishop Samuel Ruiz of San Cristóbal de las Casas and the National Intermediation Commission, which he heads, Zedillo tried to name a multiparty legislative commission, with members from the different political parties in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, as the main vehicle for negotiations with the EZLN. Obviously this was a way of not giving a lot of leeway in terms of maneuvering in the negotiations. At the same time, he continued the military build-up in the region.

The EZLN rejected Zedillo's proposal and on December 19 managed to make an impressive display of force outside of the immediate area that is recognized by the government as rebel-held territory. They carried out coordinated actions in 38 municipalities outside of that region, most of them extending in a northward band up toward the Gulf coast.

That's significant in two ways. On the one hand, it's a show of force in a strip to the north, from which a lot of the indigenous population had migrated into the Lacandón region in the 1960s and '70s. So there are a lot of close family ties between the people in the EZLN and the

people in that region leading north toward the Gulf of Mexico.

On the other hand, these actions obviously involved not just EZLN units but a lot of people from mostly peasant organizations in the region who closely identify with the EZLN. There were local people participating in the mobilization on December 19, which mainly consisted of blocking roads and taking over some municipalities for a limited period of time, with all the participants wearing the traditional EZLN ski mask and carrying small arms. A lot of them identified themselves not directly as EZLN combatants but as people who sympathize with the EZLN struggle.

As a result two things took place. One, there was a massive troop deployment. At this point most estimates put the figure at about two-thirds of the active troop strength of the Mexican army as being in and around Chiapas, deployed as part of the army's containment strategy. Two, at the same time Zedillo was forced to retreat. He backed down and recognized the CONAI (National Intermediation Commission) led by Bishop Ruiz as the main mediators for the talks, and named his own representative for the talks.

EZLN Conditions for Peace Talks

The EZLN has specified its conditions. It calls for a major reform of the constitution, the removal of the PRI governor in Chiapas, Eduardo Robledo (whose "victory" was based on a fraudulent election on August 21), and in effect the recognition of the parallel government which has been declared by Amado Avendaño, who was the candidate of the PRD (Democratic Revolutionary Party) for governor of Chiapas. Avendaño claims the support of a little over half the municipalities in the state. In some cases this involves parallel municipal administrations, but most of them are municipalities in opposition, which have been taken over by mass organizations and have begun to function as local administrations loyal to the Avendaño government.

The EZLN also calls for resolution of post-electoral conflicts in the states of Vera Cruz, San Luis Potosí, and Tabasco. In Tabasco there have been large mobilizations, including the takeover of significant oil installations by PRD supporters, protesting the results of gubernatorial elections there in November.

There have been other shows of force by the EZLN in Chiapas, demonstrating that its influence now extends well beyond the initial area that it dominated. On January 3, for example, a caravan from the CND (Convención Nacional Democrática) was received in San Andrés de

Larrainzar, which is well outside the initial area. There were 200 EZLN regulars there. Shortly thereafter, the Mexican army moved in, in one of the many operations it is carrying out now, operations in which it distributes food to communities that are considered in rebel territory. This is done as part of the counterinsurgency tactics in the region.

For a National Liberation Movement

It was on January 1 that the EZLN laid out its conditions for the resumption of peace talks. It also issued a call for a National Liberation Movement to be presided over by the CND and by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. (We can come back to this point later.)

Devaluation of the Peso

On December 20, one day after the deployment of EZLN forces around the state of Chiapas, the Mexican government announced a devaluation of the peso. They used the EZLN deployment as a political excuse for a measure they felt obliged to take anyway. That excuse didn't sell well. An initial poll taken right after the announcement indicated that 80 percent of the population didn't believe the EZLN was responsible. All polls showed a very high rejection of Carlos Salinas, the former president, who was widely seen as being responsible for the devaluation. The latest poll I saw, a couple of days ago, indicated that all but 14 percent of the population tend to blame it on Zedillo, Salinas, or both. The attempt to scapegoat the Zapatistas hasn't played well at all.

Within a few days of December 20, the Zedillo government carried out a second devaluation. It was a major blunder, one of a series of blunders by the new administration. On the morning of December 22, it raised the upper level of the trade band of the peso against the dollar by 15 percent. That actually provoked a run on the peso, which led to a decision to let the peso float freely. It then began to drop even more considerably.

The reason for the devaluation is related to a crisis in the development model the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been promoting all over in underdeveloped and newly industrializing countries, of which Mexico was the star example.

A more specific problem was related to the particular spin of the Salinas administration, which was betting on the possibility of heavy inflows of portfolio investments, based on the need to achieve inflation rates similar to those

of developed countries and maintaining a strong currency. When you began to see an outflow of investments, particularly portfolio investments, in early 1994, there was initial concern even in the Salinas administration over whether it was necessary to devalue the peso at that time. That again was not exclusively tied to the EZLN uprising in Chiapas. In fact, the market reactions were much stronger when there were signs of growing instability and infighting within the regime itself, such as the Colosio assassination and the assassinations and kidnappings of other leading business and political figures later in 1994.

Part of the problem is that Mexico was no longer an alluring investment option for international capital. Other emerging markets were increasingly more attractive for achieving high yields on short-term investments. There was a tendency to move investments into other markets, further south in Latin America and in Europe, for example, Albania and Poland.

However, the Salinas government decided to stick to its guns and maintain the value of the peso at all costs, and they wound up spending most of their \$25 billion in foreign currency reserves to shore up the peso. At this point they're down to about \$5 billion. So this policy was no longer sustainable; they had to devalue. And they simply tried, unsuccessfully, to get some political mileage out of this by blaming the Zapatistas. But it hasn't worked at all, and they haven't been repeating those charges.

They've been having to acknowledge major policy errors from before. The Zedillo administration is trying to throw as much blame as possible upon its predecessor, the Salinas team.

Obviously the situation is very severe, because even the emergency plan they have adopted has very little credibility. They're scrambling to catch up, but most aspects of the recovery plan are not coming together at this point. Today, on January 9, the peso took another dive. Yesterday, on January 8, Mexico began to draw on its \$15 billion in credit lines, mainly from the United States and Canada, in the form of purchases of pesos. Apparently this was seen as a way to offset the fact that a large number of dollar-denominated treasury bonds were coming due, and they weren't expecting much of that money to be reinvested in Mexico, so they were trying to offset the effects of that. It did not seem to work. It brought the peso up a bit on January 8, but on January 9 the value of the peso had fallen to about six to the dollar.

A Social Pact

One of the measures the Zedillo government took to supposedly help stabilize the economic situation was to broker a broad agreement among the PRI-dominated labor and peasant union bureaucracies, the major business associations, and the government itself. The aim was to define the main lines of economic policy, including currency policy. The new version of this social pact, signed in late December, is called the "Agreement to Confront the Economic Crisis." Basically it calls for a very se-

vere austerity program, limiting wage increases to a maximum of 7 percent at the same time that the government is projecting annual inflation for 1995 of around 16 percent, although no one really believes they can hold inflation down to that. It will probably be in the 20 percent range.

This agreement supposedly demands concessions from business to correspond to the limit on wage increases. Businessmen are supposed to make an effort to reduce their profit margins and things of that sort, but obviously there is no way of monitoring that. It's not at all a serious proposal.

The main emergency features of this agreement are that they are reducing government spending to try to achieve a balanced budget for 1995 (which no one expects will actually happen). They're also following the same basic formula as before — of trying to sell off what's left of state-owned industry. They're projecting \$14.5 billion in new sell-offs: basically, seaports, airports, rail lines, and the country's government-owned satellites.

The problem they have is that most of what they're putting on the auction block — with the possible exception of the satellites — is not very viable. Capitalist buyers are not very interested because these facilities are in such bad shape. They're not going to get any decent money out of them. Most observers believe that the \$14.5 billion figure is wildly exaggerated in terms of what they can make on these sales.

In regard to Pemex, the state-owned oil company, I suspect there may be growing pressure for that to be sold to private investors. An IMF delegation is expected to arrive today to begin negotiations. This is a bit of a humiliation for the government, the first time since 1989 that it has had to negotiate directly with the IMF in terms of economic policy. But there will probably be more pressure from that quarter to accelerate the privatization of parts of Pemex. They've put in charge of Pemex a number of people who have been developing a policy of gearing it up for privatization. Right now, however, the government is insisting it's not going to privatize either Pemex or the federal electricity commission, but will just sell off particular units.

The Economic Outlook

It looks like the country is heading into a recession. So far the emergency measures have not played well anywhere. The Mexican stock market is continuing to plunge and the peso is continuing to weaken. [This was written before U.S. capital, through the Clinton administration, came up with a \$40 billion plan to try to bail out its capitalist partners and servants in Mexican government and business circles. — Eds.]

There are growing possibilities of popular opposition to the rulers who have gotten Mexico into such a mess. The bulk of the labor bureaucracy of course is very much tied to the PRI government and its policies. Only one of the unions that traditionally signs these types of agreements failed to sign this time. That was the electrical workers union, which is one of the most independent unions among those belong-

ing to the official umbrella group, the Congress of Labor.

In terms of developing opposition, at this point there's very little leadership from within any significant unions or from within the political parties either. Most of that will probably continue to develop outside the major political organizations. For example, the PRD and the PAN (National Action Party) are increasingly adopting a conciliationist approach to the Zedillo regime. The PRD has expressed increased willingness to negotiate with the administration. When Zedillo announced the labor-business-government pact, there was a very odd detail he included. Usually it's a strictly economic package, but his speech focused partly on increasing democracy and electoral reform, which is the hook to keep the PRD and PAN on board in terms of negotiations with the regime and the possibility of coopting more figures from in and around those parties into administrative posts.

The National Liberation Movement

The EZLN, with its proposal for a new formation, the MLN (National Liberation Movement), is looking to develop a broader-based movement to make up for the fact that there isn't any significant political leadership outside of Chiapas that's willing to directly challenge the regime.

The choice of the name MLN is interesting because it was originally used by a broad-based left opposition that was formed in Mexico in the wake of the Cuban revolution. It lasted from around 1961 to 1963. It was led by, among others, Lázaro Cárdenas (the former president of Mexico, who nationalized the oil industry in the late 1930s). Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was also active in that earlier MLN. It included the Communist Party and most of the left that existed at that time. It was also largely coopted by the government eventually. The name harks back to that organization, which sort of fell apart in 1963. They managed to coopt a lot of its leaders into government posts, and at the same time took a hard line toward those who remained active.

The call by the EZLN was for the CND and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas to build this new movement. Cárdenas responded indirectly by issuing his own call for the formation of a movement, taking up a lot of the same points raised by the EZLN. But he's obviously very worried about developing a direct identification with the EZLN or being seen as a political arm of the EZLN. Nevertheless, he is promoting this. At this particular point he's been largely frozen out of the leadership of the PRD, which is on a course of increasing conciliation with the regime. Cárdenas, on the other hand, is maintaining a posture of opposition, refusing to recognize the Zedillo administration, supporting the Avendaño administration in Chiapas, taking a much more radical position.

The PRD is not pleased by the proposal. In fact there's already been some talk of trying to issue an alternative proposal to undercut the one put forward by Cárdenas for a new movement.

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Solidarity Conference in Havana

Cuba and the World

by John Daniel

Over 3,000 delegates from 107 nations met in Havana November 21–25 for the first World Conference in Solidarity with Cuba. The conference was opened by Sergio Corrieri, president of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) and was attended by such well known figures as Daniel Ortega, Nobel Prize winners Rigoberta Menchú and Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, Marcelino Dos Santos, Pastors for Peace leader Rev. Lucius Walker, Frei Betto, and Canadian MP Svend Robinson, to name a few.

Conference participants, including over 250 from the U.S., were able to visit factories, schools, hospitals, and other sites while the conference was not in session. The Conference itself was divided into three working commissions, plenary sessions, and speeches followed by discussions. Notable speakers included the highest levels of the Cuban leadership presently engaged in the struggle to survive the “Special Period.”

Carlos Lage, vice president of the Council of State, explained that Cuba found itself in its present difficult situation as a result of the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the tightening U.S. blockade. He also described how economic associations that Cuba has been entering into were “necessary changes for the defense of our achievements, in order to adapt our socialist system to current international economic relations.” Lage reported that so far 165 joint ventures have been entered into with foreign investors.

Ricardo Alarcón, president of the National Assembly, while describing the nature of Cuban democracy pointed out that from the general strike in 1959 until the present, the Cuban people have participated and played a leading role

in every endeavor of the revolution, not only in the first literacy campaigns and Committees for the Defense of the Revolution but also in public health and the innumerable internationalist missions. “That is why,” he added, “when the Cuban people discuss how to develop and deepen their democratic system, they are not thinking of how to look good for those who consider themselves to be the owners of democratic ideals and who seek to impose on other countries how they have to organize their societies in this unipolar world today. What we are doing is continuing in the same process of emancipating people who stopped being victims of their own history and became its main protagonist.”

Cuban Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina spoke on the second day of the conference and reiterated, “The revolution of the poor, for the poor, and by the poor didn’t remain just an historic pronouncement by Fidel; it was converted into history by the poor themselves.” He further went on to state, “There are those who council us to make concessions in order to get along with the United States. Experience shows us that if you give them a finger, they’ll want your life.”

The conference closed with a speech by Fidel Castro Ruz, president of the Republic of Cuba and first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba. Excerpts from his speech appear elsewhere in this issue (see next page).

Below are a few of the resolutions adopted at the conference [from *Granma International*, December 7, 1994].

- As 1995 is the 100th anniversary of the death of José Martí, that year shall be declared the International Year of José

Martí and of the Fight Against the Blockade.

- To celebrate World Day of Solidarity with Cuba on October 8. Solidarity drives will be held throughout the year in connection with Cuban national holidays, such as the International Week of Protest and Education in April 1995.
- To promote by all possible means an increase in trade, investments, tourism, and other modalities of exchange with Cuba to break the blockade and publicize the Cuban reality.
- To pressure the U.S. government to comply with UN resolutions which condemn the blockade.
- To continue to promote national and international aid drives to mitigate the effects of the blockade, such as the “Educate for a Better World” campaign to collect and send school supplies, and to highlight the political nature of this aid.
- To hold coordinated activities among the countries of one or several continents in solidarity with Cuba and in opposition to the blockade, such as the Friendship Caravans organized by the Pastors for Peace, and regional meetings of organizations of friendship and solidarity with Cuba.
- To hold international youth campaigns of solidarity with Cuba and against the blockade, including an international rock festival.
- To convene a 2nd World Solidarity with Cuba Conference, whose date and venue will be determined at a later date and which shall be financed by the participating delegations. □

The Zapatista Struggle and Devaluation of the Peso

Continued from page 5

Heberto Castillo, who was a major figure in the MLN in the early 1960s, a leader of the Mexican Workers Party in the 1970s (a kind of left nationalist party), and the 1988 presidential candidate of the United Mexican Socialist Party (which was dominated by the former Communist Party and subsequently dissolved into the PRD), is talking about forming an MLN that would be based on people from the PRI, the PAN, the PRD, social organizations — and business leaders and bankers!

I don’t think Castillo and his allies are going to go anywhere with their proposal. They’re just looking to undercut a national movement in-

volving Cárdenas and the Convention forces, which might attract other social organizations and political forces at this point. There is support among the Convention forces for trying to build a broader movement of this sort.

Cárdenas just announced his proposal on January 6, so it’s too early to say how the forces supporting the EZLN call will try to implement it or where to go from here, now that Cárdenas has announced a version of his own.

Balance of Trade Problems

One of the main aims of the current crisis program is to cut the current account deficit [i.e., the deficit in the balance of trade]. That was the

main problem fueling the peso devaluation. The idea was that a devaluation would automatically reduce imports and boost exports. The problem is that since they have maintained this policy of opening up the economy full speed, much of domestic industry, or industry oriented toward the domestic market, which would have been in a position to take advantage of new export opportunities, is no longer in shape to do that. Either they’ve closed down or, in a lot of sectors — including electronics, textiles, really across the board — companies over the last couple of years have just shut down production and turned their factories into warehouses for handling im-

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Excerpts from Fidel Castro's Speech

We have not only had to endure the blockade during the years of the revolution; we have also had to endure incessant hostility in the political sphere, from attempts to eliminate the revolution's leaders, through every known form of subversion and destabilization, to direct and perennial sabotage of our economy...

Our country has also been subject to chemical warfare, through the introduction of toxic elements, and biological warfare via the introduction of plant, animal, and human diseases. There are no weapons or resources that have not been used against our country and our revolution by U.S. authorities and governments...

The war waged against the Cuban revolution has been total and absolute; and it is not an old war, it is still being maintained, and plans are being made and carried out to sabotage our economy and our strategic industries.

Currently, organizations closely linked to the U.S. government are preparing to attack the revolution's leaders — nobody should think that this is a thing of the past, it's going on right now. They are planning dirty wars, armed mercenary infiltrations to kill, sabotage, create insecurity, and to bring death to every part of our country. I am saying this in all seriousness, that such actions against Cuba are being planned by the United States. This amounts to something more than a blockade...

The United States is talking about human rights!... [Here in Cuba] you won't see people sleeping in doorways, covered with newspapers, regardless of our present poverty. There is not a single human being abandoned or without social security, regardless of our present great poverty. (*Applause.*) The vices we see every day in capitalist societies do not exist in our country. This is an achievement of the revolution...

We are the country in the world with the most doctors per capita, regardless of the special period (*applause*) and I'm not only referring to the Third World, but to the whole world! More than the Scandinavians, more than the Canadians and all those who are at the top rankings in public health. By reducing infant mortality from 60 to 10 per 1,000 live births and with other pediatric programs, the revolution has saved the lives of more than 300,000 children.

We have the most teachers per capita in the world, (*applause*) regardless of the hardships we suffer... That is the country that is being blockaded, that is the country

that they are trying to bring to its knees through hunger and disease...

On the U.S. November Elections

When you analyze the electoral results in the United States you discover that they have just elected a new Congress, where undoubtedly there are worrying tendencies toward conservatism and the extreme right; but those are internal matters in the United States. The truth of the matter is, I can assure you, I promise you, we have not made it a condition that the United States renounce its system in order to normalize relations. (*Laughter and applause.*) Just imagine if we told them they had to have 80% of the electorate voting...

It is very much the same in many countries of Latin America. Many people don't even vote. The slaves and the servants say, "What am I going to vote for, if I'm still going to be just the same?"...

In our elections... 95% of Cuban citizens vote... the local residents nominate the candidates... campesinos... women's organizations... trade unions... Committees for the Defense of the Revolution take part in the process of selecting candidates and there are numerous students who are deputies to the National Assembly and women, campesinos, workers, and intellectuals, from all sectors...

What kind of democracy is it that requires one to be a millionaire to be able to have all the resources with which to speak and persuade people to vote for you? And then the candidate doesn't remember those who voted for him until the next elections four or five years later; he doesn't think about them ever again, he forgets them.

In our country people can be removed from their posts, and the same applies to a municipal delegate as well as the highest official...

That is why for us the question of ending the blockade in exchange for political concessions, concessions that correspond to the sovereignty of our country, is unacceptable. It is exasperating, and really, we would rather perish than give up our sovereignty. (*Prolonged applause.*)...

When we helped the Central American revolutionaries, the United States said that they would remove the blockade if we stopped helping them, and nothing of the kind ever crossed our minds. (*Applause*) On other occasions they said that they would be prepared to remove the blockade if we stopped helping Angola and other African

countries, and the idea of selling out our relations with other countries never crossed our minds... The blockade will never end at that price, because it is a price we are not prepared to pay...

Now they talk about the globalization of the economy. We'll see what is left from this globalization for the countries of the Third World, with the disappearance of all the current defense mechanisms of the Third World, which must compete with the technology and the immense development of the industrialized capitalist countries. Now the industrialized countries will try more than ever to exploit the natural resources and the cheap work force of the Third World, to accumulate more and more capital. However, it is superdeveloped capitalism, like in Europe, for example, that has more unemployed people all the time, and the more development, the more unemployed there are.

What will happen with our countries? There will be a globalization of the differences, of the social injustice, the globalization of poverty.

However, this is the world we've got, with which we must trade and exchange our products, in which we have to survive. That is why we must adapt to that world and adopt those measures which we consider essential, with a very clear objective... Hence, all of the measures, changes, and reforms that we have been making, in one way or another have the objective, as we stated in this conference, of safeguarding our independence and the Revolution, because the Revolution is the source of everything, and the achievements of socialism, which is to say to preserve socialism or the right to continue constructing socialism when circumstances allow it. (*Prolonged applause*)

We are making changes, but without giving up our independence and sovereignty; (*applause*) we are making changes, but without giving up the principle of a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. That, translated into revolutionary language, is the government of the workers, by the workers, and for the workers. (*Prolonged applause*) It's not a government of the bourgeoisie, by the bourgeoisie, and for the bourgeoisie; nor a government of the capitalists, by the capitalists, and for the capitalists; nor a government of the transnationals, by the transnationals, and for the transnationals; nor a government of the imperialists, by the imperialists, and for the imperialists. (*applause*)...

Leader of Haitian Workers Federation Speaks Out

“What We Have in Haiti Now Is Not Democracy — It Is Occupation”

by Cajuste Lexiuste

As told to David Weiss in French and translated into English by Ronald A. Aubourg and Raynald Laforest on December 26, 1994.

My name is Cajuste Lexiuste. I have been general secretary of Haiti's General Confederation of Workers (CGT) since October 7, 1990. The CGT consists of different affiliated labor organizations. We were 25,000 strong before the coup d'état of September 1991, and our organization included factory workers as well as those from the assembly sector and agricultural workers. Two of the most prominent sections of the Confederation were the Federation of Agricultural Workers of Gros-Morne and that of St Michel de l'Attalay. Those federations themselves are affiliated to other peasant labor organizations.

I became a founding member of the Metropolitan Public Transport Workers Union (SCTPM) in 1986, and I was also general secretary and president. SCTPM is a very important and strategic organization, since, unlike the United States, which has different ways of traveling, such as by bus and by subway, Haiti has only one public transportation system — minivans. SCTPM was the largest union for public transportation drivers in Haiti. I along with other comrades tried to unionize the drivers, despite the fact that an organized system of transportation was nonexistent in the country. The public transportation in Haiti is owned by the private sector, with individuals owning as few as one minivan and as many as 10. To assume the position of general secretary of the CGT I was obligated to resign my post as president of the drivers union.

The Drivers Union

The drivers union since its inception in March 1986 has improved the position of its members by, for example, hosting seminars. Also, particularly after the fall of the Duvaliers, we became overwhelmed with complaints from the drivers. As you may know, in Haiti there is not a real, independent police force; this duty is assumed by the army, which results in many abuses against drivers. We have protested, as well as organized marches, against the abuses by the military.

For example in 1987, a soldier in the countryside fatally shot a driver who was in detention. I tried with other comrades to mobilize the drivers and organized a general strike, which lasted six days. We demanded that the murderer be tried, and as a result of our strike, which crippled the whole economy, the Namphy gov-

ernment bowed to our demand. We had made a specific demand for the soldier to be tried in a civil court; that demand was not accorded. However, the soldier was court-martialed and sentenced to life imprisonment, and his salary was given to the wife of the victim, who was expecting at that time.

In 1989 Gen. Prosper Avril assumed the presidency of Haiti and nominated his brother-in-law, Isidor Pognon, to head the Motor Vehicles Department, which is part of the police. Pognon is a known torturer and was responsible for many deaths on April 26, 1986, during a peaceful march. He was the head of Fort-Dimanche (a known torture center). We protested vehemently against this nomination. As a result of our actions Gen. Avril ordered the transfer of Pognon.

The CGT in Electoral Struggles

We have encountered all sorts of obstacles during election periods.

In 1987 there was an election in which a lot of voters were assassinated by the attachés and machetes, particularly in Ruelle Vaillant at a voting station. Candidates Gerard Gourge, a lawyer, the ex-president of the Haitian Committee for Human Rights, and a member of the National Council of Government (CNG) headed by Gen. Henri Namphy, and the late Sylvio Claude of the Haitian Christian Democratic Party (PDCH) were at that time the front runners.

In 1990, there was another election, and the people of Haiti elected Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide. He had accepted to become candidate after a majority of the people urged him on. Members of the CGT gave their undivided support to Aristide. We publicly supported him and published a list of demands, asking him, if and when he became president, to improve the lives of our drivers; we particularly demanded respect for the rights of workers.

The main reason we supported Aristide was his public position against the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and also for his public statements against exploitation of the workers. One demand met by the Aristide-Preval government was an increase in wages for the workers in the assembly sector. This bill was submitted to the Parliament, was voted on, and was supposed to have been effective as of October 1991.

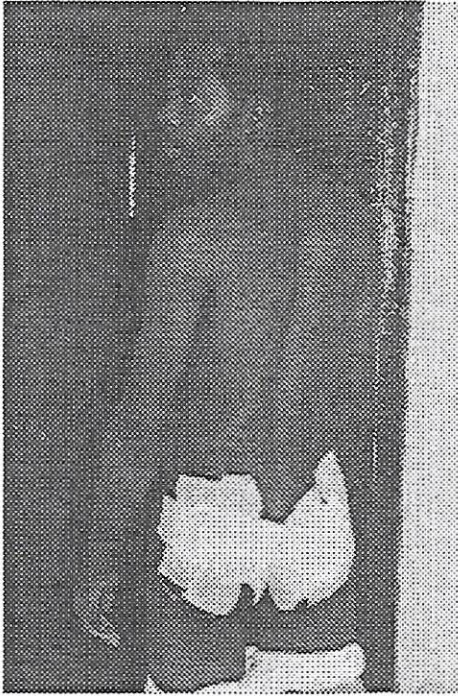
The minimum wage was to go up to 26 gourdes (\$5.20 per day) from 15 gourdes (\$3.00 per day).

The minimum wage of 15 gourdes per day dated back to 1984, but according to the Labor Code of François (Papa Doc) Duvalier, when a rise in inflation occurs it is obligatory for the employer to adjust the salary to the current inflation rate. Unfortunately, the cost of living began rising drastically and the minimum wage did not. The September 1991 coup cut short the life of this program and sent President Aristide into exile, where he remained until October 15, 1994. As is well known, he returned to Haiti following a military intervention by the United States.

Opposition to U.S. Intervention

We worked very hard for Aristide's return to power, but we were and are against a military intervention in our country. For we have full knowledge of the history of the U.S. intervention in other countries, as well as in our own. The United States occupied us from 1915 until 1934. The same institutions that took over Haiti in 1994 had earlier created the Haitian “gendarmier” (precursor of today's army). It is this “gendarmier” which produced some of the worst criminals Haiti has ever known, such as “Generals” Avril, Namphy, and Regala, all trained at Fort Benning, Georgia and at the School of the Americas, in Panama. It is these same U.S. forces who created the anti-democratic groups in Haiti, such as FRAPH (Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti, a CIA creation), the section chiefs, the attachés.

Yes, we were always for the return of Aristide, but we were and remain against the military intervention of the United States. Today the president is back in Haiti, stripped of real powers. He is a prisoner of the United States, while the U.S. ambassador to Haiti assumes real power in the country. For example, this week I heard a statement made by William Swing, the U.S. ambassador, during an interview. He assured the people of Haiti that they, as in the U.S., are making progress, thanks to the upcoming legislative elections. He arrogates to himself the right to address any political or social gathering he pleases, trying to influence their positions on issues. This is in direct violation of Haitian law and the Geneva Convention (especially in regard to foreign diplomatic personnel).



The author, showing the results of torture at the hands of the Haitian police.

The Present Situation

The members of FRAPH are still powerful in Haiti. It is now clear to us why. Not long ago the special envoy of the United States to Haiti, Lawrence Pezzulo, made a public statement to the effect that they created FRAPH to pressure President Aristide. As we speak, there is an organization in Haiti which is suing the leaders of FRAPH, particularly Emanuel (Toto) Constant. His response to the suit was that he will not appear before a judge until after the legislative elections.

There is only an apparent stability in Port-au-Prince and the other large cities. For example, last week the "zenglendos" (armed thugs) were still terrorizing the people of Gonaïves. I believe the situation in the capital is very tense. Right now they are preparing the elections and this is a priority for the United States. Thus, they will not let the FRAPH people react now; they want to create a sense of security in the country.

The United States is not interested in the president; they are rather interested in a government that has a majority in the parliament. I am convinced that the upcoming elections will be very chaotic, the putschists will create an alliance in an attempt to win more seats in the parliament, blocking with political parties such as the Movement to Restore Democracy in Haiti (MIDH) of Marc Bazin, PANPRA of Serge Gilles, and the MDN of Hubert De Ronceray. I would not be surprised if Toto Constant becomes prime minister next year. If they have the majority after the elections, they will have the luxury of choosing a prime minister closest to them. I would not be surprised if a torturer or a murderer is our next prime minister.

At that point the president will not have any power whatsoever. He will be there only to

name the embassy staffs and entertain foreign dignitaries.

My Experience After the Coup

Personally, I have been in exile since October 1993. After the 1991 coup, our organization organized marches, and prepared and published protest letters, to pressure the military government and demand Aristide's return to the country. The CGT, publicly, went against the bogus legislative elections in which 18 parliamentarians were voted in. We believed that it would be safer for Aristide to come back with the military leadership still in place than to come back without a majority in parliament.

I believe that it was a month after this public statement that the National Popular Assembly called for a general strike. Their demand was the immediate departure of General Raoul Cedras and of the police chief, Colonel Michel François, as well as the unconditional return of President Aristide. The CGT supported the strike.

I was with two other comrades, distributing our press release supporting the strike to radio stations. When we arrived at Radio Caraïbes, I noticed a police pickup truck in my rear view mirror. In it was a sergeant and two civilians. With me was Jean St. Louis Joseph, the general secretary of SCTPM, who was carrying the press releases. The sergeant called him and he walked over to him. We proceeded into the building but soon noticed that he did not come along. As head of the CGT, I felt responsible for the delegation and went back down to investigate. At that point the press releases were in the hands of the sergeant and he was pressuring Jean to accompany him to the police station.

I questioned the sergeant, and Jean took advantage of the distraction to flee into the building. The sergeant asked me to accompany him inside. When we got inside Jean was nowhere to be found. That is when the sergeant, not being able to find Jean, announced that we were under arrest. We went to the police headquarters and were verbally harassed and humiliated by the attachés. We were told they were awaiting orders to decide our fate.

After two hours the plainclothes police officers formed a line and one of them punched me above my eye and I was bleeding instantly and two of them pulled me by the arms and dragged me to another room which seems to be used only to torture people. They started punching and kicking me. I noticed a small bed and several batons in the room. I was forced to put my hands between my legs and my head under the bed. One by one they got on the bed with their boots and got off of it using my back as a staircase, and started beating me with the batons. I passed out, and therefore do not know how many hours they spent beating me. It was on Friday, April 23, 1993.

A Nearly Fatal Beating

After a while I found myself in a very dirty cell and worms were crawling into my ears and mouth; I was beaten so badly that I was unable to push the worms away. Nearby I noticed my

other two comrades who had also been arrested: Sauveur Aurelius, president of an agricultural union in Gonaïves and the national delegate of the CGT; and Fabonore St. Vil, secretary of the CGT. Of the three of us Fabonore was spared the worst beating and was able to push the worms away.

We spent three days in the same cell with the same blood-soaked clothes, no food, no shower. We were given food but I was not able to eat. I could not move. On the fourth day, we were called by a sergeant. Sauveur and I weren't able to move, but we were helped by the other able prisoners to the military clinic. There they took off our clothes and we were given new shorts and T-shirts and we were each assigned a bed. A short time later we received the visit of a delegation of the UN/OAS Civilian Mission in Haiti headed by Colin Granderson, the executive director. I believed that it was the visit of the Mission which prompted all this sudden attention by the military. I was in such deteriorating condition that my rear end had become infected. The doctor who accompanied the Mission suggested that I be admitted to a hospital right away.

Everyone, including my family, thought that I was going to be transferred to a private hospital, but I was instead taken to the military hospital in a military ambulance. I was operated on three times, twice on the buttocks and once on the kidneys. The military doctors, after examinations, found out that I had kidney failure. I was taken to a private hospital because the military hospital was not equipped to deal with my kidneys. I spent a month at the military hospital.

Released Thanks to International Pressure

I was released because of international pressure from human rights groups and labor unions. Because of my tenure in the labor union I was somewhat internationally known. For example, there is a well-known lawyer from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights with whom I had a meeting in 1989. The latter and the National Labor Committee and several other organizations faxed their press releases to Haiti protesting my arrest. It was then that I was freed.

Still, I did not feel safe, because the police will free you under pressure, but they will dispatch their death squads to your house. That is why I was offered haven at a friend's house for a week, then I moved to another location in which I spent several months. In October 1993 I was invited to Washington by President Aristide along with several other labor union leaders. I traveled to Washington on October 11 and was due back in Haiti on October 14. I was visited by members of the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees as well as members from the American Embassy. The latter offered to help if I decided to seek refuge in the U.S. with my family. I declined because I did not want to leave the country; but my family was pressuring me to leave Haiti.

Continued on page 30

Latina Says, "I Walk in Fear" Because of Anti-Immigrant Law

by Evelyn Sell

Lawsuits against California's Proposition 187 were successful in securing court injunctions against key provisions which bar illegal immigrants from receiving public education (schools and colleges), most tax-financed non-emergency health care, and various social services. It is expected that legal battles will proceed for at least two or three years until the state's high court or the U.S. Supreme Court makes final rulings on critical constitutional questions. Re-elected Governor Pete Wilson immediately denounced the injunctive relief by declaring, "I will not tolerate this. The voters of California will not tolerate this." State regulators have been ordered to draft guidelines for implementing Proposition 187 — even though such directives cannot be sent out or put into effect until the legal issues are settled.

Anti-immigrant forces are trying to get rid of any opposition to their goals. Plaintiffs in the lawsuits against 187, such as the Los Angeles school board, are prime targets. At a November 17, 1994, meeting of Proposition 187 supporters, the head of Voice of Citizens Together told the large audience that the three "Rs" taught in Los Angeles's public schools would be changed: "Instead of reading, riting and rithmetic, it will be recall, remove, and replace." On December 14, 1994, a lawsuit was filed against six members of the Los Angeles board of education charging them with illegally using public funds to block Proposition 187. Also, a petition campaign is currently underway to recall school board president Mark Slavkin.

Although not currently enforceable, Proposition 187 is achieving some of its goals because of the threatening atmosphere created by its ballot victory. This is already evident in the widespread fear caused by the proposition's requirement that educators, social workers, health professionals, and law enforcement officials report *suspected* illegal immigrants. Latinos, in particular, are concerned about harassment based on "suspect" appearances (skin color, language, ethnic features) regardless of legal status. The day after the elections, Southern California medical clinics located in predominantly Latino communities reported a sharp drop in the number of patients. Plans were announced by one clinic to have 200 volunteers go door-to-door assuring people that immigration authorities would not be called if people came in to receive needed health care. Immediately before and after the election, according to administrators at the Community Health Foundation of East Los Angeles, there was a 60 percent drop in prenatal examinations and an even greater reduction in immunizations against childhood infectious diseases such as measles,

polio, and diphtheria. "It's directly tied to the fear of Proposition 187," explained the executive director of the facility. "The undocumented parents, the parents of mixed undocumented and resident families, are not bringing their kids in. People are fearful. They think we're going to start reporting them [to La Migra]."

"How Can I Leave? My Children Are American."

Telling a *Los Angeles Times* reporter, "I walk in fear," a young mother said she was returning to Mexico because "I'm afraid to take my children to the doctor. I'm afraid to wait for the bus. I'm afraid to leave my house." Other immigrants — from Mexico, Israel, Canada, Europe, and Asia — told reporters they would not engage in the "self-deportation" desired by Proposition 187 supporters. "How can I leave? My children are American," explained one Israeli woman who, along with her husband, overstayed a visitors' visa. "My little girls wouldn't know what the Philippines is like," said an undocumented mother. A November 20 *Los Angeles Times* article, entitled "Complex Family Ties Tangle Simple Premise of Prop. 187," noted:

Most undocumented people are closely related to U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents, often wives, husbands, parents, siblings, or children. Many are in the process of seeking papers, usually via spouses or other relatives who are legal residents entitled to petition for loved ones under the principle of family reunification, long a cornerstone of U.S. immigration policy.

Mass deportation would inevitably mean the splitting of hundreds of thousands of families, including many whose members are on official waiting lists for green cards. Immigration today is very much a family affair, assisted and encouraged by networks of relatives well-established in the United States.

Latino and immigrants' rights groups are utilizing Spanish-language publications, public service announcements, neighborhood forums, and pamphlets to assure people that they can still send children to school and receive medical care. Bert Corona, national director of Los Angeles-based *Hermanidad Mexicana*, said that such reach-out efforts "give us a chance to get into the parishes, the barrios, the trade unions, and let people know that there's no reason to be afraid." *El Rescate*, a group offering free legal and social services to immigrants, initiated weekly community meetings where undocumented persons could receive information and have discussions about how Proposition 187 was affecting their lives. The organization's attorney explained, "We're seeing a level of

fear, a level of depression and low morale in the community. The fear is uncertainty about what's going to happen."

Some protest demonstrations have taken place. On November 18, 1994, hundreds of students at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) marched through the campus and engaged in a sit-in at Murphy Hall. The students demanded that the university chancellor publicly declare a refusal to enforce the initiative at UCLA. The Pro-Immigrant Mobilization Coalition organized a December 9, 1994, rally and picket at the Downtown Federal Building in Los Angeles to stop the implementation of 187.

Boycotts Called — And Opposed

Boycotts have been called by some groups: the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, which was considering San Diego as a site for its national convention, voted to keep their gathering out of California unless 187 is repealed by the state's voters or voided by the courts; about 500 expected participants in a conference on Spanish-language children's books refused to attend the annual meeting in San Diego; the World Boxing Council canceled a meeting which was to be held in California.

At a weekend conference in Tucson, held a month after the passage of Proposition 187, a number of organizations called for boycotts of RJR Nabisco, the Walt Disney Company, and other businesses because corporate officers made major donations to the re-election campaign of Governor Pete Wilson and other pro-187 Republican candidates. A representative of the California Latino Civil Rights Network, a group which helped organize the record-breaking October 16, 1994, mass demonstration in Los Angeles, is sponsoring the campaign against the tobacco and food giant. During a demonstration outside of a supermarket in a largely immigrant Los Angeles neighborhood, boycott supporters wore armbands asking, in Spanish and English, "Who's next?" — a reference to the generalized attacks against immigrants from various countries. Coordinadora '96, a leadership coalition of immigration rights groups, is heading up the Disney and Chevron boycotts. Standing outside of the main entrance to Disneyland, a leader of the coalition told reporters, "These corporations need to be sensitive to the people that make them wealthy.... We want to sensitize companies like Disneyland that make earnings from immigrants."

Boycott plans are strongly opposed, however, by important Latino and labor organizations which are also involved in the struggle against Proposition 187. A representative of the

Orange County Building Trades Council said that a boycott "will pit working people against working people." The president of the union for some Disneyland and Disneyland Hotel employees said, "All [the boycott] will do is force our members — 50% of whom are immigrant workers — to stay home with no wages and benefits." Groups announcing opposition to boycott efforts include: Hermandad Mexicana Nacional, the League of United Latin American Citizens of California, Local 681 of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union, and the Orange County Central Labor Council.

Boycott leaders have declared their intention to proceed with their plans. "The purpose of our boycott is to send messages to businesses that Latino immigrants, through their spending power, won't support politicians who support racist policies," explained a spokesperson for

La Alianza, a community advocacy group in Southern California.

Unifying Strategy Needed

At the present time, there is no unifying strategy or organizational framework for mobilizing a concerted challenge to Proposition 187. This is a dangerous weakness, especially because anti-immigrant efforts in other states have been encouraged by the ballot victory in California. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that key sponsors of 187 "have been inundated by phone calls from reporters around the world seeking reaction and from grass-roots groups across the nation hoping to launch similar movements in their own states....They [187 leaders] talk of initiatives similar to Proposition 187 being placed on ballots in Arizona, Texas, and Florida." A cosponsor of the proposition, who said she received calls from grass-roots activists in

18 states immediately after the election, stated, "We anticipated the passage of Proposition 187 would have a ripple effect across the nation. Right now, we feel like we are in the midst of a tidal wave, for goodness sake. We never in a million years anticipated this type of response, and we're obviously thrilled."

These forces have not yet forged a powerful national vehicle — but the economic, political, and social crises in the U.S. provide fertile grounds for the growth of scapegoating attacks against immigrants. In order to mount a defense against this threat, a nationally coordinated effort is needed by those who share common problems and interests: the labor movement (organized, unemployed, and non-union), immigrant communities, human rights activists, and civil liberties groups. □

January 6, 1994

Stop the Escalating Violence Against Women

by Sarah Springer

Nineteen ninety-four ended on a resoundingly ominous note for women's rights, in particular reproductive rights. On December 30, a gunman murdered two people and wounded five others at two reproductive health clinics in Brookline, Massachusetts. The next day police arrested a suspect in Norfolk, Virginia, after the man fired 23 shots into that city's Hillcrest Clinic (which has been the site of repeated anti-abortion protests and acts of terrorism, including arson and a bombing). This brings up to five (since 1993) the total number of murders of people who had been working at, or associated in some way with, reproductive health clinics.

According to a recent news report, there were over 1700 incidents of violence against abortion clinics in 1994. These included bombings, vandalism, and physical attacks on clinic personnel.

While the violence has been escalating, the debate seems to be shifting in more subtle ways. Even after five murders, the mainstream press (see the *New York Times*, January 2, 1995, p. 1 and 10, for instance) continues to print long and verbose statements from anti-abortion fanatics who are supposedly aghast and appalled that this sort of violence might have sprung from or been connected with their movement, but who nonetheless state in their next breath that they believe the killers were only doing what they thought was best, given their intense personal

beliefs. On the other hand, the media reports, there are those who condone and wholeheartedly praise these acts of terrorism and murder.

Defend Abortion Clinics

The media is once again attempting to frame this as a debate between the so-called "moderates" in the anti-abortion milieu and those who are more "extreme." That is not the debate. The debate is not to what degree and in what form terrorism should be applied in order to effect the closure of reproductive health clinics. Rather, the debate should be how best to protect staff, escorts, and patients at these facilities from anti-abortion "moderates" as well as "extremists."

Violence against women has not been limited to the area of reproductive freedom. Several domestic violence cases that ended in murder have reached national attention — for all the wrong reasons. In Maryland, Sandra Peacock was shot and killed by her husband several hours after he found her in bed with another man. He received an 18-month work release sentence from a judge who stated that he believed few men would have had "the strength to walk away without inflicting some corporal punishment, whatever that punishment may be."

To judge by the media, there is a heightened awareness of the prominence and severity of domestic violence in the lives of so many women. Yet in the Maryland case, the wife-murderer has, in effect, been released with no negative

consequences. This sends quite a different and chilling message.

Violence against women cannot be tolerated in any form or to any degree. To do so is to send a message that women are unimportant and how they are treated is inconsequential. We must organize, mobilize, and let it be known that we refuse to be intimidated. We must demand resources to ensure that women's lives are free from violence — in the clinic, on the job, and at home. You can get involved in your local clinic defense coalition, domestic violence shelter, union, school, or feminist organization.

The National Organization for Women (NOW) is organizing a series of actions in Washington, D.C., April 7-9, 1995, to protest violence against women. According to the *National NOW Times*, these will include a Young Feminist Summit Against Violence and will culminate in a rally on the mall on Sunday, April 9.

"The goal of this campaign," says the *NOW Times*, "is nothing less than to change our culture — to make violence against women as socially unacceptable as it is illegal."

Contact your local NOW chapter for more information. This is an important demonstration that everyone should help build and in which we all need to participate. □

Report from Moscow Conference

Trotsky's Legacy Lives Despite Decades of Suppression

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

In Moscow on November 10–12, more than 150 Russians and international guests met for the first conference ever held in Russia on Leon Trotsky.

Leon Trotsky was co-leader with Lenin of the Russian Revolution in October 1917. After Lenin's illness and death, Trotsky led the Marxist opposition in the Bolshevik party to the bureaucratization process which Stalin embodied. Yet despite Trotsky's brilliance as one of the greatest Marxists of the 20th century, his writings, indispensable to anyone who seeks to understand today's world, were systematically falsified and brutally eliminated in the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy for decades, until the glasnost openings in the late 1980s.

Moreover, history was rewritten to exclude Trotsky and falsify his ideas and the contributions made by him and other Bolshevik leaders of Lenin's time — most of whom were murdered in the purges of the Communist Party in the 1930s. Trotsky continued his struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy and for a revival of revolutionary internationalism until his assassination by an agent of Stalin in August 1940 in Mexico, where Trotsky was living in enforced exile.

In recent years, historic truth has been allowed to resurface. The Moscow conference was a manifestation of this process.

The conference was sponsored by Scholars for Democracy and Socialism and the Center for Problems of Democracy and Socialism of the Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Purpose of Conference

The purpose of the conference was "to discuss a broad range of issues related to contemporary interpretations of Marxism, the development of socialist theory and practice, Trotsky's role in the history of social and political theory and in the labor movement, the fate of socialism in the former Soviet Union, and the bureaucratic phenomenon and the means of struggle against it."

The conference was organized to allow presentations by participants, who were given 10 minutes each to summarize papers they had prepared — 20 minutes with translation — on many themes related to the ideas of Leon Trotsky. Each presentation was followed by a question and answer period.

In the late afternoon of the second day, there was a "round table" at which representatives of a number of Trotskyist and other political cur-

rents were given 5 minutes each to address problems and propose solutions to the current crisis of leadership in the working class; these presentations were also followed by discussion.

The conference was opened by Alexander Buzgalin of Scholars for Democracy and Socialism, who welcomed the guests and speakers. The first speaker was Professor Mikhail Vovyeikov (pronounced *voy-yay-koff*), doctor of

economic sciences and a department head at the Institute of Economics at the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS). Professor Vovyeikov, one of the key organizers of the conference, spoke on "The Relevance of Trotsky's Ideas Today."

Vovyeikov on Trotsky and Bukharin

Vovyeikov explained why Trotsky, with his analysis of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Bolshevik party and Soviet government as well as of the Communist International, offered the only alternative to Stalinism. This, Vovyeikov explained, is precisely why the bureaucracy during the Gorbachev period held up Nikolai Bukharin as the preferred alternative to Stalin. Bukharin had gone along with Stalin in suppressing the Left Opposition, led by Trotsky. Later, in the Moscow show trial of 1938, Bukharin himself fell victim to the bloody bureaucratic machine that Stalin dominated.

Bukharin never seriously opposed the bureaucratization of the party and the state, nor did

Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy

The following proposal was adopted by the November 1994 conference in Moscow.

The **Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy** has been constituted for the purpose of furthering a deeper and broader study and understanding of the ideological heritage of L.D. Trotsky and how his ideas relate to problems of social development. The Committee shall undertake the following measures:

1. To publish in Russian and English the materials of the international scientific conference "The Ideological Heritage of Trotsky: Its Historical and Contemporary Significance" held in Moscow in November 1994, where the Committee was formed.
2. To create in Moscow an International Scientific Center for the organized collection and study of materials linked with the political and theoretical activity of L.D. Trotsky.
3. To facilitate the scientific publication of the works of L.D. Trotsky, above all in the Russian language. It is proposed to include among these the expeditious publication in Russian of the hearings of the Dewey Commission *The Case of Leon Trotsky* and the Commission's verdict *Not Guilty*.
4. To continue to hold conferences and seminars on problems of understanding and applying L.D. Trotsky's theoretical heritage.

President: Pierre Broué
International Coordinators: Aleksei Gusev (Moscow), Marilyn Vogt-Downey (New York)
Initial Advisory Council: (Russians and Belarussians:)

Alexander Buzgalin (economics professor, Moscow University, leading figure in Scholars for Democracy and Socialism)

Vadim Lugatenko (Committee for Workers Democracy and International Socialism, worker, Belarus)

Aleksandr Pantsov (historian, Trotsky specialist, Sinologist, visiting professor at DePaul University, Chicago)

Vadim Rogovin (historian of Trotsky's work, professor and author, Moscow)

A. Kuryonyshv (historian, worker at State Historical Museum)

Mikhail Vovyeikov (professor, Institute of Economics, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow)

(International:)

Terrance Brotherstone (professor, University of Aberdeen)

Geoff Barr (professor, Exeter University in Devon, Workers Revolutionary Party)

Elizabeth Clarke (of the Militant group in Britain, residing in St. Petersburg)

Jim Miles (rail worker, *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, USA)

Carlos Olivera (League for International Trotskyism, Brazil; currently a student at Moscow State Univ.),

Hillel Ticktin, *Critique* magazine, University of Glasgow.

For more information, contact:

In the USA: Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy, P.O. Box 1890, New York, NY 10009. Telephone and fax (please call before faxing): 718-636-5446.

In Russia: Professor M. Vovyeikov, Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Economics, Ulitsa Krasikova, 27, 117218 Moscow, Russia. Telephone: 332-4525 (office), 326-3497 (home).

his ideas challenge the premises of bureaucratic rule. Trotsky, on the other hand, exposed the causes and effects of the bureaucracy's rise to power and the counterrevolutionary nature of its policies and called for the bureaucracy's overthrow. As a result, the campaign to vilify Trotsky and falsify his ideas continues to this day. (See pages 14–15 of this issue, for excerpts from the pamphlet by Voyeikov on which his presentation was based.)

Other Speakers

Also speaking were Hillel Ticktin, a lecturer at the University of Glasgow and editor of *Critique* magazine (“Trotsky on the Contradictions of the Soviet Socio-Economic System”); Aleksei Gusev, a doctoral candidate in history at Moscow State University and a founder of the Socialist Workers Alliance (SWA) — the title of his talk being “The Place of Trotsky in the Marxist Tradition”; also, Mikhail Saavas, a professor of philosophy at the University of Athens (“The Ideas of Trotsky in the Contemporary Political Process”); V.B. Volodin, a worker from Novosibirsk, also a member of the SWA (“The Reasons for the Defeat of the October Revolution and Its Historical Significance in Assessing Trotsky”); O.V. Dubrovsky, a worker from Dnepropetrovsk in Ukraine and a member of the SWA (“Trotsky on the Ukrainian Question at the Beginning of the Second World War”); A.A. Kuryonyshv, a historian who works at the State Historical Museum (“Trotsky on the Defense of the USSR”); and many others.

There were at least 23 presentations, most of them by scholars and professors — but some by workers too — with a broad range of age groups, from those in their early 20s to a few septagenarians. (But there was only one woman.) They examined Trotsky's theories in relation to the historical past as well as their application today. Most of the reports delved into Trotsky's writings, as well as the context in which they were written, with unparalleled richness and depth.

Various Trotskyist Currents

Representative of several currents considering themselves Trotskyist participated in the conference:

- The Committee for Workers Democracy and International Socialism (Vadim Lugatenko from Belarus spoke at the round table discussion), unaffiliated internationally;
- The Socialist Workers Alliance, as indicated above; it supports the Workers Organization for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (WORFI);
- Carlos Olivera, a Brazilian student studying law at Moscow State University and a supporter of the League for International Trotskyism (formerly led by the Argentine Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno);
- The Militant tendency of Britain (Rob Jones participated in the round table);

- The United Secretariat of the Fourth International (Chris Eswell of the International Trotskyist Opposition in Britain made a presentation and spoke at the round table);
- The Spartacist League (Victor Granovsky spoke at the round table).

Former CPSU Currents

In addition, representatives of other political currents participated on various levels. Boris Slavin, a doctor of philosophical sciences and a member of the Central Executive Board of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), made a presentation and also spoke at the round table. Aleksei Prygarin, a leader of the Union of Communists (UC), participated in the round table discussion. Sergei Novikov, a parliamentary deputy for the Russian Communist Party (RCP), not only participated in the round table but served throughout the conference as the translator from Russian to English and English to Russian for the foreign guests. The CPRF, the UC, and the RCP all emerged out of the collapse of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

While most of those attending were Russians, the foreign delegation included Terrance Brotherstone, a professor of history at the University of Aberdeen; internationally renowned historian Pierre Broué, editor of the French *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*; Simon Pirani of the British Workers Revolutionary Party (WORFI); Jim Miles and myself from *BIDOM*; and Todd LaRue, a graduate student specializing in Trotsky at DePaul University in Chicago.

Committee for the Study of Trotsky's Legacy

One of the most important achievements of the conference — in addition to the valuable discussions it sparked — was the decision to support a proposal initiated by Professor Voyeikov to launch the Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy. (See box, this page.) The conference named an initial council of Russians and international supporters and two international coordinators to oversee the work, with the perspective of beginning immediately to expand the list of supporters in Russia and internationally.

The coordinators and an initiative committee met the day after the conference and agreed on mechanisms to undertake the practical work, including to gather and publish in Russian and English the presentations made to the conference. The work of the new committee will include finding translators for the publication in Russian of *The Case of Leon Trotsky* and *Not Guilty*. These two volumes contain extensive materials from hearings held in Mexico in 1937 by a commission headed by the American educator John Dewey to examine the charges made against Trotsky in the Moscow trials. Historian Pierre Broué will prepare notes reflecting newly found archival materials to accompany the Russian translations of these texts.

The committee will also begin plans for a second conference, to be held December 8–10, 1995, in St. Petersburg, on the 90th anniversary of the 1905 revolution. Reports made at the recent conference will be collected for publication in Russian and English.

Funds Raised for Striking Miners

Before the conference closed, it was agreed by most of those present to collect funds to send with a statement of support to coal miners in Tula province, south of Moscow. Some 200 coal miners there had been on a hunger strike in the pits for a week, demanding payment of unpaid wages.

The miners in the region were owed 22 billion rubles; in Russia as a whole, the unpaid wages owed to miners alone amount to around 50 billion rubles, according to the newspaper *Moskovsky Komsomolets*. Thirty of the miners had already been hospitalized as a result of their hunger strike. Nearly 240,000 rubles were collected to send to them.

Survival of Genuine Marxism

The conference was exhilarating on several levels. Not only was its occurrence living proof of the failure of all the murders, repression, falsification of history, and totalitarian measures by the bureaucratic caste headed by Stalin and his successors. They were unable to destroy the genuine Marxism that Leon Trotsky and his struggle represented. The very idea that young Trotskyists could take the platform in a public forum and begin to argue out, as they did, their differences after decades of terror and fear of gruesome reprisals for even mentioning Trotsky's name without an insulting adjective attached to it — this was a light at the end of a tunnel.

Without such open and public discussion of these and other ideas, the workers in the former Soviet Union will never find their way out of the crisis imperialism and Stalinism have created.

A brief report of the conference was featured on Moscow television news the last day of the conference. The same newscast reported that 10 people had frozen to death in Moscow that day. The economic crisis deepens.

During the days preceding the conference — around the time of the anniversary of the 1917 revolution, which also happens to coincide with Trotsky's birthday — a main television channel featured the film “Trotsky,” which has been recently produced and promotes the new school of falsification of Trotsky as an evil-minded egomaniac, who lusted for power and was as ruthless as Stalin himself.

There is much work to be done to keep pushing forward the historic truth, clearing away the debris and lies about the past. Now, at last, we may have an avenue, and a basis for collaborative efforts, to proceed with this work. It is a fundamental part of the task of finding the way toward genuine socialism, a society based on the free association of the producers themselves. □

December 28, 1994

The Theoretical Legacy of Leon Trotsky and Its Contemporary Significance

by Prof. Mikhail Voeikov

The headline above is the title of a pamphlet by Mikhail I. Voeikov (pronounced "voy-yay-koff"), head of a department at the Economics Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences and one of the organizers of the conference on Trotsky held in Moscow in November 1994. Voeikov's pamphlet served as the basis for his presentation to the conference. We print below the introductory section of the pamphlet ("The Tasks of this Report and What It Can Do"). The footnotes are by the author. The translation is by Marilyn Vogt-Downey.

Like all, or almost all, normal social scientists educated in the postwar period of Soviet life, my attitude toward L.D. Trotsky, if not overtly negative, was at least largely one of indifference. What did we know about Trotsky? Very, very little. Of course, after the Khrushchev "thaw" we no longer took seriously many of the previous charges which the rabid Stalinists had made against him. From some sources, above all, of course, from the works of Lenin and from a number of works by other authors, one could obtain a certain idea about Trotsky's real role in the October revolution (1917), the civil war, and perhaps a few other areas.¹ But no more than that.

But all the propaganda, all the previous social science was structured in such a way that if in some connection Trotsky was given credit for something, he had also to be subjected to abundant criticism using many pretexts and subjects. In fact, even the works of Lenin were utilized in the ideological propaganda in such a way that Lenin's positive references to Trotsky ended up in the shadow and were glossed over while any negative remarks were played up and made the dominant feature. Since our early school days a negative attitude toward Trotsky and Trotskyism had been drilled into the brains of Soviet social scientists and was perceived as almost a natural component of intelligent, progressive social knowledge.

The generation of social scientists to which I belong studied in the institutions of higher learning in the 1960s, and the attitudes of "the sixties generation" — hostility toward Stalinism, dogmatism, or any uncritical approach to science — made a deep impression on us. We took Marxism and Leninism seriously and had a broad interest in new or modern phenomena in Western social thought (the problems of alienation, Karl Marx's early writings, existentialism, personalism, etc.)

Trotskyism "Same as" Stalinism?

And Trotsky? We perceived him to be something very close to Stalinism, a very left-wing radical, nearly an ideologue of terrorism. Even the fact that Trotsky was the first and most profound, not to say fiercest fighter against Stalinism, that he perished at the hand of a murderer hired by Stalin — even that fact made no impression on our thinking. Enmity toward Trotskyism for some reason was almost as widely felt as enmity toward Stalinism.

Many of us were inclined to support Social Democratic ideals and market socialism; we were more attracted to the names of Bukharin

or Rykov. We saw in them an alternative to Stalinism, socialism with a more human face.

There was a certain theoretical basis for this. Some thought that the successes of economic construction in postrevolutionary Russia would have been more lasting if the development had been according to Bukharin's plan, without the insane tempos of industrialization and distortions of collectivization, etc. However, Stalin took a left course, i.e., the strategy developed by Trotsky. Therefore, Trotskyism, the average social scientist came to think, is a theory and ideology almost like Stalinism, but perhaps a bit more intelligent, without such bloody terror.

For us, Trotskyism was, all the same and above all, a left-radical ideology for the revolutionary transformation of the world. Moreover, we presumed that it was precisely Trotskyism that found its embodiment in Stalinism. Unfortunately, these wrong notions have been persistently imparted by our publicists up through the late 1980s.²

In general, we did not read Trotsky and practically knew nothing about him. Therefore, we could relate with understanding to the words of Mikhail Gorbachev during the 70th anniversary of Soviet power when he said: "Trotskyism is a political current whose ideologues, while hiding behind left and pseudorevolutionary phrases, essentially have a capitulationist position."³

Our Mistake: Not Reading Trotsky Closely

Even during the time of perestroika, when a few of Trotsky's works began to be published, we were in no hurry to read them. "Again this Trotsky," we said. "Again this revolutionary with his left deviations." Trotsky and Trotskyism were considered a historical phenomenon which, of course, one should read and remember. But today the works of Trotsky are not necessary, we believed. And this prejudice is very widespread to this day.

This way of thinking was our big mistake. And not only ours. Of course, I do not mean to say that Trotskyism is an eternal dogma which can give satisfactory answers to all of today's problems. In the works of Trotsky, there are many things that one simply cannot agree with and not simply because they have not withstood the test of time but because even when they were written, they were wrong and unsubstantiated, even if talented and distinctive. Our mistake, that is, the mistake of the average or ordinary social scientist, was that we were in no hurry to read Trotsky carefully and were satisfied with the Stalinist interpretation that had been imposed on us of this greatest Marxist.

One more important factor deserves special mention. Trotsky's biography is sharply divided into three theoretical periods: the prerevolutionary (to 1917), the revolutionary and civil war period (to 1923), and the postrevolutionary period (from 1923). Of course, this is all one and the same Trotsky, but while taking into consideration the many circumstances, including Trotsky's ardent passion in regard to the demands of the moment, his literary works during these periods are markedly distinctive. One can even speak of three Trotskys, although in terms of principle, this is, of course, not true. Thus, most often, all a person has had occasion to read are individual works by Trotsky mainly from the second period, scattered in journals and collections of party congresses and documents. These were relatively accessible. But these works on the whole have not provoked much enthusiasm. In fact, most likely, the opposite is true. One could find works by Trotsky from his third period — which are the most interesting and the most useful to us in the USSR — only in single copies, and even these were tightly hidden away in special collections in only a few of the largest libraries.

Finally today, we have begun to read Trotsky. But we have only begun and only to read. What is going on is, so to speak, our first acquaintance with the works of Trotsky. A serious scientific study of his works is still to come.

Serious Study Needed

The theme "Trotsky and the Contemporary Era" or "Putting Trotsky's Ideas into Action Today" is so vast, complicated, and contradictory that only a true dilettante, with hardly any grasp of the complexities of the issue, could claim to be able to deal with it. The situation is made more difficult by the fact that in our literature and in our social sciences, there is no tradition, for understandable reasons, of serious and scientific, shall we say, Trotsky studies. It is not clear what to write and what not to write, what to argue and who one can rely on.

To argue against those presenting Stalinist criticisms of Trotsky is not a matter of compelling scientific or personal interest, at least for me. Although it is still necessary to find some way to disentangle the heaped-up mess created by the "Stalin school of falsification."

Many Works Not Available in Russian

A difficulty of elaborating on the announced theme is also found in two substantial circumstances. First, the absence of the works of Trotsky himself, within easy reach, in accessi-

ble form. Some, of course, have today been reprinted. Many are in libraries. But not all have been reprinted. For example, one of the most fundamental works of Trotsky, his *History of the Russian Revolution*, is available only in the largest libraries, and access to it is very restricted. The same must be said about any number of his writings in the *Biulleten Oppozitsii*.⁴

Second is the fact that there exists abroad a rather vast body of literature which for all practical purposes is inaccessible for Russian researchers.

Thus, because of these, so to speak, natural causes, my report will be very general, on the one hand, and fragmentary, on the other. Its aim is not to add something essential to world literature or to deepen it in some way, but to pose the problems we have in trying to study Trotsky and his legacy and to turn the attention of ordinary social scientists in that direction.

But here one finds a mass of very interesting and complex problems which have never been scientifically studied. For example, themes such as the following deserve attention: Trotsky as a historian, as a Marxist, as a political economist; Trotsky and the revolution (this theme has been raised somewhat in our literature, although only in recent years); Trotsky and the economic problems of socialism; Trotsky and NEP, industrialization, collectivization; Trotsky and the army; Trotsky, the Soviet regime, and the soviets, and the struggle against bureaucratization; Trotsky and the civil war, and the Brest peace; Trotsky and foreign policy, and international relations; Trotsky and the Comintern, and the international workers movement, and the rise and development of fascism; Trotsky and literature, culture, everyday life; Trotsky as a person, his relations with Lenin, with Stalin, with Bukharin; and many, many other themes.

On many of these problems, Trotsky has left very deep theoretical elaboration, often regarded by experts as irreproachable models of scientific analysis.⁵

Ignorance in Vogue

Without a comprehensive and thoroughgoing scientific study of all these problems, it is impossible with sufficient depth to understand the history of Russian society, the development of Marxism, the contemporary workers and revolutionary movement, and mainly, what is taking place in Russia today. However, this is something that can be done only by a large collective of diverse researchers from diverse countries, with diverse views and diverse aspirations. And this complex of research projects cannot be undertaken without many works of Trotsky.

Moreover, to discuss Russia's destiny and its prospects (which many are now heatedly debating), basing oneself only on the works of Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, and other "steamboat philosophers," without reading and making use of the works of Trotsky, is as ignorant as to discuss state regulation of the economy only on the basis of Ricardo and Adam Smith, without reading, let us say, John Maynard Keynes. True, at the moment, ignorance is in vogue. But this cannot last forever!

This report examines only the theoretical aspect. Of course, Trotsky is a figure of such enormous historical stature that his practical work and struggle often overshadow him as a theoretician. However, without belittling the significance of his revolutionary experience, I still think that Trotsky is relevant today above all and mainly as a theoretician who was able at the beginning of the 1930s to understand and scientifically analyze the nature of the then Soviet Union and alternatives for its transformation. And sixty years later, what Trotsky predicted has fully come true. This is astonishing. Only a genius is capable of doing this. □

Notes

1. For my generation, perhaps, the first book which opened our eyes to Trotsky's outstanding role in the 1917 revolution was John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World*, published by Politizdat in Mos-

cow in 1959, after a long interruption in its publication. And even though there was a hideous afterword by the editors, which in firm Stalinist tradition pointed to the "erroneous statements by Reed about 'the outstanding role of Trotsky in the revolution,'" it was no longer possible to cast doubt on the authentic testimony of a talented observer. After reading this book, one also began to gain a new perception of many of Lenin's statements.

2. It is significant in this regard that Bukharinism as a real alternative to Stalinism was propagandized in all seriousness during the first years of perestroika by many of our talented publicists of so-called liberal persuasion. See, for example, the works of L. Gordon, E. Klopov, O. Latsis, B. Selyunin, V. Sirotkin, and others. It turned out that these people, writing not in the mid-1960s but in the late 1980s, when all the hidden names had already been revealed, had not read and did not know Trotsky, and thus did not understand the material from Soviet history about which they wrote so much.
3. Gorbachev, *Selected Speeches and Articles*, Vol. 5, Moscow: Politizdat, 1988, p. 397.
4. For example, the largest main social sciences library of the Russian Academy of Sciences has only two issues of *Biulleten Oppozitsii* (Nos. 11 and 14 of 1930). In general, the attempt to gain access to the scientific works of Trotsky can turn into an absorbing, but very time-consuming activity. You begin to feel that there is a great mass of material, but all you can get your hands on are some isolated pieces. So, on this basis, try writing about the contemporary significance of Trotsky!
5. The well-known English Marxist researcher Perry Anderson writes: "Living in isolation on a small Turkish island far from the center of Europe, Trotsky wrote a series of works about the rise of the Nazis in Germany, the quality of which as a concrete investigation of the current political situation has no equal in historical materialism." (Perry Anderson, "Reflections On Western Marxism," in *On the Paths of Historical Materialism*, Moscow: Interservo, 1991, p. 108.)

Yeltsin Out of Chechnya! Condemn Washington's Complicity with Yeltsin!

Continued from page 1

Some Mexican Americans protesting California's Proposition 187 recently made a good point about borders. Referring to the U.S. theft of New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah from Mexico in 1846-48, they said: "We didn't cross the border. The border crossed us."

Incidentally the "sanctity of borders" was a constant refrain of the tsarist empire (unless the borders were moving outward). After expanding across one-sixth of the land surface of the earth, and conquering dozens of non-Russian peoples, large and small (a process analogous to the "manifest destiny" expansion of the U.S. over much of North America), the tsarist authorities insisted that "Russia" was one and indivisible (*yedinaya i nepodelimaya*).

Russia "One and Indivisible"

"Russia, one and indivisible" was also a slogan of the counterrevolutionary White armies in the civil war that raged over the territory of the

former tsarist empire. It was one of the slogans that the Bolshevik leadership under Lenin and Trotsky fought against. Russia was not a single, indivisible territory in their eyes. No. It was a prisonhouse of nations! And they assured the right of self-determination, up to and including separation, to all of the oppressed peoples of the Russian empire, whether Finns or Poles, Latvians or Estonians, Chechens or Abkhazians. One amazing result was that many elements among the small nationalities formerly oppressed by the tsarist empire (an oppression that the Whites intended to continue) fought fiercely on the side of the Reds, many Chechens included!

What a tragedy and a betrayal, then, when the Stalinist bureaucracy, beginning in the early 1920s, gradually returned to a government policy of oppression and Russification deeply reminiscent of the tsarist era. This began as early as 1922, when Stalin advocated "autonomization," that is, that in areas where the Soviet revolution had been victorious among non-Russian peo-

ples, those peoples should be limited to autonomous regions within the Russian Federated Soviet Socialist Republic. No, said Lenin. There should be separate national republics. The non-Russian republics should have equal rights and powers with the Russian republic. They should join in a free and voluntary union, with the inviolable right to secede if they found the union unsatisfactory. Lenin won that battle, with the support of the genuine revolutionaries in the Bolshevik party and its leadership. (See, for example, Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*.)

Under the impact of Lenin's struggle, through the 1920s and partly into the '30s a policy of support and encouragement to the separate development of each non-Russian republic (or autonomous province or district) was carried out. But in the end, Stalin's "autonomization" policy became the reality. Every republic or region in the end came under the total domination of the increasingly bureaucratized central government in Moscow, which during

the '30s adopted a more and more brazen policy of Russification, the revival of Russian dominant-nation chauvinism. This was one of the central pillars of Stalin's rule, a source of his support among backward and philistine elements in the Russian-speaking part of Soviet society (which was the dominant part of Soviet society). (See Ivan Dzyuba, *Internationalism or Russification?*)

Stalinist Glorification of the Russian State

The expansion and glorification of the Moscow-centered state (instead of its withering away) were accompanied by a revival of pro-tsarist Russo-chauvinist ideology. For example, Ivan the Terrible, the first Muscovite prince to adopt the title tsar (meaning "Caesar"), was glorified by Stalin for having strengthened and expanded the state, including defeating the Tatar khanates, so that Muscovy could expand from the northern forests of Eastern Europe all the way across Siberia, and into the southern steppes, toward the Black Sea and the Caucasus. Tsar Peter I was glorified for modernizing the Muscovite state, making it a military power on a European scale, and "opening a window" onto the Baltic Sea by defeating the Swedes and building St. Petersburg. (It was during the reign of the expansionist Peter, in the early 1700s, that Russian forces first probed toward the northern range of the Caucasus Mountains and encountered the Chechen and other indigenous peoples who had lived there for centuries.)

The *New York Times*, incidentally, told us in the first days of the Chechen war that the Russians have "had trouble" with the Chechens "for the last 300 years." That's the same as saying the Spanish conquerors "had trouble" with the Mayan peoples they subjugated. That's been going on for 500 years.

Closer to home, you could say that the predecessors of the publishers and editors of the *New York Times* "had trouble" with the Algonquians, the Iroquois, the Cherokee, the Shawnee, the Sac and Fox, the Lakota, the Comanche, the Apache, and on and on. Well, it was a bother, wasn't it? They had to take their land, deport them, force them onto reservations, police them, and ethnically cleanse them. What a lot of trouble! Well, it's the white property owner's (read land grabber's) burden.

Part of the revival of the policy and ideology of Great Russian chauvinism under Stalinist bureaucratic rule was the rewriting of history in the mid-1930s. Bolshevik historians described the guerrilla war of the peoples of the Northern Caucasus, led by Shamil, against tsarist imperial expansion, as heroic, justified, and progressive. Stalin's revisionist historians, beginning on the eve of the Great Purges, the slaughter of a whole generation of revolutionaries, began to depict the struggle led by Shamil as "reactionary nationalism."

Stalin's Deportation of the Chechens

Stalin's government didn't just rewrite history. In relation to the Chechen and Ingush people it wrote a new and monstrous page in history. The

Stalin government carried out a measure that even the tsarist government never managed. It deported these populations in their entirety (every man, woman, and child) from their native lands in the Northern Caucasus to remote areas of Siberia and Central Asia. This was done in 1944 on the pretext that these peoples had collaborated with the Nazis during the brief occupation of parts of the Northern Caucasus by Hitler's troops. This was a baldfaced lie. Many Russians too had collaborated with the Nazi invaders. But the Russian people were not deported. (Where would Stalin have put them all?) If Chechen or Ingush individuals had aided the enemy, they could have been dealt with under the law — providing evidence and fair trials. But no, here was a chance to "ethnically cleanse" this entire people with their incorrigible spirit of resistance! Many of them, incidentally, had fought in exemplary fashion against the Nazis.

After Stalin's death the Soviet government, under Khrushchev, admitted the injustice that had been done against the Chechens and Ingush, issued a decree clearing them of the false charges of 1944, allowed them to return to their native lands, and restored the Chechen-Ingush autonomous area which had been abolished at the time of deportation.

What Stalin's government did to the Chechens and Ingush was comparable, of course, to what the U.S. government did to Japanese Americans during World War II. While the U.S. racists claimed to be defending "democracy," the Stalinist Russo-chauvinists claimed to be "building socialism." Is there any wonder people are equally cynical about capitalist "democracy" and the Stalinist brand of "socialism"?

The fact is that the Chechen people were able to return to their native regions and have their autonomy restored because *they built a mass movement to fight for their rights*. It was only in response to that mass struggle, which won sympathy from other sections of Soviet society — various dissenters and other nationalities whose rights had been violated — that the more cautious bureaucratic government of Stalin's heirs during "the thaw" of the late 1950s and early '60s made this concession. Racist Russian chauvinist elements continued to harass the returned Chechens and Ingush and tried to resist returning stolen homes and lands to them. This culminated in a racist pogrom in Grozny which had to be suppressed by troops of the central government. (See Aleksandr Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples*.)

It is no wonder, in the light of this historical background, that the Chechen people chose to declare independence from Russia when the central government in Moscow became drastically weakened in the wake of the failed coup attempt of August 1991 and the struggle between the various wings of the bureaucracy around Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and others.

A War to Suppress the Chechen Mafia?

One justification given for Yeltsin's war against Chechnya is the claim that it is the center of all mafia formations in the former Soviet Union.

But the real mafia is the one headed by Yeltsin, Grachev, and Company. And it is motivated by the desire to seize the oil riches of these people (just as Native Americans in Oklahoma were often murdered for their oil rights).

If the government of Chechnya under Dzhokhar Dudayev represented only corrupt bureaucrats and mafia elements, why the massive outpouring of the Chechen people to defend against the Russian assault? Note that the Chechen fighters *have no officers!* All the fighters are equal, fighting with magnificent morale for the independence of their land and people. Is this egalitarian spirit what you'd expect from a government of gangsters and corrupt officials? Isn't it more likely that what we are seeing is exactly what Trotsky said about the great upsurge of consciousness when an oppressed people fights for its right to independence?

If the Chechen government is nothing but a stronghold of gangsterism and corruption, why did the "opposition" to Dudayev (flagrantly supported by the Russian government and military) suffer repeated failure and gain no popular support? In fact, isn't frustration over the failure of the Yeltsin-Grachev covert attempts to oust Dudayev one of the reasons for this war? Isn't another reason for this action to distract attention in Russia from the constantly worsening economic situation there and the Yeltsin government's continuing loss of popular support?

Mobilize Mass Opposition to This War

If mass opposition can be mobilized now, it may be possible to stop the assault on Chechnya. Surely there is sympathy and support from other non-Russian peoples in the ex-USSR. In the late 1980s, General Dudayev himself refused to follow orders against demonstrators in the Baltic states who were fighting for their national rights. Stories put out by Yeltsin's propaganda machine about Latvian riflemen fighting on the side of the Chechens may be a projection of the kind of internationalist solidarity the Moscow government fears.

The Yeltsin government is the enemy of working people just as much as the Clinton White House and the Dole-Gingrich Congress. If the Yeltsin government can be stopped in its criminal attempt to crush the Chechen resistance, that will strengthen the cause of workers and oppressed people everywhere.

If we had a genuine labor party in the U.S., or a workers government, it would unhesitatingly demand "Yeltsin, Out of Chechnya!" It would call on people everywhere to demonstrate their massive, universal opposition to the Russian attack. It would aid the Chechen fighters in every way possible and would call on labor organizations everywhere to do the same. A mass working class International would do likewise. □

January 10, 1995

National State of the Race Conference

by Claire Cohen

The following article is based on a telephone interview. Claire Cohen has been politically active in the Pittsburgh Black community for a number of years, particularly with the Campaign for a New Tomorrow.

The National State of the Race Conference (SORC) was held in Baltimore, November 17–20, 1994. (See the box on next page for the stated “Goals and Objectives” of the SORC.) The conference was conceived about two years ago. The main person behind it was Ron Daniels, who served as chairman of the National Coordinating Committee (see the box with his statement about the conference). But there were a number of other activists from around the country who played a role in getting it together, including Jemadari Kamara and Damu Smith.

At the time they started planning for this all the events around Ben Chavis and the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] hadn’t occurred, but when those events occurred, that gave more of a push for this to happen. It became connected with the African American Leadership Summits, because many of the people who were most favorable to having this State of the Race Conference were the people in Ben Chavis’s camp in the NAACP and were involved in the African American Leadership Summits. (See *BIDOM*, November 1994, for Vera Wigglesworth’s detailed account “Ben Chavis, the NAACP, and African American Leadership.”)

[Readers should note that since the SORC, another African American Leadership Summit has been held, this time in Chicago the weekend of December 9–11. Ben Chavis and Louis Farrakhan figured prominently at that Summit, with press attention focusing on the call for a March on Washington by one million Black males later in 1995. The proposal for such a march was commented on favorably by Ron Daniels in an article in *Z* magazine last fall, before Chavis was ousted.]

So even though the planning for the SORC had already started, it fit in well with the effort to get the Leadership Summits together. As far as I could tell, the current leadership of the NAACP was not at the SORC, but the people who were supporters of Ben Chavis were, like Don Rojas and others. (Don Rojas was prominent in the Grenada revolution and the New Jewel Movement, then editor of Harlem’s *Amsterdam News*, and most recently communications director of the NAACP under Ben Chavis.)

There hasn’t been any national Black conference since the 1972 National Black Political Convention was held in Gary, Indiana, so this was an attempt to revitalize that kind of initiative. It was also an attempt to bring together grassroots activists with a diversity of ideologies to review and analyze where we are and where we need to be going, how we can work together better, support each other across the country, and strengthen our efforts at liberation.

That’s basically what it was about. (The official theme of the conference was “Taking Responsibility for the Reconstruction of the Black Community.”)

It was held in Baltimore, but that was not related to the fact that Ben Chavis’s headquarters were there as leader of the NAACP. There were two sites that were being looked at, at the first couple of planning meetings which I attended — Pittsburgh and Baltimore. In Pittsburgh we had too few resources, and the organizers’ aim was to try to have the resources come from the Black activist community, rather than accepting funds from just any source that would give them. Of course we are resource poor, so in Pittsburgh we weren’t able to get what we needed for places where we could possibly hold the conference.

In Baltimore there is a Black-owned, Black-run school complex called the Sojourner Douglass College. They go all the way from elementary school to the junior college level, awarding an associate’s degree. It’s like a community college for working people and poor people. It donated its buildings and facilities to hold the SORC. That’s a big reason why the conference ended up being in Baltimore. That had all been decided before the ouster of Ben Chavis.

The sponsors of the conference were the National Malcolm X Commemoration Commission, the National Black United Fund, the Campaign for a New Tomorrow, and the African American Institute for Research and Empowerment (AAIRE). Cosponsors were the National Black United Front, the National Conference of Black Lawyers (which is a more radical Black lawyers’ association; they do things like fight for Black political prisoners and reparations for slavery; it’s not the more mainstream Black lawyers’ association). Also, the National Association of Black Social Workers, the African Heritage Studies Association, and the National Association of Blacks for Reparations in America.

National Black United Fund

The National Black United Fund contributed a major part of the funding, which kept the price down. We purposely wanted to keep the price low, so that regular people would be able to come — working people, college students, poor people.

For the National Black United Fund, this was a chance to showcase itself and its ideas. It’s a national organization that is attempting to get Black people to give part of their paychecks every month toward a fund which will be able to support and finance efforts in our community that wouldn’t normally be funded. They haven’t been able to get real bourgeois Black people to

give to it, like John Johnson or Bill Cosby. Most of their funding has come from working people.

The National Black United Fund has had to go up against the United Way, which saw it as a threat. Instead of giving to the United Way, people in some states have wanted payroll deductions given to the United Fund. The main idea of the Fund is that we could start to build a pool of resources, in a way almost like a national dues from your paycheck. It would fund, and in fact does fund, more radical and progressive things than the United Way would ever do, not just charities.

The United Way saw this as a threat, because United Way does a big drive every year to get people to give payroll deductions to it. If there’s another group for people to give deductions to, that cuts into the United Way’s share. In one case, United Way took the Black United Fund to court, but the Fund won the case. In some states the National Black United Fund is receiving payroll deductions, but it’s not possible to do this everywhere.

For a four-day conference the cost was quite low, thanks to the United Fund’s contribution, which paid for the hotel space, conference materials, and other on-site expenses. Even for those who registered late, the cost of the conference was only \$25 for students, \$35 for others, aside from travel expenses. (It was \$10 or \$15 less if people registered a month early.) As a result there were a lot of grassroots people and students from all around the country.

Conference Participants Pitch In

The fact that the conference was organized with minimal resources and no paid staff was reflected in the rather poor state of organization of the conference. It got better as time went on, but the first day was really bad. The main reason it got better was that people really wanted to see it work. A lot of people, instead of just complaining, pitched in and helped to make it work. And that was what saved it, because otherwise it could have been a real fiasco.

Many of the speakers were quite good, especially at the Saturday workshops on November 19. There was an attempt to have some really serious all-day workshops, to seriously impart some knowledge to people on how we can move further in a number of areas.

The Organizers Institute

At the start, on Thursday and Friday November 17–18, they had something called the Organizers Institute. It was supposed to help new people learn how to do grassroots organizing. That was a real mixed bag. It was kind of rough and rocky in the morning. I think it gave some insights to

Goals and Objectives of the State of the Race Conference (SORC)

- To provide an overview and analysis of the Black freedom struggle in the U.S. since 1954... [Also, to provide] an assessment of the current crises affecting the National African American Community, as a basis for developing strategies for the survival and development of African people in this country and the world.
- To examine concrete models of community-based movements, struggles, projects, organizations, and agencies doing positive work at the grassroots level in communities across the country, e.g., African-centered education, community economic development, Black United Funds, youth organization and development, rites of passage programs, initiatives against racist violence and police brutality, anti-drug, anti-crime, and anti-violence projects, the Urban Peace Movement ["gang peace"], religion-and-liberation programs, etc.
- To provide an opportunity for information exchange and the linking up and networking of community-based movements, organizations, and institutions toward the goal of creating a national network of community-based organizations.
- To raise the financial resources to build and strengthen the African American Institute for Research and Empowerment (AAIFRE) as the institution to carry out the follow-up to the SORC and serve as the anchor for the national network of community organizations. AAIFRE is envisioned as a progressive African American research, policy, leadership training, and technical assistance mechanism to serve grassroots organizations and movements in the U.S. and the Pan-African world.
- To equip SORC participants with the information and inspiration to return to their respective communities fired up with a renewed dedication to take responsibility for the reconstruction of the Black community by intensifying the struggle at the grassroots level.

people, but could have been done better. Some speakers and facilitators were better than others, but you had no way of knowing ahead of time. If you were in a good group, you had a good experience. But if you were unfortunate enough to be stuck in a group with poorer quality facilitators and speakers, your experience wasn't as good as it might have been.

On top of that, they were supposed to have a round table discussion, which was canceled. People had paid extra for the Organizers Institute, but when the round table discussion was canceled they had to let those people attend the Organizers Institute.

National Town Hall Meeting

There was a National Town Hall Meeting, which went fairly well once it got started. But it got started late. This was because Minister Louis Farrakhan was originally on the agenda to speak, but the conference didn't do the security the way he wanted it done, so he wouldn't speak. Later in the conference, another representative of the Nation of Islam spoke, who was actually good, but all this delayed the start of the meeting.

Once it got going, the main speakers at the Town Hall Meeting were Ben Chavis, Ron Daniels, Ramona Edelin, Conrad Worrill, and some other people. It was broadcast live on C-Span. Basically it was an introductory meeting, where people raised issues and concerns about the state of the Black community. I don't know if he was a plant or what, but a white guy got up and chastised Black people for being so

separatist, charging them with being "racist in reverse," and that caused a big commotion. And C-Span sure did film that.

Emphasis on Equality for Women

On Friday there was a Women's Issues Caucus, which I wasn't able to attend, but I understand it was quite good. There were a number of things related to women's issues at the conference that I thought were really positive. One was that there was a real emphasis on equality for women and respecting the leadership contributions and capacities of Black women. Instead of having a competitive view, it was looking at us working together hand in hand. I think a lot of women at the conference really appreciated that.

Another positive thing was that there was a real emphasis on people bridging ideological gaps, because there were people there who were clearly socialists, and people who were clearly nationalists, and people who were sort of a mixture of both, and people who were more into spirituality. There was a real push to get people to transcend those differences instead of being stuck in ideological niches. There wasn't the kind of sectarianism that I've frequently seen at these kinds of conferences. So that was a plus.

A Big Turnout

Another plus was that there were about 1,500 people there. I base that estimate on the capacities of the two auditoriums, both of which were filled at times. From Pittsburgh alone, for example, between 75 and 100 people traveled to the conference. Pittsburgh's Campaign for a New

Tomorrow took a busload of about 50 people, and quite a number of others drove down separately. So it was a really good turnout.

I was pleasantly surprised that about half of those attending the conference were young people, college students and high school students. They seemed really eager for direction, to learn and to understand, to take stock of what was going on in terms of the Black community, and really hunting for ideas on how we can better organize ourselves. That was very encouraging.

The largest numbers were probably from the Northeast. There were delegations from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, also New Jersey. There were a lot of people from the South; I met people from Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina. There were groups from Detroit and Chicago, from Ohio, Wisconsin, and California. There were probably people from other states too, but those are the ones I know of.

Strong Support for Independent Politics

Another very good thing was that the audience clearly felt strongly in support of independent politics, about breaking with the Democrats and Republicans. Any time a speaker talked about that, people whistled and clapped and cheered and made comments, especially the young people. Some of the older people were more ambivalent, but it was very clear that the young people who came to the conference were very strongly for trying to build an independent political party. And that fits in with the *New York Times* article a few months back about the fact that there are increasing numbers of Americans who think we need a third political party and that 40 percent of all registered young people (18-25) registered as independents. The fact that the audience was so positive about that, seemed to make the speakers talk about that more and mention it more often.

I was in the independent politics workshop on Saturday. There wasn't any real talk about individual presidential candidates (whether Jesse Jackson or Ron Daniels, for example). There was more talk about grassroots organizing on the local level, about how we can facilitate the building of independent political formations and parties. Jesse Jackson was one of several scheduled speakers who didn't show up at the conference. There was talk about trying to register a million people as independents over the next year, about going back to our communities and trying to build movements for independent politics, or facilitate such movements, as well as pushing to have local political agenda conferences to come up with party platforms or programs that we can hold candidates to. That's one of the ways of making candidates more accountable to their supporters.

Local Independent Campaigns

A number of local independent Black political campaigns have happened since the 1992 elections. There was a party called the Umoja Party that was formed in Washington, D.C. They have

won ballot status and have run some candidates for office. They didn't win, but they got large numbers of votes. There was a similar effort in Alabama, and a number of other local independent political campaigns. People were much more focused on how they can move on a local level, and so there wasn't much discussion on the experience of the national presidential campaign of Ron Daniels in 1992, although I raised it in the workshop. While people appreciated what Ron tried to do, they were more focused on how they can make something happen locally.

After the Organizers Institute, there was an opening ceremony for the conference as a whole, in mid-afternoon on Friday, November 18. Among the speakers were Mary France of the Campaign for a New Tomorrow and Bill Merritt of the National Black United Fund. A lot of invited speakers didn't show up. I noticed a pattern. It tended to be the more mainstream speakers that didn't show up. Mayor Kurt Schmoke, the Democratic Party mayor of Baltimore, did attend, to give an official welcome to the conference.

A Socialist and Internationalist Perspective

After the opening ceremony, there was a very informative plenary session on international issues. Don Rojas was there. Randall Robinson was not, but there was somebody from the Southern Africa Support Project and somebody from Aristide's government, to talk about the Haiti struggle. The audience, mainly the young people, had a lot of interesting questions. And there was an internationalist and socialist bent to the presentations at that session. A lot of the young people were hearing a perspective they hadn't heard before. It was putting the whole world situation in perspective, not just a narrowly nationalist viewpoint.

On Friday evening there was a session on domestic issues. (All the sessions, incidentally, started one to two hours late on the first couple of days, which was a serious problem.) Among the speakers were Gwen Patton, from the Southern Rainbow Education Project, Rev. Calvin Butts, from the Abyssinian Baptist Church, Dr. James Turner, of the National Malcolm X Commission, and Connie Tucker, of the Southern Organizing Committee, an environmental justice movement (Blacks and Native Americans and Hispanic Americans, mainly from the South and West, who are fighting against all the toxins in their environment). One of those who did not show up was Malenga Karenga, the man who started Kwanzaa, the African celebration of the winter solstice, in answer to the European Christmas.

A Working Class Approach

There wasn't as much of a socialist bent to the session on domestic issues, but Gwen Patton and Connie Tucker had a real grassroots, working class approach, because that's what they are. And people really seemed to appreciate it.

On Saturday there were all-day workshops, including one on Black workers. The "Labor,

From the Chairman of the National Coordinating Committee

"Building a New Movement for Black Liberation" — Statement on the National State of the Race Conference

At critical moments in the life and times of Africans in the U.S., great gatherings have been convened to discuss the status and future of the race in this hostile land. The realities of racism, cultural aggression, and economic exploitation in this society have always compelled the sons and daughters of Africa to meet periodically to plot and plan for the survival and development of the race.

Beginning with the 1850s movement for repatriation led by Edward Wilmot Blyden, and W.E.B. DuBois's Niagara Movement [in 1905], which also called for a meeting of our people to plan for how we will survive and flourish in the U.S.A., we as Africans born in America have met periodically to get organized to achieve our self-determined ends.

At the height of the civil rights revolt and the rise of Black nationalism in the 1960s and '70s, the Black Nation was called into session on several occasions. With the fires of rebellion still smoldering, the Black Nation convened in Newark in 1967 for the first Black Power Conference. The next year, the second Black Power Conference was held in Philadelphia. In 1970, the Con-

gress of African People was convened in Atlanta, paving the way for the historic National Black Political Convention, held in Gary, Indiana, in 1972.

In every instance the impetus for these great gatherings of the '60s and '70s came from grassroots activists, nationalists, Pan-Africanists, and community-based leaders functioning at the local, regional, and national levels. And so it must be now as we strive to meet the challenge of building a new movement for Black liberation.

The State of Emergency which exists for the masses of Black poor and working people and the failure of established Black political leadership to forcefully and effectively fight with and for the Black masses dictate that it is time, past time, for a message and a movement from the grassroots. The current crop of "accommodationist" Black leaders must be replaced by a new visionary and fighting leadership emerging from grassroots movements and organizations. It's time to network, link up, and connect up the range of movements and organizations waging struggle in local communities across the country.

— Ron Daniels

Black Workers, and Black Liberation" workshop was led by Roger Newell, a progressive in the Teamsters union; Lou Moye, of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; and Ajamu Dillahunt, of Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ), who is president of Local 1078 of the American Postal Workers Union in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Justice Speaks, BWFJ's newspaper, gave this report on the workshop:

Non-union, unemployed, union, and organized Black worker activists in the building trades, postal service, manufacturing, Teamsters, and public service sectors examined specific struggles and working conditions of Black workers. The workshop was half women workers and one-third from the South.

A host of topics were discussed from the perspective of Black workers: an independent political party, increased job discrimination and racism, lack of women union leaders, the need for a national political strategy to stop the privatization of public sector jobs, the lack of a Southern strategy for organizing workers into unions and the labor movement in general, and the impact of NAFTA and GATT on the Black working class community. [See the December 1994 *Justice Speaks*, which also prints the recommendations unanimously adopted by the labor workshop.]

A Variety of Workshops

I wasn't able to go to all the workshops, of course, because I was in my own workshop on independent Black political action. (All the workshops reported back to a plenary session of the conference Saturday evening, but I don't have all of that in writing.) When we came back to Pittsburgh some of us sat down and talked about the workshops we had gone to and our experiences at them.

I got a lot of positive feedback about the workshop on "Education for Self-Development." It sounded like a very serious one, with a lot of literature and information given out on a variety of subjects having to do with African-centered education, from how to get a more diverse curriculum in the regular public schools to starting one's own school, to liberation schools, and after-school programs.

The "Crisis of Black Youth" workshop was very popular among the young people. They organized their own network out of that. Another one popular with the youth was "From Gang Banging to Black Liberation." It was organized by the Urban Peace and Justice Movement, a movement among gang members which originated out of the Los Angeles rebel-

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A Working-Class Black History Lesson for Cleveland Students

by Jean Tussey

Black History Month had a head start in Cleveland. In December more than 600 local secondary school students learned some things about their working-class heritage and potential that they are not taught in school, in official texts, and certainly not in the for-profit media.

From December 6 through December 22 the young people, mostly from inner-city high and middle schools, came with their social studies teachers for a one-hour educational field trip to the Greater Cleveland Labor History Museum, housed in the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union's Sidney Hillman Building. There they received a guided tour of a traveling exhibit on the life of the historic socialist, labor, and civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph (1889-1979), and a new companion exhibit, "Unsung African-American Labor Leaders from Greater Cleveland."

The entire exhibit and educational project, including a "Student Transportation Fund" to pay for the use of the yellow school buses and drivers, was initiated and organized by the Cleveland Chapter of the A. Philip Randolph Institute and its experienced labor/community organizer, Berthina E. Palmer. "Bert" Palmer is a long-time staff member of the local AFL-CIO, a member of Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) Local 1794, and a former member of the Cleveland Board of Education.

Cosponsors were the Greater Cleveland Labor History Society, the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor, the Coalition of Labor Union Women, and the United Labor Agency.

Students Meet A. Philip Randolph

Through a 10-minute videotape interview, "Portrait in Black: Life of A. Philip Randolph," the students were able to see and hear Randolph himself. A nontraditional "role model," he tells how he was called "the most dangerous Negro in America" in 1917 for his radical socialist antiwar, antiracist, and pro-working class speeches, publications, and other activities.

He relates how he organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925 at the request of Black workers barred from membership in the white railroad brotherhoods.

He explains how he built the first national mass march on Washington in 1941 to protest race discrimination in defense and government employment and called it off only after President Roosevelt drafted and signed what became Executive Order 8802, forbidding job discrimination by the federal government and all federal contractors.

He describes how he worked with other leading civil rights and labor leaders like Martin

Luther King and Walter Reuther to organize the historic 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, which was followed by passage of the Civil Rights Act the next year.

After the video, volunteer guides from the sponsoring groups, including veteran Cleveland labor and community activists, answered questions and led the students through exhibits which illustrated many of the events discussed by Randolph in the video.

The traveling exhibit is an attractive, graphic documentation of the highlights of Randolph's life. It was designed and developed by the George Meany Center Archives of the AFL-CIO in commemoration of Randolph's 100th birthday, April 15, 1989.

The exhibit was on display at the Cleveland Labor History Museum November 19 through January 2. A special program December 18 featured Norman Hill, president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute in Washington, D.C., as guest speaker.

Local Black Labor Leaders Honored

The companion exhibit, "Unsung African-American Labor Leaders from Greater Cleveland," consists of ten colorful panels of photos and information about Black workers who were union and community leaders in the Cleveland area over the past 50 years. It includes "The A. Philip Randolph Hall of Fame" (the top 16), and the "Wall of Honor" (listing about 80 men and women and their unions). Criteria for both were the highest union office attained, length of service, and community involvement.

Two panels picture miscellaneous activities of the 25-year-old Cleveland A. Philip Randolph Institute, one of the oldest chapters in the country. Included here were workshops sponsored for eighth and ninth grade students like some of those visiting the current exhibit.

Because of Randolph's concern about minorities becoming a part of the building trades unions, he helped form the A. Philip Randolph Education Fund, and through it, the Recruitment and Training Program. R-T-P, as it was commonly known, is considered responsible for the fact that more than 2,000 men and women today are members of Cleveland area unions — the program was also among the first to recruit women for the construction unions.

Role of Worker Community Organizers Noted

Other Black worker community organizers, not part of the AFL or CIO, were pictured in a ninth panel. First was John O. Holly, founder of The Future Outlook League in 1935, which led

picket lines and demonstrations under the boycott slogan, "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work." Many new job opportunities were opened through their militant tactics, first in neighborhood stores, then in larger companies downtown and in some factories. The main Cleveland Post Office is now named after John Holly.

Also seen on this panel is Bertram Washington, a key figure in the Postal Alliance, which functioned as a union and fought for the rights of minority workers at the Post Office in the days when no one else did.

Washington's daughter, Vivian Grubbs, president and business representative for the OPEIU, is pictured beside the Randolph bust which is located in Union Station in Washington, D.C. The bust was commissioned by the AFL-CIO at the same time as the traveling exhibit.

The final panel shows pictures from other recent exhibits at the Greater Cleveland Labor History Museum (such as a history of the workers in the Cleveland needle trades and garment industry), and photos of the ribbon-cutting ceremony opening the Randolph exhibit November 19.

After viewing the exhibit, the students met as a group for a brief question-and-discussion period and a drawing for door prizes from the registration slips they had signed when they arrived. Two from each class won Greater Cleveland Labor History Society T-shirts bearing its familiar logo and slogan, "Preparing for Our Future by Studying Our Past." Every student received a packet of material about Randolph for further study, to share with their families, and for possible use in preparing essays for class during Black History Month in February.

Student Response

The classes that visited the A. Philip Randolph exhibit ranged in size from 15 to 82 students. Some took notes. Some responded to the exhibits with questions and comments to the guides. Many had no idea what a "Pullman porter" was...or a union.

Many students and social studies teachers thanked the volunteers who hosted their visit. One sent a letter to Ben Shouse, co-chairman of the Cultural Arts and Education Committee of the United Labor Agency, which he forwarded to Bert Palmer. She shared it with other sponsors of the program. The student wrote:

On behalf of the eighth graders who went to the Labor History Museum to see the exhibit on A. Philip Randolph, I would like to thank you for the opportunity. The students were fascinated by the information presented. Not many of us knew about A. Philip Randolph.

He was a labor leader and accomplished a lot during his lifetime. All of us deeply appreciated his effort. He was one of the leaders of the March on Washington. He also abolished segregation in the armed forces.

As usual this field trip, like many of the others, was extraordinary. The people there treated us like we want to be treated. Once again, I would like to thank you for remembering Cleveland School of the Arts students. □

The African American Nation: A Journal for Self-Determination and Workers Power

Reviewed by T. Archer

One of the most significant events of 1994 was the emergence of a new revolutionary Marxist journal. The *African American Nation* is published in Raleigh, NC, by the Black Workers League. After reading Volume 1, Number 1, I found myself in the unusual situation of being in political agreement with a publication that is not part of the traditional Trotskyist movement. The second issue was a corroboration of my initial opinion. The comrades of the Black Workers League, through years of involvement in working-class and Black liberation struggles, have developed a revolutionary program for mobilizing and leading African Americans against the ruling class. Their analysis has allowed them to begin developing a transitional program that can, first, lead the African American people in a struggle for self-determination, and, second, will put the Black working class in the vanguard of broader working-class struggles for social change.

In the first issue, S. Muhammad defines the African American nationality in an article entitled "African American Self-Determination and Workers Power: Organizing the Masses from the Bottom Up." He is careful to avoid the pitfalls of the academicians and bourgeois politicians. Muhammad rejects their mechanical and rigid definition of nationhood. His Marxist social and economic analysis of the United States and the role of the Black population are the basis of his position of African Americans as an oppressed nationality. He states that the geographical basis for the Black nation is the super-exploited Black Belt of southern counties. The Black Belt consists of over eighty counties that are majority Black, stretching from Virginia to Texas. Muhammad provides documentation showing that here the rate of exploitation and the standard of living are analogous to underdeveloped countries. He states that the national interests and aspirations of the African Americans in the Black Belt are concurrent with those of the Black populations in the large cities of the North and West. Muhammad does not attempt to arbitrarily or unilaterally define the borders of a Black nation. He understands that if and when these borders are to be defined, that will come from the masses of African Americans in struggle against the oppression of U.S. imperialism.

Leading Role of Black Workers

Muhammad goes on to discuss the class character of the national liberation struggle. He points out the predominance of the working class in the African American population and the need for this class to lead the struggle. And while many of the demands of a struggle for national

liberation would be the extension and fulfillment of the tasks of the first two U.S. bourgeois revolutions, the Black bourgeoisie is too weak and too tied to the imperialists to lead such a struggle. As Muhammad illustrates quite effectively, imperialism cannot afford the existence of an independent African American nation led by the African American working class. As a matter of fact, given the current worsening economic conditions, imperialism can ill afford the intermediate demands of a movement for African American self-determination. Therefore, the struggle for African American liberation strikes at the very right of imperialism to exist. A struggle to form a Black nation in the U.S. is a struggle to abolish U.S. imperialism.

Additionally, the tasks and class character of the national struggle in South Africa are discussed by N. Jackson in the second issue. "South Africa: The Working Class, the Peasantry, and the Revolution" is primarily a polemic against the Stalinist theory of two-stage revolution and the ultraleft and "adventurist" position that South Africa is ready for proletarian revolution and that the African National Congress (ANC) is no different than the apartheid regime of DeKlerk. Jackson states that South African revolutionaries should not trust any other class with the leadership of the struggle. Only the working class can successfully unite the peasantry, women, and youth in a consistent struggle against apartheid and colonialism. What is necessary to lead the fight in South Africa is a revolutionary party that "would include the best elements of the trade unions as well as representatives from community organizations, township councils, women's groups, youth leagues, press cultural and educational organizations, peasant committees, factory committees, parliamentary groups, and military self-defense units." This party cannot simply be declared, but will develop out of the struggle.

Double Oppression: As Blacks and As Workers

Referring again to Muhammad's article on self-determination and workers power, he points out that in the course of struggle many Black trade unionists and other workers will not only be African American freedom fighters but will also link up with and lead many broader union and other working-class struggles. His analysis is that the Black working class will be in the vanguard of the anticapitalist struggles to come. This perspective does not come from some blueprint or preconceived notions, but rather from a Marxist analysis of the class struggle. Black workers, by struggling against their double op-

pression, will be galvanized into some of the most advanced fighters for a new social order.

Muhammad states that the tasks of the Black liberation movement are "to build and maintain the political and organizational unity, focus, and demands of the revolutionary struggle for African American self-determination and national liberation." Furthermore, a transitional program is needed to guide the liberation struggle through the various stages of the anti-imperialist and socialist revolution. This same point is made in a Black Workers League position paper in the second issue of the *African American Nation*, entitled "Black Workers League Statement to the Southern Regional Conference on Unity and the Proposed Building of a National Liberation Front." The Black Workers League explains how this transitional program will allow them to reach the masses of Black Americans at their present stage of political development and involve them in struggles which will heighten their national aspirations and class consciousness. In addition, this program must build a movement that projects a vision of fundamental change for all oppressed peoples and the U.S. working class as a whole. The demands of this program will be intended to involve the Black working class and other sectors in independent political action. The mass actions of the civil rights movement of the 1960s are referred to many times as an example of how to struggle.

Independent Black Political Party

Muhammad has no illusions about the Democratic or Republican parties. He is clear that both represent the white racist capitalist class. While he views the struggle for Black elected representation as progressive and necessary, the emphasis is on the struggle and the necessity of maintaining independence from the capitalist parties and their representatives. There is an in-depth discussion of the need for a Black political party and the crucial role that party could play. This party is projected as a mass party representing the national aspirations of African Americans and would not only run candidates in local, state, and national elections, but would also lead and take part in ongoing struggles for social and economic justice.

Also included in Muhammad's article is a discussion of the labor movement and the role Black revolutionaries can play. Active participation in the Workers Unity Network is one important area of work. The Workers Unity Network is a group of trade unionists and activists. The program of the WUN: (1) seeks to organize the South; (2) demands that labor break immediately with the Democratic Party

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How African Americans Won the Civil War

Glory, a film produced by Fredie Fields, directed by Edward Zwick. Starring Matthew Broderick, Denzel Washington, Cary Elwes, Morgan Freeman, Jhimi Kennedy, and André Braugher.

Reviewed by Jim Miles and Vera Wigglesworth

The iron gate of our prison stands half open. One gallant rush from the North will fling it wide open, while four millions of our brothers and sisters shall march out into liberty. — Frederick Douglass, "Men of Color to Arms!" March 21, 1863.

Most of Hollywood's treatment of the American Civil War up until now has been in the form of romanticizations of the Confederacy, or Westerns that happen to have the Civil War as a backdrop. *Glory* is probably the most technically accurate and historically truthful Civil War movie made so far — about a struggle that cost over 620,000 lives from 1861 to 1865 and was the decisive world-historical event of the 19th century.

Glory is an emotionally powerful film that tells the story of the turning point of that war, when Blacks seized the opportunity to join the Union Army and, through heroic sacrifices, turned a stagnating war-to-restore-the-Union into a revolutionary war of liberation against human slavery. It is also the story of the revolutionary alliance between them and the young, white radicals who became their officers. Set to a musical score splendidly performed by the Harlem Boy's Choir that is at once simple, elegiac, and reverential, *Glory* is a living monument to the real heroes of the Second American Revolution.

Based primarily on the book *One Gallant Rush*, by Peter Burchard, and on the letters of Robert Gould Shaw, the 25-year-old commander of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment of Volunteer Infantry, the film effectively portrays the ups and downs of forging solidarity between Blacks and whites in the context of a rigid military command structure where only whites were allowed to be officers. Shaw, admirably played by Matthew Broderick, is the only historical character in the movie's 54th Massachusetts Regiment. The four main Black roles are fictional, as is that of Shaw's friend, Major Forbes.

The 54th was actually composed of mostly free Northern Blacks. In the movie, however, the soldiers are mostly ex-slaves, as were most of the 180,000 African Americans who served in the Union army. The story of how free Blacks and ex-slaves transformed themselves into disciplined combat units and a civil war into a revolution is told through the four Black fictional characters of *Glory*.

André Braugher plays the young Black intellectual Thomas Searles, Shaw's childhood friend. Morgan Freeman gives what is possibly his finest performance as the sagacious gravedigger Rawlings, who helps lead

the regiment even before he becomes sergeant-major. Jhimi Kennedy is Jupiter Sharts, the guileless young field hand who becomes the regiment's first-class marksman. And Denzel Washington is the sardonic, adversarial, and uncompromising Tripp.

The Second American Revolution

Although the North had participated and profited from the slave trade ever since Africans were first brought to the English-dominated part of North America as slaves in 1619, and although slavery was legally recognized in the U.S. Constitution of 1787, the demands of a Northern industrial capitalist economy based on free labor mobility increasingly came into conflict with a Southern agrarian precapitalist economy based upon private property in human beings. Prior to the Civil War only a tiny handful of people in the North, the abolitionists, openly advocated the immediate freeing of the slaves. Shaw's parents, shown briefly at the beginning of the film, were wealthy abolitionists, and genuine revolutionaries of their day.

The domination of the Southern slavocracy penetrated into every aspect of social, political, religious, and personal life in the North and was actually responsible for the fostering and perpetuation of the widespread racist beliefs of nearly all classes of white people before the war. To be opposed to slavery and for racial equality was to risk death, and not only in the South.

The decade of the 1850s had seen the growth of federal laws and court rulings that, along with the increased cotton demands of the British textile mills, strengthened slavery's existence and the slaveowners' grip on the federal government. Many Southern states had by 1860 enacted laws giving free Blacks the choice of exile or re-enslavement.

The election of the moderate, anti-slavery Lincoln in 1860, with his policy of containing slavery in the states where it already existed, threatened the slavocracy's domination of the federal government, signaling a political revolution in favor of Northern industrialists. Lincoln's election stampeded 11 Southern states into secession in 1861, launching a counterrevolution which set up the Confederate government.

It wasn't until after the Union victory at Antietam Creek in Maryland on September 17, 1862 (with which the movie opens), that Lincoln announced he would issue an Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves in states still in rebellion and enlisting Blacks in the U.S. army. Eighteen months of Northern military defeats had helped convince the majority of white people in the North that the war to save the Union now had to become a relentless revolutionary war against slavery.

Contrary to what African Americans and abolitionists desired at the outbreak of the war, it is doubtful whether emancipation could have

become a war aim sooner than it did. As Frederick Douglass, the leading abolitionist and himself an ex-slave, pointed out in 1876:

Had he [Lincoln] put the abolition of slavery before the salvation of the Union, he would have inevitably driven from him a powerful class of the American people and rendered resistance to rebellion impossible. [*The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Vol. 4, p. 316.]

Initially, only Massachusetts, headed by the radical Governor John Andrew, authorized the raising of Black troops. After the bloody scenes at Antietam, we see a battle-fatigued Shaw on leave at his home, where Governor Andrew and Frederick Douglass ask him to take command of the first Black regiment in the North. Shaw asks his friend Cabot Forbes (Cary Elwes) to come with him as second-in-command, and their mutual friend Thomas Searles (André Braugher) offers himself as the regiment's first volunteer.

Some people have charged that the film is "racist" because the main hero is Shaw. But the film is well balanced in constantly shifting back and forth between the ranks of Black soldiers and the white officers. The demoralization of the regiment after the whipping of Tripp for desertion (a standard practice in the Union army, which the historical Shaw actually never engaged in) is only overcome by Shaw's egalitarian response to the regiment's spontaneous strike against unequal pay. It is these tensions of the developing alliance between the Black soldiers and the young radical white officers, portrayed by Broderick and Elwes, that is at the heart of the drama of the film.

The Two-Front War of Black Troops

Just what a revolutionary act it was to arm Blacks is poignantly underscored early in the movie. The Confederate Congress's counter-revolutionary threat to re-enslave or execute any Black soldiers captured in battle and execute their white officers, is read to the regiment by Shaw in the midst of a thunderstorm at Camp Readville, with the offer of a full discharge for those wishing to leave.

This threat was actually carried out until Lincoln, under pressure from Frederick Douglass and the Radical Republicans, issued a retaliation order on July 31, 1863, threatening to execute or send to hard labor a Confederate prisoner for every Union prisoner so dealt with. But the brutal massacre of over 200 Black troops at Fort Pillow in April 1864 by Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest showed that the counterrevolution remained relentlessly racist.

To make the idea of Black troops acceptable to backward Northern public opinion, the War Department stipulated that only white officers could command Black units. A further concession to white racism was made when the War Department authorized that Black combat troops would receive only the

pay of laborers, far below that of white union soldiers, after Blacks in the North had already enlisted with the promise of equal pay.

The pay strike of the 54th, depicted in the film, lasted 18 months and won equal pay for all Black troops in 1864. Sticking to principle, the soldiers even refused a subsidy from the Massachusetts legislature (raised at the behest of Governor Andrew) until equal pay for all was won.

Shaw and the Burning of Darien, Georgia

The contrast between revolutionary abolitionist officers and racist opportunists who managed to acquire command of Black regiments is well depicted in the film's historical contrast of Shaw and Colonel Montgomery. In the movie, and in real life as well, after completing their training, the men of the 54th embarked for the Sea Islands off South Carolina, where Black and white abolitionists were carrying out a literacy campaign among ex-slaves. It was also the base of the 2nd South Carolina, a "contraband" regiment of ex-slaves, some of whom had been forcibly conscripted into the Union army.

On June 11, 1863, the 54th and the 2nd South Carolina under Colonel Montgomery conducted a foraging raid on the town of Darien, Georgia. Shaw was horrified at Montgomery's order to sack and burn the defenseless town, worried that news of Black troops looting and burning would have disastrous consequences for the abolition cause. Shaw was even more horrified one night when Montgomery shot one of his own men on the spot because the soldier refused to be silent after taps. In the film this incident and the burning of Darien are compressed together. After Darien, Shaw was anxious to get his men into combat and alongside white troops "in order that they may have witnesses besides their own officers to what they are capable of doing."

On July 16, Shaw's regiment finally saw action on Morris Island, where they covered the retreat of a white regiment, the 10th Connecticut, which had been badly mauled. Afterward, the white soldiers came up to shake hands with their saviors and many wrote letters home eulogizing the Black troops.

The Meaning of the Battle of Fort Wagner

The climax of *Glory* is the 54th's assault on Fort Wagner, a formidable fortress guarding the approaches to Charleston Harbor. The importance of this battle went far beyond the stated military objectives of clearing the way for an assault on Charleston. As Civil War historian Joseph T. Glatthaar points out in his book *Forged in Battle — The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers*, the outstanding performance in mid-1863 of Black soldiers at the three battles of Port Hudson, Miliken's Bend, and Fort Wagner, challenged the widespread racist belief that Blacks would not fight.

However, if the Black regiments in these three battles had faltered under fire, as many white regiments already had,

the results would have been catastrophic for the Black race and the USCT (United States Colored Troops). Fortunately, they fought with the courage of veterans [p. 141].

Black Soldiers Won the Civil War

White prejudice was too deep to be cast aside at once, but the heroism of these soldiers opened the gates that allowed the 180,000 Black volunteers, mostly ex-slaves, to join the Union army. Considering that another 300,000 were serving as laborers and drivers, supporting and supplying federal troops, the contribution of Blacks in winning the war against slavery was not only decisive, *the Civil War could not have been won without Black troops*. Lincoln himself recognized this on several occasions. In August 1863 he noted that

some of the commanders of our armies in the field who have given us our most important successes, believe the emancipation policy, and the use of colored troops, constitute the heaviest blow yet dealt to the rebellion; and that, at least one of those important successes, could not have been achieved when it was, but for the aid of black soldiers. [Lincoln, *Collected Works*, Vol. VI, p. 408-409.]

One year later, as what would prove to be a hotly contested election campaign with the Democratic anti-emancipation candidate General McClellan rapidly approached, Lincoln emphasized to a reporter:

The slightest acquaintance with arithmetic will prove to any man that the rebel armies cannot be destroyed with [D]emocratic strategy. It would sacrifice all the white men of the north to do it...no human power can subdue this rebellion without the use of the Emancipation lever as I have done. Freedom has given us the control of 200,000 able bodied men, born & raised on southern soil... My enemies condemn my emancipation policy. Let them prove by the history of this war, that we can restore the Union without it. [Lincoln, *Collected Works*, Vol. VII, p. 506-507.]

Neither Grant's victories in 1864-65 or Sherman's conquest of Atlanta and famous March to the Sea would have been possible if the Union army had been understrength, relying only on white conscription and not Black volunteers. But it was not only the numbers of Blacks who fought; it was their belief that the Civil War was a fight for the liberation of themselves and all African Americans that made the majority of Black troops fight with a greater determination, stubbornness, and courage than most white troops. It was this revolutionary consciousness that made their military role decisive in winning the civil war.

The Fate of the Second American Revolution

After the end of the war in 1865, slavery was formally abolished and Black civil rights

were legally guaranteed by the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution. But by the mid-1870s, the new class of industrial capitalists that had achieved dominance in the Republican Party found their rule increasingly challenged by the emerging Northern industrial working class. Since the previous ruling class, the slavocracy, was already defeated and was becoming a subordinate agrarian capitalist class, there was little incentive for the new capitalist federal government to authorize further expropriations of their old enemies by parceling out the plantations among the ex-slaves, as some Radical Republicans like Thaddeus Stevens had championed with the slogan "forty acres and a mule." Only a radical land reform promoting economic independence for the ex-slaves and poor whites, backed up by local militias and federal troops, would have guaranteed the civil rights of the freedmen.

But by 1877 a deal was cut between the Republican and Democratic parties whereby the Republicans pledged to withdraw federal troops (defending Radical governments in the South) in exchange for the Democrats' conceding the presidential election in the electoral college to Rutherford B. Hayes. This effectively ended Radical Reconstruction, paving the way for the creation of Jim Crow laws restricting Blacks' legal rights and freedom of mobility. The subsequent reign of terror — legalized lynchings, burnings, rapes, and torture — was only ended by the mass mobilization of Blacks and their allies in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s. These self-mobilizations of African Americans to enforce the rights that their ancestors had won by force of arms in the Second American Revolution transformed both the participants and their allies.

Appropriately, at the end of *Glory*, the 1897 monument built by Saint-Gaudens in Boston to commemorate Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts fills the screen. Saint-Gaudens's bronze bas-relief, which took twelve years to complete, inspired Freddie Fields in 1985 to spend four years creating *Glory*, a modern living monument to those heroes of the Second American Revolution. □

Further suggested reading:

Joyce Hansen, *Between Two Fires: Black Soldiers in the Civil War*.

Corporal James Henry Gooding, *On the Altar of Freedom: A Black Soldier's Civil War Letters From the Front*, edited by Virginia M. Adams.

Peter Burchard, *One Gallant Rush: Robert Gould Shaw and His Brave Black Regiment*.

Captain Luis F. Emilio, *A Brave Black Regiment: History of the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 1863-1865*.

James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*.

Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*.

Union Activists Assess Prospects for Labor Party

by Frank Lovell

The Labor Educational Conference held in Toledo, Ohio, December 10–11, 1994, was sponsored by chapters of Labor Party Advocates (LPA) in Cleveland, Toledo, and Detroit and by several local unions and other groups associated with organized labor in the Midwest. It was the first opportunity for a sizable number of politically conscious union members and others active in the workers movement to meet and assess the outcome of the November general elections, in which nearly all labor-endorsed candidates at all levels of government went down to defeat in the shambles of the Democratic Party.

Although this was a regional conference and did not attract many participants from beyond the Midwest area, national LPA leaders delivered the main talks and led some workshop discussions. The conference was structured to allow for full participation by all who attended. There were 341 conference registrants, from 60 different unions, and 19 states, plus Canada. Some came from California, Texas, and other distant states. Nearly all paid their own way, but some were officially sent by their local unions.

Wages and Dodd the Keynote Speakers

The conference began with opening remarks by Virginia Robinson, secretary-treasurer of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) Local 7-622 of Cleveland. Her main assignment was to introduce the two keynote speakers. The first was Bob Wages, international president of OCAW. The second was Jed Dodd, general chairman of the Pennsylvania Federation of the railroad union Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE). Both unions have officially endorsed LPA, and these elected officials are committed to the labor party idea and are helping to expand the influence of LPA in the union movement in the hope of organizing a union-based labor party that will represent the interests of the working class and other poor people.

Both Wages and Dodd (the text of whose talks appear elsewhere in this issue) emphasized the problems working people feel most keenly — cutbacks in the workforce, longer hours of work, frozen wages (and often reduced wages), and job insecurity because of the weakened condition of the unions.

On December 11, the Sunday edition of Toledo's daily newspaper, *The Blade*, which advertises itself as "one of America's great newspapers," carried a front-page story on the conference, headlined "Third political party in

view." The *Blade* reporter, James Drew, quoted Wages's reference to the betrayal of working people by both Republicans and Democrats: "It's like the difference between a toothache and a headache. You're going to hurt either way." In reference to Dodd's talk the reporter summarized that without a labor party in the United States workers can't reverse the "one-way class war" that the employers and their two political parties are waging against unionism. Also he interviewed and quoted several participants from different parts of the country.

The November Elections

On the question of the Republican sweep of Congressional seats in the November elections, the reporter quoted one LPA member, Lisa Hane from Chicago, who "rejected the conventional wisdom that the results of the Nov. 8 election were a trumpet call for the nation to move to the right." Pointing to the fact that 125 million eligible voters stayed away from the polls (a 61 percent majority), Ms. Hane said: "There are millions of people who are looking for something that was not there." The reporter also quoted Bob Wages: "There is a tremendous political vacuum. Working men and women can fill that vacuum if we have the guts to band together."

It is noteworthy when quotes of this kind appear in a daily capitalist newspaper, even one of a medium-sized Midwestern city. The reporter was obviously impressed by the tenor of the conference. The editors probably decided to feature his report because they know that the "third party" idea, if not that of a labor party, strikes a responsive chord among readers. Whatever the motives of the local editors, the capitalist media outside Toledo followed their general blackout policy on labor news. Daily papers in Cleveland and Detroit made no mention of the Labor Educational Conference.

The low turnout in the November election, only 39 percent, was one of the most generally talked about facts at the conference. The minority who voted in the election split very nearly in half. Thus it is clear that few, if any, members of the present Congress received the endorsement of more than 25 percent of eligible voters. This is hardly a "mandate." Yet they claim to speak for "the American people" and talk about "saving taxpayers' dollars" (while increasing military spending). If seriously challenged by an enlightened and enraged electorate, this Congress would be unable to defend its legitimacy to govern.

The bipartisan rush to cut taxes on the rich and take away assistance programs for the working poor and for poverty-stricken families was one of the trends in the new Congress most commonly discussed at the conference. Both keynote speakers referred to it, explaining that this is part of a larger plan to shift the division of wealth in this country more in favor of the rich than it already is, to do a reverse Robin Hood, to take from the poor and give to the rich.

Labor and Management, No Common Interests

Another underlying theme in both keynote talks, not explicitly stated, was the deceptive use of "middle class" to designate "the great majority." Use of these misleading terms by politicians and the media is now pervasive, the purpose being to hide the class antagonism between workers and employers. The myth that labor and management have common interests was spawned long ago, but it has gained a new luster recently in labor-management cooperation schemes, such as "quality of work life" committees, in which union and management collaborate in the productive process to raise productivity and reduce labor costs. Under these schemes workers and managers all belong to "the great middle class," but workers are paid wages and managers receive salaries and bonuses and stock dividends. Ownership and major decision-making power remain in the hands of the employers, although the wealth is actually produced by the majority who do the labor. Therein lies the class distinction and inherent antagonism between capital and labor.

The labor party begins as the political arm of labor, its purpose being to defend the social interests of the working class. In so doing, it will help create a better society, in which the actual "quality of life" for the vast majority will be greatly improved. These goals of a labor party were not spelled out by either keynote speaker. That kind of discussion was beyond the purview of this particular conference.

Both Wages and Dodd came to the conference with well-prepared talks. Their talks were well delivered, in all respects different from the trite stump speeches of capitalist party politicians. Wages and Dodd spoke sincerely about urgent social and economic problems. They spoke with conviction of their own experiences as union leaders, and their generalizations on the evils of the two-party system and the economic ills of society were convincing.

The audience was unusually quiet and attentive. There was an occasional burst of applause,

and at the end of each talk warm appreciative applause. But the enthusiasm of a party crusade was lacking, partly because this conference was not intended as a crusade. It was an educational conference. And that accounts in part for the seriousness of the audience and its subdued response to the keynote speakers.

The Changed Conditions Labor Faces

Another side of this has to do with the audience itself, its composition and expectations. Most of them came to the conference to participate in its deliberations and to learn; some came because they thought they had something to teach. The size and composition of this body may have been a reflection of the present stage of political consciousness of union members. Most of those at the conference were in the 30-60 range. Few Blacks were present. Women were about 25 percent of the conference, according to several estimates. There was a scattering of youth (people under 30), but those under 20 could be counted on one hand and were not vocal.

Nearly all conference participants had joined unions in the post-World War II period, and were conditioned by the labor-management collaboration that seemed to work well for union members, with seniority and steady employment in the 1950s and '60s. But in the 1970s union members, especially in the building trades and in most mass production industries, saw their unions lose ground and their future become less secure. With the 1980s came the realization that the entire union movement was under attack by a concerted drive of the employing class to dislodge the union shop and eventually destroy the unions. Now in the 1990s we see the beginning of an awakening to the fact that, for self-defense, the union movement must organize its own independent political party.

For the past several years LPA has conducted surveys of membership sentiment in several unions and has documented the fact that in all unions surveyed the majority of members favor the formation of a labor party. When and how this will come about remains to be seen.

Conference Workshops

This challenging task confronted all the workshops that met during the conference. The ten workshops addressed the following problems: jobs, workers compensation, privatization, oppressed minorities, independent labor candidates, strike and lockout solidarity, women's rights, labor law reform, national health care, and foreign policy. (The largest workshop was on independent labor candidates, and those present were unanimous on the need to combine electoral and nonelectoral action, such as strike solidarity.) The results of discussions in these workshops were reported to a plenary session of the conference, the final session before adjournment. Each workshop reported five proposals that had been agreed upon as ways to help relieve the specific problem.

For example, the jobs workshop recommended a massive public works program, a

shorter workweek with no cut in pay, elimination of overtime work, and an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. In this workshop Tony Mazzocchi, founder and principal organizer of LPA during its several years of existence, led the discussion and tried to introduce the idea that jobs should be defined in a way different from the way they are presently understood, which is as hourly employment in return for wages. As an example of redefining jobs he offered his experience as a war veteran under the GI Bill of Rights when he received better-than-subsistence pay for doing what he thought would improve his own condition of life and in this way contribute to the betterment of society. Many GIs earned their pay by going to school. He said the GI Bill proved to be the most successful jobs program ever devised. But how the concept would apply in the present situation was not clear, and the workshop did not pursue the possibilities inherent in the suggestion that the understanding and meaning of jobs can be expanded. Instead the panel opted for the more traditional union demands that seemed to win concessions in the 1950s but that, in the present political climate, are ignored by private employers and government agencies.

Privatization

The workshop on privatization was concerned with a rather recent development, something the unions as presently constituted have been unable to deal with effectively. In the case of public transportation, for example, many municipalities contract with private bus companies to gradually replace city bus service. These private companies have their own equipment and a work force that the unions have so far not organized. The workshop formulated the following general statement:

The participants of this workshop endorsed the building of a labor party in the U.S., and labor activities designed to raise union consciousness in the work force. We see these general steps, combined with the following specific recommendations, as critical links in the process of fighting privatization.

- Public services and utilities to be retained under municipal or public ownership, and those under private, for-profit ownership to be brought under municipal or public ownership.
- Revive labor's call for full employment and a shorter work week with no reduction in pay.
- Support the petition to demand an end to attacks on immigrants and welfare rights as expressed in [California ballot initiative] Proposition 187.
- Support the great Jute Workers' March in Bangladesh, where the subsidized industry is being threatened with privatization and elimination.
- Recommend that a process be organized to create a clearinghouse for information on fighting privatization.

The other panels also agreed upon generally recognized social programs that sectors of the union movement have traditionally endorsed but failed to implement. This, of course, is

Strike and Lockout Activists at Conference

Ongoing strike struggles, such as those at Staley, Caterpillar, and Bridgestone-Firestone, made themselves felt at the conference. Dave Watts, head of the fighting local at Staley, took part in the workshop on strike and lockout solidarity. Leaders of Caterpillar and Bridgestone-Firestone locals were also scheduled to participate, but were unable to.

United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 599, of Flint, Michigan, which recently won an exemplary strike battle against General Motors over excessive overtime, was represented at the conference by a delegation of 11 workers. Dave Yettaw, the local's president (also co-chair of the New Directions caucus in the UAW), played an active role in the conference and called for more dramatic measures to support striking workers. He urged trade unionists to raise the question in their unions of a general strike in support of the locked-out Staley workers. Also represented at the conference were members of the mostly African American Local 267 of the Allied Industrial Workers Union in Detroit, who have been locked out by the National Metal Processing Company.

evidence that the need for a labor party is urgent and that its emergence in the U.S. political arena is long overdue. But at the end of the day the question remained, How will the labor party be organized and what actual forces will create it?

(A first meeting of LPA's Interim Executive Committee is scheduled for January 21 in St. Louis. Perhaps it will indicate some answers to these questions.)

Labor Party Now?

A plenary session in the afternoon of the first day of the conference addressed the question, Should a labor party be established now in the U.S.? An impressive list of officials from auto workers locals, steel workers locals, the postal workers union, the Teamsters, rubber workers, farm workers, and the National Welfare Rights Union were scheduled to speak. Some were unable to attend for various reasons, such as Sam Theodous, who is on the Executive Board of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and is president of Teamsters Local 407 in Cleveland.

This plenary session was chaired by Carol McAllister of Pittsburgh, an executive board member of Local 3414 of the American Federation of Teachers. The following panelists spoke,
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“We Have to Form Our Own Independent Political Party — With an Agenda That Makes Sense for Working Men and Women”

by Bob Wages

The following is a nearly complete transcript, with a few minor omissions, of the keynote speech given by the president of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) to open the Labor Educational Conference on the theme “Labor and Politics” in Toledo, Ohio, on December 10. For more on that conference, see the article by Frank Lovell on p. 24 and the transcript of the second keynote speech, by Jed Dodd, on p. 28.

I’m really delighted to be here. I’m delighted with the opportunity whenever I can to talk to trade unionists and workers — and even an occasional union bureaucrat, if they’ll venture out into the weather — about where we’re at, where we find ourselves, where we’re going, and at least our perception of what we think is our obligation.

What Happened on November 8

Obviously this is a very timely meeting. Something interesting happened on November 8. Oddly enough just prior to November 8 I was writing an article for my union newspaper that goes out to my membership, and I indicated in that article that the prospects for November 8 were that Newt Gingrich would be speaker of the House and Bob Dole would be majority leader of the Senate. And I could envision, at the time all this was coming down, that everybody in the labor movement in Washington — which is a whole ‘nother labor movement — was sitting around kind of wringing their hands wondering, Now what are we going to do, what’s going to become of us? And saying, Oh God, can it get much worse?

A Time to Examine Options

Well, it probably is going to get a lot worse. But it’s also a time of opportunity. It’s also a time when I think we can sit back and really examine what the options are, what we really do bring to the table, what we could do if we want to advance a progressive agenda, and what really went on on November 8.

Because as I pointed out in my article to my members, November 8 would simply validate what’s been going on for 15 or 20 years. There’s been a conservative domination in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. Progressive legislation essentially has stopped.

Every time you get into a meeting with a bunch of bureaucrats like myself everybody would be sitting around salivating at the prospect of a Democratic Senate and a Democratic House of Representatives, and would think about [a law banning] “striker replacement,” and would think about labor law reform and things like that. But in fact it was never really a legitimate possibility. It was never really a situation where we had people in the Congress, and certainly not in the White House, who understood workers’ concerns, who understood the middle class, what was happening to our cities, what was happening to our manufacturing base, and who would reach out to the real people in

this society and talk about what it is we have to do to change this very, very real trend that has gone on politically for the last 15 or 20 years in this country.

Corporatization of America

I regard what happened on November 8 as simply a reaffirmation of the corporatization of America. [The idea is:] “What’s good for big business is good for you. What’s good for corporate power and greed is good for us.” It harkens back to the days when people talked about, “What’s good for General Motors is good for the country.”

What people in the trade union movement haven’t done and what our so-called friends haven’t done is to say, “Well, we have to think this over.” Because we can go back and look at the last 30 or 35 years, and we know what’s happened to us.

A Tremendous Political Vacuum

So my message to you today is that it’s not a time to sit back. It’s a time of opportunity and to act on opportunity. It is not a time to be timid. It’s time to be bold. It is not a time to sit back and say, We can’t win, we can’t get anything accomplished. Because I happen to believe that there’s a tremendous political vacuum in this country, that working men and women can band together, and we can fill that vacuum if we’ve got guts enough to band together to do it. And I think we can.

What’s happened over the course of the past 30 years? In 1954 when the Internal Revenue Code was adopted, the tax code in this country, it was split roughly in the following way: large corporations and the rich assumed about two-thirds of the federal tax burden; one-third fell upon the poor and the working class. Now that burden has shifted. Now the working class and the poor pay two-thirds of the burden, and Corporate America complains about welfare.

Now they’ve decided that they’re going to embark upon an agenda that is a whole different kind of government policy. It’s taking us back 45 years. It’s deregulation, de-unionization, “free trade.” We’re told things are good. We’re told that over the last 20 years — as this corporate agenda has moved forward to deregulate, to de-unionize, to engage in “free trade” — we’re told that jobs are up and inflation is down, that opportunities are out there abounding, when in fact our jobs are leaving. We’re working longer and earning less. Our cities are crum-

bling. Our educational system is in disarray. And all for what?

Neither Party Cares About the Working Class

My suggestion to you this morning is that a lot of what’s happened has happened as a result of both political parties abandoning any notion and any pretense of giving a tinker’s dam about the middle class, the working class, the working folks in this country. Yet there’s no question that in any electoral scheme and on any electoral basis, it is in fact the working class, the poor, and the disenfranchised that, if they banded together, would make the difference. And it’s high time to start talking about the politics of making a difference.

They like to say, Play by the rules. Well, I think it’s time we quit playing by the rules. Because they’re *their* rules. Nobody conferred upon them any right to make the rules. Because this is *our* economy. And there has to be a politics that *we* form from the bottom up.

There are a handful in the trade union movement that believe that if we stand together and band together, we can make it happen. I wish I could say that I was on [the AFL-CIO headquarters] Christmas card list and that they shared these values. But I think they would rather find solace in wringing their hands and wondering how they’re going to continue to play inside-the-Beltway politics when inside the Beltway there’s no longer anyone that’s even *under any illusion* that they speak for working men and women in this country.

They’ve Made Union Busting an Art Form

So we’re now facing the corporatizing world of tax cuts that are essentially given away to big business, a trade program essentially given away to big business, and a campaign in this country for the last 20–25 years that has made union busting an art form for anyone who wants to engage in it. If you break the law, not to worry. Over a period of time you can amortize your losses. And who cares if the [National Labor Relations] Board finds you guilty? A few dollars here, a few dollars there. If you’ve amortized your losses, you’re going to be able to pay everybody off, and still bust the union. You can be in the final analysis a criminal, but on top of the world in terms of corporate profit.

And where have our so-called friends been? Where’ve they been on trade policy, NAFTA and GATT? Where’ve they been on tax policy?

I've already outlined it for you. Where've they been on health care, one of the larger [issues] of the last 24-36 months? Where were they on campaign financing reform. They weren't with us! They abandoned us on health care. They sold NAFTA and GATT. They in fact employed the same kind of tax policy that they learned from the Republican majority. And I say "the Republican majority" ironically because it really has been a *corporatist* majority for the last 15 or 20 years.

In 1992 when Bill Clinton ran for president everyone got kind of excited about the prospect of labor law reform. And I saw how hard President Clinton fought for that. [Laughter.] And then there was "striker replacement" — our number one priority. I saw how hard the president fought for that. And then I saw NAFTA, and I really saw how hard the president could work. [Laughter.] And then there was GATT. And it continues and continues and continues.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that those folks aren't our friends. This isn't complicated. It's not hard to understand what's going on. The stark reality is that we have to figure out what to do about it.

The "Contract on America"

Now what are we confronted with? A new Republican contract — I call it "contract on America." [Laughter.] Now we're going to have a capital gains tax cut. That's going to cost all of us about \$225 billion over a period of 5-10 years. Now what Newt has come up with and what this capital gains tax cut will look like is that it's going to be called "the wage enhancement and jobs creation plan" of the Republican contract on America.

And then they're going to do one better. They're going to do a little tax cut here and a tax cut there, and the theory is that if we do good for the corporations, then thanks to the corporations — because they are socially conscious, because they want to treat their people right, because they want to be decent in the communities in which they operate — all of that is somehow going to redound to the benefit of the poor and the downtrodden who are in the communities and in the plants where these corporations were. Guess what? It's going to be the same thing as "trickle down" economics 10 or 12 years ago.

Now we're faced with a new one called the "neutral cost recovery act." It's part of the contract on America. That really is a cut in corporate income tax. That's what it is.

Who Funds the Democratic Leadership Council?

Why do I point this out? Because there's not a huge difference between what's going on with the Republicans and what went on with the Democrats, all in the name of creating a political economy conducive to business. It's no secret that the Democratic Leadership Council has taken over the Democratic Party, and it's funded by some of my closest corporate "friends" — Chevron, Arco, the American Petroleum Institute, and the like. And I'm sure it's great when all the buddies get together.

I saw a picture on TV the other night of Clinton giving a speech to the Democratic Leadership Council. Okay? They're all in tuxedos. That's what *we* go to meetings in, right? Well, there he is in his tux at a \$5,000-a-plate dinner and he's talking about free trade and a growing economy and growing jobs and what's good for Middle America. And he's talking to a bunch of corporate lawyers parading themselves as "democrats" who belong to the Democratic Leadership Council.

We have to form our own independent political party to stand up to the government and to stand up to both parties and to carve out an agenda that makes sense for working men and women.

Because let me tell you what *didn't* happen on November 8. What didn't happen was a rejection of the values we share. What didn't happen was a rejection of a tax policy that was fair or a trade policy that was fair. It was not a rejection of the fact that we have to build our cities, improve education, and give opportunity to people in this country. None of that was rejected.

The Toothache and the Headache

What was rejected was a political system that doesn't address the needs of anyone except corporate and rich interests. And when people say that working people who are Democrats didn't come out to vote, why in the hell should we? Who are we voting for? You're voting for the difference between a toothache and a headache. You're going to hurt either way.

And most of the folks in my union, I'm sure, woke up on November 8, heard the alarm bell go off, and hit the button. Then they went back to sleep. Because until there's a reason to vote and until there's a difference, people are not going to re-engage in the political process.

So we're faced with one hell of an opportunity. Because there is a huge political vacuum here, and there's going to be a huge challenge to fill it.

Labor — The Largest Constituency

Remember, there are 16 million unionists in this country, and we all touch 2 or 3 others. It is a political constituency larger than any other political constituency in the country. Yet we sit on our thumbs. And don't have the boldness or the vision to step out beyond where we've always been.

That's the call. And it is not going to happen from the top down. It's going to have to happen from the bottom up.

One of the reasons we started the discussions in our union several years ago about Labor Party Advocates was that we knew we had to forge an agenda and start creating a discussion around issues that resonated in the rank and file of our union. We talked about issues that made sense to them as workers, as family members, as wage earners.

They understand and you understand that this generation of Americans, your children, don't have the future that you had. It is probably the *first* generation that is not going to have the kind of future that the preceding generation had.

An Agenda for Working Men and Women

So this obligation falls upon us. It isn't just an option. This is something that we're compelled to do if we believe in the principles that drive us here, if we believe in equity and justice in the workplace and society, if we believe in a policy that gives opportunity. If you believe in an educated society, if you believe that people don't *want* to be criminals but are driven to it by circumstance, if you believe that our cities are going to hell and our infrastructure is in shambles, if you believe all these things, then you have to believe that we can carve out a political agenda that will resonate with the masses of working men and women in this country and with the people they touch and in the communities in which they operate. And that has to give us reason to believe and reason to hope.

Other unions are starting the discussions now. Maybe not as boldly as Brother Dodd's union and the OCAW, but certainly it's now well understood out there that things are going to change, and they're going to change rather dramatically unless we do something, organizing from the bottom up.

Mass Action in the Streets

I come from a generation that saw mass action in the streets stop a war. I come from a generation that saw mass action in the streets bring about civil rights legislation. Many of you come from a generation that saw people sitting down in plants and taking action in the streets that created a whole new political dimension and discussion in this country that was called the New Deal. And I don't think any of you that saw the '30s and then prospered in the '50s would argue that that came about because of the political benevolence of Franklin Roosevelt. It came about because people were in the streets and occupying plants. It came about because we organized from the bottom up.

Organize from the Ground Up

We say in my union we want to turn our union around by organizing. I say you have to turn the country around — by organizing everyone you see, everyone you touch. And we have to play that role. We have to fill the political vacuum that's been created by the corporatization of this country.

And it's only by doing it from the ground up that we're going to be successful.

I want to give you my best wishes for a wonderful conference with some meaningful debate and dialogue. I want you all to take this message back to your unions and build something from the bottom up that will endorse independent political action, endorse creation of a labor party, endorse the discussion and the debate necessary to create a political agenda around which working men and women can organize as they build the United States. Thank you very much. □

“Reverse Management’s One-Sided Class War Against Workers”

by Jed Dodd

The following is the full text of the speech presented by the author to the opening session of the “Labor and Politics Conference” held in Toledo, Ohio, December 10–11, 1994. For more on that conference, see the article by Frank Lovell elsewhere in this issue.

Brothers and Sisters, the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE) is one of 11 craft unions that collectively represent approximately 200,000 railroad workers in the United States and Canada. Our particular union represents the men and women who build and maintain the nation’s railroad tracks, buildings, bridges, and overhead catenary systems. We perform tough, hard, dangerous work. We work night and day, in the pouring rain, snowstorms, and blizzards, to ensure that the freight vital to our country moves across the railroad and that passengers reach their destinations on time. Conditions for our production workers resemble those conditions often attributed to migrant workers who live far from home in camp cars, which are sheds on flat cars that provide sleeping and living accommodations.

Since 1986, 56 of our members nationally have been slaughtered on management’s altar of production, with 43 of these individuals being struck and killed by moving trains for which the dead employee was provided with no advance warning that the train was coming. Since 1989 there have been 2,400 accidents which involved men and machinery being hit by trains or track equipment.

Management often complains that our work rules are unproductive, and the media repeats their lies about featherbedding. One of these tough, unproductive rules is the rule that requires management to provide 5 days advance notice before abolishing our positions. While they take their golden parachutes to economic paradise, we wait for our 40-hour notice. And 40 percent of our bargaining units work only 7 months of each year. We earn our money through our sweat and our blood.

Direct Elections by the Rank and File

I am the chairman of the Pennsylvania Federation, which represents those workers who are employed by Conrail, Amtrak, parts of the CSX System, and several smaller railroads in the Northeast. Our name does not come from the state of Pennsylvania but rather from the former Pennsylvania Railroad, and our jurisdiction covers the 14 states in the Northeast and Midwest that once composed the Pennsylvania Railroad. Our union is over 100 years old and has

always been considered an extremely conservative and traditional business union.

I was elected to leadership position in the Northeast as a leader of a rank-and-file reform caucus that successfully struggled to bring my members the right to directly elect union officials who represent them. We structurally reformed our Federation in the Northeast to provide for direct rank-and-file control of the leadership of our union. In order for me to retain my position I must respond to the membership and not to the institutional and political needs of our International. For a long time our International Union [officers] fought me and our Direct Election Committee tooth and nail. They opposed and still oppose direct elections, but over the years we have been able to bring some sanity and progress to our union.

At our last International Convention in July 1994, my International Union became the third union in the country to endorse Labor Party Advocates. After intense debate a majority of delegates expressed their disgust with the two-party system — with the Democratic Party in particular — and voted to have our union join Labor Party Advocates.

Grand Wizard Gingrich...

Despite this success, however, I am really depressed today, speaking here in front of you. [Said ironically.] The world has come apart. No one can fix it. You all know the source of my depression — our shared grief. The Republican Party has taken over control of both houses of Congress. The Democrats, “labor’s great friends,” are in disarray. President Clinton is on the ropes. The new order is now in power. A one-sided class war has been declared, and the shrill voice of capital is demanding that we surrender our dignity, run for the hills, get jobs at McDonalds, and decertify our unions. I understand that the Republicans have instituted a new dress code when Congress convenes. Congressmen and women will now be required to wear sheets when they debate the finer points of the new order. It will make Grand Wizard Gingrich very happy.

...And What the Democrats Already Did

Seriously, do you realize what this new Republican-dominated Congress might do? They

might pass NAFTA! They might try to eliminate the Railroad Retirement System that provides railroad workers with benefits greater than social security at an extra cost to our members and our employees and no extra cost to the government. They might not pass the striker replacement bill. They might intervene in a railroad strike and order us back to work under horrible conditions — at a real wage loss — despite massive productivity increases on the part of our members and despite the fact that we could win the strike and secure our fair share of the value we produce.

They might pass GATT. They might attempt to eliminate what is left of the legally mandated labor protections we presently enjoy in the event of mergers or line sales. They might eliminate AMTRAK. And so on — and so on. Why, they might not even provide United States citizens with a health care plan.

I realize I am painting a horrible picture. But the picture I am painting is a Democratic Party picture. All of the atrocities I have just described have all occurred during Congressional sessions in which both houses were controlled by Democrats. Most of them occurred while we have a Democrat as president of the United States.

There are still things left for the Republicans to go after — and they will. But one of the reasons I am up here today, one of the reasons I am a died-in-the-wool supporter of Labor Party Advocates, is that I have seen what our “friends,” the deregulating, free market, restructuring, strike-breaking, privatization-happy Democrats, are willing to do to our membership. And what they are willing to do — what they have done — is not very different from what the Republicans have done and will do. It is the difference between dying from a heart attack or dying slowly from cancer. Or to put it more fundamentally, it is the difference between shit and diarrhea.

The Twin Parties of the Rich

Both parties represent wealth in this country. The only time we have increased our portion of the value that we produce is when we fight them in the streets. And the only time we are going to get anything valuable from congress is when a majority of the members in both houses support an agenda which benefits the working people

and the poor of the United States — an agenda that will be adopted by Labor Party Advocates and followed by millions and millions of hard-working United States citizens.

Not an Ideological Issue

Please do not misunderstand me. The idea of a third party or Labor Party is not an ideological question for me or the members of my union, but simply an empirical question. My job is to represent the membership and lead them through collective action to improve our working lives and increase our share of the value we produce. It is not to run around spouting out ideological pipe dreams. If the Democrats provided a framework in which the union could grow and advance the material conditions and rights of our membership, we would be stalwart defenders of the Democratic Party. I would apply this standard equally to the Republican Party.

Neither Party Meets Objective Standards

We need some objective criteria by which to measure the relative impact of the two parties as they affect the political process that affects us. This criteria should include: matters that directly impact upon my membership in particular and directly impact upon the poor and working people in general; expansion of rights to organize and level the playing field between labor and capital so that the material conditions for labor can advance; reducing the chance of war and eliminating racism and sexism and the effects that these cancers have on the ability of the working class to unite and advance economically. When these standards are applied to both of the major parties they fail to varying degrees but in every respect.

The Record under Carter

Under Jimmy Carter we learned what happens when we have a Democratic President and a Democratic House and Senate. Labor law reform that was designed to level the playing field between labor and capital was defeated in Jimmy Carter's administration. Real wages continued to decline under Jimmy Carter's administration. The foundation for the deregulation of the railroad industry was laid under Jimmy Carter's administration. This legislation was supported through the Senate by the great Democrat and "friend of labor" Ted Kennedy. In 1979 under a regulated rail environment there were 600,000 rail workers in the United States. Now there are less than 200,000. That means 400,000 decent, hard-working Americans lost their jobs in deregulation schemes sponsored by the Democrats and initiated when the Democrats had control of both the White House and Congress.

And under Reagan/Bush

When Reagan came along, we learned what happens when the Republicans control the White House and the Senate. We witnessed the brutalization of PATCO. We saw tax relief that restructured the wealth of the country to ensure

that the rich receive larger percentages of the country's value at the expense of working people and the poor. We saw a massive military build-up and a massive assault on civil rights and liberties. When our union struck in 1991 and was locked out in 1992 it took a proactive Democratic Congress to cooperate with President Bush to order us back to work and crush our collective bargaining struggle.

Democrats' Collusion with Republicans

Thousands more of our members' working lives were destroyed because of the Democratic collusion with the Republican administration. What changed when the Democrats won control of the House and the Senate and the White House under Bill Clinton? When push comes to shove, we have seen time and time again a majority of both the Democratic and Republican parties unite to destroy the fundamental rights of the American working class and to participate in the material disintegration of our living standards to benefit the few and the powerful.

In my union we have people in Washington, D.C., who function as lobbyists for my members. Most of them are good people — committed to uplifting the living conditions of my membership. But unfortunately they get so caught up in the process that they lose sight of the big picture. There was a time in history when U.S. workers had the right to organize and fight under the law. There was a time in U.S. history when railroad workers could strike and would not be immediately ordered back to work. There was a time in U.S. history when our members knew they had secure jobs that paid union wages and when the U.S. government *encouraged* union membership. Those days are gone despite the fact that both houses of Congress were controlled by the Democrats almost continuously since 1948.

No Longer Fighting for the Whole Loaf

We have allowed our benefits and our rights to erode to such a degree that we don't even remember what we had and that when we had it, it wasn't enough. But our lobbyists keep telling us to back the Democrats blindly — because we still have more to lose. We used to fight for the whole loaf of bread. As a result of compromise we then started fighting to keep half a loaf — with the support of our "friends" the Democrats. Then half a loaf became too much and we were told to give up more or face losing it all. Finally the Democrats guaranteed us that we will have the opportunity to *ask for a piece of bread* but warn us that if we don't give up all of the bread we have left, we will lose the right to *ask for a piece of bread* — in a cooperative manner with management — and the Republicans will take the last of our bread with no right to request it back.

The voices of collaboration and continuous compromise in our unions do not realize the simple fact that we lost the ability to properly

feed our members 20 years ago. The days of compromise must be over before no one is left to even *ask for a piece of bread* and we all die of starvation.

Perot Not an Alternative for Workers

Other options, like that offered by Ross Perot, are forming to challenge the dominance of the two parties, and our members will support them if we do not organize legitimate alternatives. Ross Perot, a billionaire who earned his profits fighting unions at EDS and exploiting the value produced by his own employees, garnered 19 million votes in the last presidential election. This is despite the fact that his program, when you could figure out what it was, opposed the objective interests of the American worker. We do not need a third representative of the wealthy to provide the alternative to the two parties of wealth.

Today we are in a struggle for our very survival as a labor movement. Only 12 percent of the workers in private industry are organized. Time after time we see our legislative initiatives foiled regardless of which party is in power. Organized management is systematically attempting to relocate to Third World countries where super-exploited workers earn one-tenth of what our workers earn. Then the Democrats and Republicans inform us that we are in a deadly global competition with the exploited Third World workers and we must reduce our living standards in order to compete with them. But it doesn't matter how much we give up, because we simply cannot compete with workers earning one-tenth of what we earn and whose unionization drives face violent government oppression.

Time to Fight Back

Brothers and Sisters, the time has come to fight back. The time has come to end business as usual. We have watched the Democrats and Republicans steal from us for too long and then tax us to bail out the corrupt Savings and Loans. I am sick of watching the Republicans make suggestions such as eliminating Amtrak and Labor Protections and Railroad Retirement while they control the White House — and be unsuccessful in achieving legislation to do this because Democrats control the Congress — only to see the Democrats attempt to adopt the same proposals when they control both houses of Congress and the White House. I am sick of having no organized political voice representing the millions of working people in this country.

In 1991 all of rail labor struck because rail management refused to provide us with a reasonable share of the massive productivity increases we produced and the immense profits they enjoyed as a result of those productivity increases. Despite the fact that both houses of Congress were under Democratic Party control, they ordered us back to work in 16 hours and imposed a real wage decrease and onerous working conditions on our members. One year later one rail union struck one carrier and rail-

road management locked out every railroad worker in the United States. Our Democratic Party "friends," led by *Ted Kennedy* in the Senate and *John Dingle* and *Speaker Foley* in the House then ordered us back to work, despite the fact that we were locked out, and passed legislation mandating binding arbitration. Despite the fact that we could have won a local strike, Congress, under the complete control of the Democrats, ordered us back to work and destroyed the working lives of thousands of railroad workers.

Resolution to Defy Congress

At our last Convention we passed a resolution directing our International President to defy the law if Congress orders us back to work and

maintain the strike. I know that the Democratic Party will view such action as a violation of law and move to have us thrown in jail for defying Congress.

I ask you, Brothers and Sisters, would Labor Party Advocates move to throw us in jail for defying a law which forbade us to strike, despite the fact that our employers could afford to pay more and provide better working conditions? If a majority of politicians in Congress were dependent on Labor Party Advocates in order to win elections, would Congress even move to order us back to work? I think not.

Brothers and Sisters, in addition to massive street action, we need a political organization that clearly supports the majority of people in the United States. We need, we must have Labor

Party Advocates. And we must build it into the strongest possible political organization as rapidly as possible.

Without a response such as Labor Party Advocates, we cannot reverse management's one-sided class war in this country which is designed to eliminate the union wage, union benefits, decent safe working conditions, and our civil and economic rights. Without a response such as Labor Party Advocates, we cannot fulfill the responsibilities we take on when we accept the honor of holding union office.

Thank you, Brothers and Sisters. I look forward to seeing you and working with you to build Labor Party Advocates as an alternative political movement for American working people. □

"What We Have in Haiti Now Is Not Democracy — It Is Occupation"

Continued from page 9

While I was in Washington, on October 13, 1993, Minister of Justice Guy Malary was gunned down in broad daylight, and my family convinced me that it was too dangerous to return home. After my release from the hospital I was living in hiding and it would have been suicidal to go back to Haiti, to be followed and eventually killed. I was obliged to stay in the United States.

INS Says There Is Democracy Now in Haiti

In January 1994 I applied for political asylum, but I still have not been accepted as a person needing asylum. Two days before the return of Aristide I was interviewed by the office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in Newark, NJ. They were aware of our concern and of the imminent danger that my family is facing, but I was told by my lawyer that the INS is taking its time on my application because, according to them, there is democracy now in Haiti.

I don't think one can import democracy, and even if there was democracy in Haiti I don't think it would be carried by the U.S. soldiers. Just before Aristide's return to Haiti he was given a 21-gun salute. To me the salute meant that he was being stripped of the mandate and powers that the people of Haiti gave him and was now at the beck and call of the Pentagon. I believe that Aristide is now closer to the Pentagon than to the people of Haiti. I am really sad to find myself in this situation. President Aristide is our president, we chose him and we loved him. I think we have to struggle, so he can become the president of the people. But we do not have use for a puppet president.

Against IMF Privatization Plans

We protested against the program of the IMF for Haiti. Yet Leslie Delatour [new governor of the Central Bank] is, to say the least, the representative of the IMF in Haiti. We are also appalled by the message for reconciliation without justice. I think that Mr. Delatour poses a greater threat to Haiti than Marc Bazin. We of the CGT protested Delatour's nomination as minister of finance under the regime of Gen. Henri Namphy, because of his plans to privatize several institutions in Haiti, such as the phone company and the power company. Now given his official position as the new governor of the Central Bank, he would be in a better position to deal with the IMF and carry out their agenda for Haiti.

We were publicly against the program of the IMF and have been since 1986. And today, more than ever, we remain opposed to the application of the Structural Adjustment Program. We will not sit idle or stand by without a fight and let them privatize our institutions.

It has been publicly said by the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince that Gen. Cedras's houses were rented by the U.S. for \$5,000 a month and that the check will be forwarded to him in Panama. I find that to be a disgrace — the fact that he emptied the coffers of the state and he's still collecting rent from houses he built with stolen money, \$79 million to be exact. I don't think the working class in Haiti should be the one to pay for the debt that the dictatorships created, from Jean-Claude Duvalier and the military governments to Gen. Cedras, by stealing every time they get a chance.

If our institutions are privatized, the working class will end up paying the consequences. Now the question is: Will the people of Haiti accept

to pay for these debts, which the U.S. government helped create by facilitating the flights of these dictators and generals?

Real Purpose of U.S. Troops

I am not aware of any country where this IMF program has worked for the people. I think it will create social problems, and that the people will rise in mass protest for their right to exist. And I think that is the real purpose of the troops in Haiti, to curb the upheaval.

In retrospect, I think the embargo was not intended to hurt the military nor the elite, but to break the spirit of the resistance movement in Haiti. In spite of everything, the people of Haiti survived both the brutal repression and the embargo. The U.S. never was for the extinction of the Haitian army. They helped, trained, clothed and armed it. I have always said that the Haitian army is an extension of the U.S. army. Don't be fooled, because the military intervention in Haiti was not about democracy. It was not about making things better for the Haitian people. It was rather to protect the Haitian army and the property and interests of the elite.

It has been two months since the U.S. soldiers have been in Haiti. Countless crimes have been committed, but not one person has either been tried or kept in jail. What we have in Haiti now is not democracy. It is an occupation. That is why the people of Haiti must struggle to oust the U.S. military from our soil. We did it in 1934 and I believe that we can do it again, so as to have a free Haiti, truly free. □

An Evaluation of the A.E. Staley Struggle

by Ron Lare

The author is a member of United Auto Workers Local 600 and of the Trotskyist League. An article presenting another view on questions discussed here is projected for our next issue.

This article reviews the history of the struggle of UPIU/AIW Local 7837 workers, locked out of the A.E. Staley corn-processing plant in Decatur, Illinois, since June 1993. It proposes the militant action, including solidarity action, needed to win the Staley struggle. And it seeks to demonstrate the distinctive relevance of Trotskyism to class struggle in the U.S. today. The article covers a period ending in early November 1994 (and therefore not the late November arrest of Staley struggle supporters sitting in at the Illinois governor's office in Springfield or the December solidarity caravans to Decatur). For additional information on the Staley struggle, see the box on "Staley Support and Information."

A Life-or-Death Struggle

A.E. Staley is owned by Tate & Lyle, a British conglomerate. There are rumors that Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), a U.S. conglomerate and self-proclaimed "supermarket to the world," has bought Staley, to which it is already connected (literally) by pipeline. ADM is one of the top financial contributors to both the Democratic and Republican parties. It is now caught in an influence-buying scandal over the Clinton administration's choice of corn-based ethanol (produced by ADM) rather than methanol as an alternative fuel.

Prior to the lockout, Staley workers faced rotating 12-hour shifts and suffered atrocious health and safety conditions. One way to understand and feel the fierce determination of the Staley workers is to watch them tell health-and-safety horror stories in the video "Deadly Corn." A worker tells how he narrowly escaped death, as his coworker collapsed and died in propylene oxide fumes. A woman tells how she discovered that she was handling rat poison.

The Staley Lockout

The union at Staley is Local 7837 of the United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU). The Staley workers were formerly with the Allied Industrial Workers (AIW), now merged with UPIU. Dave Watts is Local 7837 president.

Ray Rogers of "Corporate Campaign" and Jerry Tucker of the New Directions caucus in the United Auto Workers (UAW) helped the Local 7837 officers and Staley workers organize themselves, as they faced a new owner and a contract struggle.

Rogers and Corporate Campaign are the strategists of the A.E. Staley struggle. Local 7837 President Dave Watts follows their leadership. As *BIDOM* readers will remember, Cor-

porate Campaign also helped lead the defeated Hormel strike in Minnesota in 1985-86.

The campaign for a decent contract at Staley at first relied on an "in-plant" strategy, including "work-to-rule" and other inside tactics. The campaign also featured union meetings involving almost the entire membership, something rare in the U.S. even during intense contract disputes.

While the in-plant strategy put considerable pressure on Staley, it also let management pick the moment to lock the workers out, rather than having the workers pick the moment to strike. Following a large rally which drew national media attention, Staley locked out its 760 workers on June 27, 1993.

Beyond the Staley plant and union local, Corporate Campaign has led Decatur community-wide organizing. The campaign managed to mobilize broad community forces around labor issues in a central Illinois town which is off the beaten track of labor history. In recent years coal miners have done comparable labor community organizing, but in communities possessing labor traditions richer than Decatur's. The Decatur community organizing has led to at least local confrontations with the capitalist state — the cops, the courts, the city council, and sometimes the state of Illinois. In the process, a wing of labor and community activists began to take on the conservative Corporate Campaign leadership over questions such as attitude toward the police.

Corporate Campaign vs. Working-Class Action

During the lockout, Corporate Campaign and the UPIU leadership have relied on boycotts and symbolic protest actions against Staley, its owner Tate & Lyle, its corporate allies, such as ADM, and its customers, such as Brach's candy and Miller Beer (the latter has now agreed not to renew its contract with Staley).

Soon after the lockout began, the Local 7837 leadership announced that the union would not attempt to shut the plant against scabs. As Watts put it, "We're not going to waste time throwing rocks at scabs." On November 6, 1993 a large rally that might have marched to the Staley plant to stop the scabs' shift change was kept listening to speeches at a union hall.

The Corporate Campaign strategy is to appeal for moral sympathy from "the public," rather than to use mass picketing to stop scabs and other militant action against the company.

Staley set out to break the union before Corporate Campaign's long-term boycott and other

public relations tactics could build much pressure. In late 1993 Staley replaced skilled mechanics with 81 scabs from a union-busting firm in Louisiana. By early 1994 there were 200 scabs.

During the Staley struggle, a Grain Millers union contract with ADM expired. UPIU also represents some ADM workers. UPIU could have proposed joining the Grain Millers in a strike shutting down ADM. Some may think such cross-union and cross-company workers' solidarity "unrealistic." But there has never been a "realistic" chance of winning at Staley without strike solidarity against Staley across union and company lines.

In early 1994 UPIU officers attempted to lobby a London meeting of Tate & Lyle stockholders, rather than organize a militant demonstration around the meeting or a sympathy strike by British Tate & Lyle workers. This extracted only a promise from management that "there will still be a union at Staley" after the dispute is over. This is not very reassuring, since "there was still a union" at Hormel, after the workers were crushed.

The June 4 and June 25 Demonstrations in Decatur

On June 4, 1994, hundreds of Staley workers and their supporters sat down in front of the plant gate. The police arrested dozens of demonstrators. The union leadership and Corporate Campaign treated this as a publicity coup and projected a bigger demonstration for June 25.

Unfortunately, the message in their publicity building for June 25 was not "We delayed the scabs on June 4, and we will stop them on June 25," but rather more like "We got arrested on June 4, and we will get arrested again on June 25."

The June 25 demonstration drew about 4,000 workers from Decatur, Chicago, St. Louis and other Midwest cities, who marched from the UPIU and UAW union halls in Decatur to the Staley plant. The number dwindled as the demonstration moved to the main Staley gate, so that some demonstrators could get symbolically arrested.

Rather than make arrests, the cops decided to tear-gas the demonstrators sitting at the gate. Videos and photographs show cops tear-gassing sitting protesters — some (including Jerry Tucker) directly in the face. These have become 1994's symbols of U.S. capitalist attacks on labor. (See newspapers and "LaborVision" videos.)

After the tear-gassing, the June 25 demonstration continued to shrink, not so much because of fear as because there was no other action projected by the leadership.

No picket line was set up to show an intent to stop scabs on this and future occasions. No attempt was made to move the protest from gate to gate to show an intent to organize "roving pickets" or "flying squadrons," as suggested by a UAW activist from St. Louis. Rather, most demonstrators were cast in the role of "onlookers," standing around behind the few who had sat down and been gassed. The leadership isolated the bulk of the demonstration from the people up front, which is one reason people drifted away.

Staley management neatly sidestepped the June 25 demonstration by rescheduling the shift change to avoid a confrontation between the demonstrators and the scabs.

Over a bullhorn, Rogers demanded a strictly nonviolent response to the cops' violent attack. This drew some vocal opposition. The most significant outcry came from militant unionists in the leadership of the Chicago Staley Workers Solidarity Committee (CSWSC). The CSWSC is a broad coalition mobilizing support for Staley workers and has a real base among the Staley workers. Apart from the other major unions on strike in Decatur, the CSWSC is the Staley workers' single most important ally.

The June 25 street debate over tactics could not settle anything, since by then there were not enough demonstrators to carry out much alternative action. But the vocal confrontation with Rogers helped legitimize debate over strategy and tactics among Staley workers and their supporters, including the left. The labor movement needs not just street debates but open, democratic, nonsectarian forums — publications, conferences, etc. — where questions can be debated.

"War Zone" Illinois

In summer 1994 the Staley workers got a boost as UAW Caterpillar and United Rubber Workers Bridgestone/Firestone workers struck in Decatur, as part of their respective national strikes. Over the last year, these strikes, the Staley lockout, the coal miners' strike, and utility workers' strikes have earned Illinois the name "war zone."

Staley workers have gotten national support through the efforts of Corporate Campaign, UAW New Directions, coalitions such as the CSWSC, and labor-left organizations. But they have not been able to organize truly mass mobilizations. Mass mobilizations sufficient to win the Staley struggle would need the full support of most of the labor movement, including the UAW, Teamsters, rail workers, and other big unions.

Staley Hires More Scabs

In September 1994 a Staley worker "Road Warrior" told a Labor Party Advocates forum near Detroit that 400 scabs are working at Staley, double the number in the spring. Some Staley workers say that this is about the number Staley needs for full production, if ADM owns Staley and wants to switch it from sweetener to ethanol production.

Meanwhile, ADM has been hiring Staley workers. Given ADM's relationship to Staley, this means former Staley workers in some sense scabbing on the lockout. In December 1994 when Staley workers' government-required right to low-cost continuation of health insur-

ance (COBRA) runs out, more Staley workers may take up ADM's offer of employment.

Despite this bad news, the Decatur struggle is still on the rise in many ways. Demonstrations have been held against scabs at Bridgestone/Firestone gates, at courtrooms around the charges brought against protesters, at a Decatur city council meeting considering an ordinance restricting street mobilizations, and in the Illinois capital, Springfield.

Joint leadership meetings of the three striking unions are held in Decatur. A joint newspaper is published. There is talk of running independent workers' candidates for city office. The UAW-John Deere contract is up. To have Deere workers join the striking Caterpillar workers would increase the UAW's involvement in the struggle.

The October 15 Demonstration in Decatur

By police estimates, the October 15, 1994, demonstration in Decatur drew 3,000-4,000 demonstrators (5,000-6,000 by some left press estimates). Like the June 25 demonstration, this was unity-in-action of Bridgestone/Firestone and Caterpillar as well as Staley workers.

Staley canceled work for October 15. After initial speeches at UAW Local 751 (including some baiting of the left), the demonstration marched to the top of the Staley viaduct. There a banner was dedicated to a worker who had been killed in an accident in the plant due to the unsafe conditions. The march was then turned about-face and led away from the plant.

Many disappointed demonstrators hoped at least to salvage headlines reading "traffic tied up for hours." Some Staley workers and CSWSC members tried to persuade the march to take up both sides of the road and block traffic, but the demonstration leaders opposed this. They also opposed taking the demonstration to the Caterpillar gate to stop scabs there.

Instead, the demonstration leaders allowed a brief sitdown in an intersection, which fizzled without any June 4-style symbolic arrests or June 25-style tear-gassing. With the sitdown far from the plant, the cops felt that they did not need to take much action.

Many Staley workers and their families expressed shock and anger. Their jobs and livelihoods were on the line, and yet they were not allowed to stop scabs or even stop traffic.

In this, as in previous demonstrations, it was evident that some of the union leaders encouraged anti-Japanese and anti-British chauvinism in response to Japanese ownership of Bridgestone-Firestone and British ownership of Staley. This hurts international labor solidarity and must be condemned.

The Need for Militant Solidarity Action

The Staley workers are in a dire situation and need help from the rest of the labor movement. Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) supporters should push for the Teamsters to hot-cargo (refuse to handle) Staley products. *Straight Track* should do the same in rail.

UAW-New Directions should demand a mass demonstration in Decatur built by the UAW International and UAW-wide strike ac-

tion to support Cat, Staley and rubber workers. New Directions could run Buick City GM strike leader Dave Yettaw or Jerry Tucker against Steve Yokich for UAW President on a program including such a demonstration.

During the recession at the beginning of the 1980s, the UAW called a nationwide six-minute work stoppage "to write Congress." While six minutes is not much, even a brief stoppage snarls production in assembly plants. And even a brief strike could focus national attention on Decatur and make credible the threat of further action.

The Need for a Left Opposition within the Staley Workers' Support Movement

Rogers and Corporate Campaign, along with the top UPIU officers, are leading the Staley struggle to defeat. This needs to be said. But Rogers and the UPIU officials have been leading the struggle in Decatur and must be included in united-front proposals by the left, however likely they are to turn down the proposals. If they take up the proposals, this will advance the struggle. If they refuse, this will lay the basis for their replacement by elected strike committees and more militant leaders.

Cheerleading for the Staley workers' leadership as the Staley workers go down to defeat does not help the workers. Nor does a cynical sectarianism that fails to understand the contradictory developments within the UPIU, the UAW, New Directions, the CSWSC, and the Staley workers themselves.

Correct calls for mass picketing to stop scabs, national solidarity strikes, a regional general strike, etc., must be made real through creative intervention into the actual struggle, taking advantage of the concrete possibilities generated by the dynamics of the struggle. Militant workers already know a better set of tactics than those of Rogers and Watts. The real challenge is to build an activist coalition to intervene on the ground.

A coalition urging more militant action could have made the October 15 demonstration more effective by persuading the march: (1) to go to the Staley gate and set up a picket line announcing, "Our march stopped the scabs today, and we will be back to do it again when the shift is not canceled," (2) to go to the Cat and Bridgestone/Firestone gates to put out the message that scabs must be stopped and that future demonstrations would return to do just that, and (3) to truly "tie up traffic" on its way to the confrontation points, as proposed by CSWSC militants.

A militant coalition would have to include Staley workers and their families, as well as activists in other unions. There is potential for this, including among the elected Staley workers' leadership, some of whom are being marginalized by the more conservative leaders. The UPIU tops have tried to marginalize Jerry Tucker.

Telling the Truth to Staley Workers

With 400 scabs in the Staley plant and Staley workers leaving for jobs at ADM, the Staley struggle must be considered defeated if the Rogers and Watts leadership is not replaced by a leadership that tells its members and the world:

to win, scabs must be stopped by mass picketing, and solidarity strikes must be organized. The mass picketing and strikes would have to involve the UAW as a whole and workers from St. Louis to Chicago.

If the Staley workers realized that the situation is this bad, they might well decide to go back to work or to accept severance pay as a settlement. But the possibility of Staley workers' drawing this conclusion should not be an excuse for telling less than the truth about the odds they face.

Recently, 300 Staley workers at a union meeting voted 3 to 1 not to give up the strike and accept severance pay as a settlement. This was an enormously brave stand by a big union meeting. Yet the vote shows there is substantial "back to work" sentiment.

Leading members of the Staley support movement, including Jerry Tucker, say semiprivately that part of the UPIU/AIW leadership is looking for a way to sell out. However, "sell out vs. continuing the struggle" is too abstract a way to pose the question. If Staley workers believe they cannot escalate the struggle, they would do better to vote to go back in all together, to fight another day with a better leadership and a better strategy, rather than to bleed to death, losing jobs and the union.

There are ways to escalate the struggle, however. Staley workers could demand that their leaders act on a proposal by Dave Yettaw at the November 4-6, 1994 New Directions National Conference in Cleveland. Yettaw called for a confrontation with the AFL-CIO Executive Board over lack of action to support the struggles in Decatur. Yettaw has the authority to make some trouble over this issue, having recently led the successful UAW Local 599 strike in Flint, Michigan.

At the same conference, a Staley worker "Road Warrior" agreed with Jerry Tucker that a UPIU union leadership sellout may be on the way. The Staley Road Warrior called for a general strike.

The workers may not have the confidence to remove their current leaders and take these measures. This is in part a consequence of the working-class retreat since the mid-1970s, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the political confusion and demoralization caused by it, and the breakdown of the mass labor-radical tradition in the U.S. working class, discussed in recent articles in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.

What should workers have done when Dave Watts said, "We're not going to waste our time throwing rocks at scabs"? There was a time when mobilized workers knew immediately either to oust such a "leader" or to dissolve his or her influence in a much larger and more militant elected strike committee determined to stop scabs. Left-wing supporters of the Staley struggle should say that now.

Trotskyism and the Staley Struggle
Karl Marx wrote that working-class revolutionaries must ruthlessly criticize everything that exists. The left must boldly draw the lessons of the Staley struggle, including self-critical lessons.

The Trotskyist tradition is to tell workers the truth, no matter how bitter it may be, in order to help resolve the crisis of leadership of the working class: to clear the way for revolutionary leaderships and strategies. This tradition was established by Trotsky's insistence on telling the truth about the international counterrevolutionary significance of the Stalinist takeover of the Communist movement in the Soviet Union, Germany, Spain, China, etc.

The Staley struggle demonstrates that the relevance of Trotskyism to the U.S. working class increases as the class struggle increases. Trotskyists understand the need for working-class independence and class-struggle methods. But they have much more to contribute than strategy and tactics at the Staley plant gate.

Using the method of the Transitional Program and basing themselves on the concrete dynamics of the struggle, Trotskyists can help build united-front mass mobilizations, expose the bureaucratic misleaders of the unions and other workers' organizations, raise workers' political consciousness, and win a hearing for transitional demands, such as workers' control of production, a labor party based on the unions and organizations of the oppressed, and nationalization of corporations under workers' control.

In the U.S. class struggle today, Trotskyists should expect and look for occasions requiring a distinctively Trotskyist insistence on honest evaluation and independent organization and action by the working class. The Staley struggle is such an occasion.

This article was developed in discussions with other trade-union activists. Their most interesting criticism was that (1) it is wrong to imply that the article's strategy is *uniquely* Trotskyist because there are non-Trotskyists who agree with it, and (2) it is wrong to imply that the strategy is *specifically* Trotskyist because there are Trotskyists who disagree with it. These points are well taken. However, I would argue that the strategy is *essentially* Trotskyist. Trotskyism is the only theory of society profound enough consistently to arrive at winning strategies for workers' labor struggles around the world, let alone for workers' revolutions. I offer not a "proof," but a rather compelling illustration.

The U.S. Socialist Workers Party (SWP)'s strategies for labor degenerated as the SWP abandoned Trotskyism over the course of the 1980s. The SWP analyzed the Eastern Airlines strike in 1990, the same year that the SWP cut all ties with the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI). The Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT), expelled from the SWP for their Trotskyism, criticized the SWP's strategy for the Eastern workers. While there are many ways in which the Eastern and Staley struggles are very different, these differences make all the more striking the relevance to Staley of the lessons drawn from the Eastern struggle in the passage below:

The role of a revolutionary party, however, must go beyond calling for and reporting elementary steps of labor solidarity. In the past, long before the party's "turn to industry," the SWP advanced a program for how unions could win struggles. The party exposed the mislead-

Staley Support and Information

To contribute financially to the Staley workers, write to Staley Workers Food and Emergency Assistance Fund, c/o UPIU/AIW Local 7837, 2882 N. Dinneen, Decatur, IL 62526.

For ongoing information subscribe to the Staley Workers' Solidarity Report (News from the War Zone), UPIU/AIW Local 7837, 2882 Dinneen, Decatur, IL 62526; phone 217-872-2205. Or contact Staley Workers Campaign for Justice, 3080 B Kandy Lane, Decatur IL 62526. Staley union member "Road Warriors" tour cities seeking support. Contact Local 7837 to obtain videos by St. Louis LaborVision, "Deadly Corn" and "Struggle in the Heartland" (excellent for fundraisers). Call the Chicago Staley Workers Solidarity Committee at 312-486-6357 or 312-935-5255. Contact UAW-Caterpillar Local 751 at 2365 E. Geddes, Decatur, IL 62526; phone 217-428-7706.

Write or phone Jerry Tucker and UAW-New Directions at Box 6876, St. Louis MO 63144; 314-531-2900. In UAW locals, it is possible to raise money for the Staley workers. But this requires sensitivity to UAW officers' reluctance to associate with the New Directions Movement, which has helped lead the Staley struggle. On a motion by myself and Local 600 Tool & Die Unit Executive Board member Judy Wraight, also a supporter of the Trotskyist League, the Tool & Die Unit on October 6, 1994, endorsed the October 15 rally in Decatur.

ership of trade union bureaucrats, encouraged the development of a new leadership composed of the most militant fighters, and offered concrete proposals for turning a situation around so that the strikers could fight more successfully.

Today's SWP has failed to point out the basic fallacies of the bureaucracy's doomed central strategy which is to look for a replacement owner for Eastern as an alternative to class struggle methods for solving the problems of the workers. When Eastern filed for bankruptcy protection shortly after the strike began, the IAM bureaucrats offered even greater concessions than Eastern owner Frank Lorenzo had demanded in order to attract an enlightened capitalist rescuer. Instead of challenging this approach, the SWP adapted to the policies and slogans which have crippled the strike. *Militant* headlines and articles emphasized the goal of getting rid of Lorenzo. In the words of one SWPer, repeatedly identified as a strike leader, "We may not get our jobs back, but we have to fight to keep Lorenzo from winning."

On April 18, 1990, Lorenzo was removed from management of Eastern Airlines, and the *Militant* claimed this was "a major victory" not only for the strikers but for the "thousands of unionists worldwide who support them." This supposedly "major victory" did not result in

any strikers returning to work or any other union gain. This was just one of many examples of the SWP's failure to present realistic assessments of where the strike stood at critical junctures. A political organization which is unable to tell the difference between an advancing workers' struggle on the road to victory and one that has been suffering from a dead-end strategy and

repeated setbacks can lay little claim to being a revolutionary vanguard party in the United States.¹

A final note. For perspectives somewhat different from those I have presented here, see "Decatur Labor Fights On," in the November-December 1994 *Against the Current*, by C.J.

Hawking and Steven Ashby (both are under charges as members of the "Decatur 50"). See also Michael Frank's "Conversation with a Staley Worker" in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, no. 119, October 1994. □

November 15, 1994

The African American Nation: A Journal for Self-Determination and Workers' Power

Continued from page 21

and promote working-class candidates; (3) calls for the formation of a labor party with Blacks and women playing central roles; (4) supports the struggles of working people around the world; and (5) opposes U.S. military and economic interventions.

Organizing the South

In an article entitled "New Labor Movement in the Black Belt South," Julius Strickland discusses the "need to win workers to unions by deeds, not by election campaign promises." Organizing in the South is particularly difficult due to the anti-union sentiment that is quite prevalent in the indigenous working class. Strickland proposes building in-plant committees to fight around specific issues and where there is more sentiment for a union, but not majority sentiment, forming non-majority unions. These newly created organizations will fight around workplace and community issues. It is through these struggles that working people will come to see the union as their own, thus increasing participation and growth. These new formations will be linked together by area Workers Unity Councils. These WUCs will combine the resources of the organizations and others to provide training and support in the struggles. In Rocky Mount, NC, the Black Workers for Justice supports a WUC which has brought together a number of in-plant committees, as well as the United Workers of Standard Products, a non-majority union. This strategy is not in opposition to the traditional union movement or an attempt to build alternative unions. The perspective is that the non-majority unions will seek recognition by an international union.

Role of Black Women

In each of the first two issues there is an article dealing specifically with the role of women and feminism. In the first issue, Ida V. Smith points out some of the many accomplishments of African American women in the fight against their oppression as Blacks, as workers, and as women. The first Black labor organization in Mississippi was formed by the Black washerwomen. When 400 Black women tobacco

workers were deemed "unorganizable" by the American Federation of Labor, the women formed their own union and successfully negotiated their own contracts. In the 1940s and '50s there were a number of women in national leadership roles in the NAACP. Smith decries the development in the '60s of an attitude that Black women could not or should not hold such positions of authority. The struggle for Black liberation must include all African Americans, and Black women must be represented in the leadership of the movement. In the second issue there is an article by D. Johnson entitled, "The South African Elections and Observations on the South African Women's Charter." This is followed by a printing of the South African "Women's Charter for Effective Equality." In Johnson's discussion of the Charter she assesses the Charter and the struggle of South African women for equality as revolutionary. The authors of the Charter recognize the class and national causes of women's oppression and seek to take part in the overturning of these relationships.

An article in the second issue, written by Jasmine Thiele, is a revolutionary perspective on the struggle for a single-payer health plan, "Fighting for a Single Payer Health Plan: Important Stage in the People's Health Movement." Thiele points out the Third World-type health conditions that exist throughout the Black Belt. The infant mortality rate for Southern Blacks is often double that of the white population. She goes on to explain the role of government and business in perpetuating those conditions, by pointing out that while Alabama is closing rural hospitals, General Electric was granted a 40-year tax break by that state. Thiele places blame for the spiraling costs on the capitalist health care system, which is driven by the need to produce corporate profits. After making a case against the existing system and explaining the social advantages of single-payer, she proposes a method of struggle, that is, independent mass action.

A Revolutionary Perspective for Black Liberation

What the first two issues of the *African American Nation* represent is a revolutionary per-

spective for Black liberation in the U.S. The analysis of the current objective conditions, along with the history of the social relations in the U.S., is a thorough scientific socialist examination of the question of Black liberation. The understanding that the democratic tasks of the movement for self-determination cannot be met in the context of capitalist society, and the clear analysis of the relationship of the African American and South African classes (that identifies the working class as the only class capable of leading the struggle) are in concert with one of the basic tenets of the Trotskyist movement, the theory of permanent revolution.

Another keystone of Trotskyism is our understanding of the need for a transitional program — a program that is based on an analysis of the objective conditions in society and the subjective political consciousness of the masses, a program that is capable of uniting and leading the masses to a revolutionary struggle for power. Throughout the pages of the *African American Journal* this approach is clearly evidenced.

A third area of agreement with the basic foundations of the Fourth International is the role and nature of the workers revolutionary party. The Black Workers League understands that a Leninist party is necessary to lead the oppressed masses in the fight against colonial oppression and for a socialist transformation of society, and this party cannot be arbitrarily declared. It must come from the various movements for social change.

The emergence of a political force in the Black liberation movement with the revolutionary politics put forward in the *African American Nation* is a step forward in the subjective level of the class struggle. For years the movement has suffered from the ultraleftism of well-meaning, dedicated revolutionaries or from the reformism of those with illusions in the Democratic Party. The analysis and program set forth is one that should be studied, discussed, and embraced in a comradely fashion by all supporters of the Fourth International. Subscriptions are \$16 per year, available from the Institute for Self-Determination, P.O. Box 46371, Raleigh, NC 27620-6371. □

1. "Balance Sheet on the Socialist Workers Party (U.S.A.)," Adopted by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency National Conference, September 2, 1990, printed in *In Defense of American Trotskyism: Rebuilding the Revolutionary Party*, published by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, 1990, edited by Paul Le Blanc, pages 112-113.

The Zapatista Struggle and Devaluation of the Peso

Continued from page 6

ports of merchandise for the same sector. They're not in a position to produce for export.

This situation, in which imports are much more expensive, particularly capital imports, means the economy will be pushed further toward a recessionary situation. It won't be possible to maintain the same level of imports, but it's also not going to be possible to increase exports much.

Weakness of Zedillo Regime

In general the Zedillo administration is looking very weak. They've been seen as quite inept by almost everyone. First they mishandled the Chiapas situation, initially overplaying their hand. On the heels of that, they handled the economic crisis very incompetently.

This has led to a situation in which Zedillo is politically a lot weaker. There are more and more rumblings from the PRI old guard, though not explicit attacks. Some of the more traditional business organizations have very harshly

criticized the government's handling of the currency crisis. The trade union bureaucracy is making little noises here and there.

In general, because he is looking so weak, Zedillo is going to have to lean more heavily on alliances with the PAN and the PRD in the coming months to maintain his grip on power. And those politicians seem more than willing to play ball. □

January 9, 1995

Union Activists Assess Prospects for Labor Party

Continued from page 25

fielded questions, and participated in the discussion: Don Dudley, president, American Flint Glass Workers Local 700 (Toledo); Marian Kramer, president, National Welfare Rights Union (Detroit); Harold Mitchell, president, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 100 (Cleveland); Rosemary Trump, president, Service Employees International Union Local 585 (Pittsburgh); and Dave Watts, president, United Paperworkers International Union Local 7837 (Staley workers, Decatur, Illinois).

A strong message was sent to the conference by one of those unable to attend, Baldemar Velasquez, president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC). His message implied an appreciation of the "free trade" treaties (NAFTA and GATT) different from the opposition to those treaties that has been expressed by the top AFL-CIO officialdom. Velasquez wrote: "GATT and NAFTA are legal expressions of what could be economic development, but instead they are the licensing of unfair enterprise and predatory capitalism." This exposes the deception of the Clinton administration in claiming that the "freeing" of international trade is for the benefit of people in all countries. The real trade policy of the U.S. government is to advance the interests of U.S. industrialists and bankers at the expense of workers in all countries, including U.S. workers. The aim of a labor party should be to reverse government policy of this kind and to govern in the interest of all workers. Thus Velasquez introduced the question of what labor party policy should be and what the goals of labor party government could be.

How Will a Labor Party Be Founded?

The panel discussion was confined to the question of whether a labor party is advisable and whether it should be established now. The panelists all agreed, answering in the affirmative. They did not attempt to explore how it can be done. This was left open for a future time. For now, the development of LPA suggests the hope that history will repeat, that like the 1935 formation of the CIO within the old AFL Executive Council, a similar group of international union presidents will in the near future issue a call for the formation of a labor party. But the precursors of the CIO were three strikes in basic

industries, culminating in the 1934 victories of West Coast longshoremen, Toledo auto workers, and Minneapolis teamsters. Today there is growing restiveness in union ranks.

A plenary session concluded the conference on Sunday morning December 11, devoted to discussion, debate, and straw-voting on reports from workshops. This was an especially animated and spirited session, with many people taking the floor. It was a prototype of what will occur when a labor party is finally formed in the U.S. and a program in the interests of working people is hammered out.

Among the recommendations that were unanimously approved were (1) that unions should run independent labor candidates for electoral office, seeking the support of labor-community coalitions; and (2) that while independent labor political action must be based on the unions, because that is the location of organized strength and resources, the unemployed, the unorganized, immigrant workers, minority and women workers, and people active in progressive social movements all need to be represented in a labor party.

Gains for Third Party Candidates

In the November elections there were some gains for third party candidates, reflecting voter anger against both Democrats and Republicans. In Vermont, Bernie Sanders, the independent progressive (sometimes called "socialist"), was reelected to Congress despite all predictions of certain defeat. In New Mexico, Indiana, Maine, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and New York third-party candidates (mostly Greens and Libertarians) scored impressive numerical gains to win ballot status for their parties. In Wisconsin the New Progressive Party candidate for state treasurer won ballot status for her party. Elsewhere, some New Party candidates won in local elections.

Beginning of a Change in Consciousness

But none of this (or all of it together) is comparable in political or social significance to the upheavals and radicalization of the industrial working class sixty years ago. Something similar is beginning now in the changing political consciousness of millions of people. What forms of expression this will find cannot be predicted, but it is certain that the present two-

party political structure will be replaced, perhaps sooner than expected.

An indication of how this structure is being undermined by the conflict of interests between capital and labor is the failure of the 32-member Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform to reach agreement after 8 months of deliberations. Republican John Danforth and Democrat Bob Kerrey had no problem reaching agreement that Social Security, Medicare, and other entitlements should be slashed. This presidential commission, however, was not limited to members of Congress but included union officials and others as well, United Mine Workers President Richard Trumka among them. He disagreed with the Congressmen because they didn't go far enough in demanding tax hikes on the rich to help balance the national budget. He also denounced them for suggesting that the age limit for Social Security payment should be raised to 70. He said that to ask miners to work until they are 70 is to impose a death sentence on them.

Today's Two-Party System — On Its Way Out: Organized Labor Can Take the Lead

As Congress works its evil ways in coming months and years the conflict between workers and their tormentors will take many forms, including mass demonstrations, industrial strikes and lockouts, and perhaps voter registration drives. These actions will contribute to the education of millions who have never yet thought of registering to vote, one reason being that they don't see much difference between Democrats and Republicans and don't expect anything good from either of them. Such people may soon get the idea that if a labor party is organized, it can represent and protect them. That will be fully realized when decisive sectors of the organized labor movement conclude that they must defend their own interests and provide for the basic economic and political needs of society.

The Toledo Labor Educational Conference was one more step on the road to working class political consciousness. It ended with the singing of labor's anthem, "Solidarity Forever." □

Letters

Booker T. Washington

I would like to commend Vera Wigglesworth for her informative and interesting article on the NAACP (*BIDOM* 120, November 1994), especially the interview with Don Rojas, a Grenadian associate of the murdered revolutionary Maurice Bishop. Also of interest is some of the historical background which she provided on the NAACP, especially important since so few European Americans — even in the movements for social change — know very much about African American history.

I would like to offer a somewhat different evaluation of the dispute between NAACP leader W.E.B. DuBois and Tuskegee Institute founder Booker T. Washington. The information which Wigglesworth presented is accurate, but in the historical context the contribution which each man made to the African American struggle is more complex than might be inferred from Wigglesworth's article. The issues faced by DuBois and Washington are not just of historical interest — not only do African American history scholars continue to debate them; they are relevant to the African American community as a whole.

Wigglesworth is correct that Washington opposed fighting for equal rights for African Americans, even to the extent of opposing the anti-lynching campaign led by Ida B. Wells. There is no question that Washington's position was completely wrong in every respect on this issue. However, it does not follow that his role in the African American struggle was completely negative, nor that DuBois was always right in his disputes with Washington. In my opinion, Washington had fundamentally a better understanding of the role of African Americans in American capitalist society than did DuBois, even if some of Washington's early followers — such as Marcus Garvey — drew better conclusions from that understanding than he himself did.

DuBois was not a product of the South nor of the slave experience. He was born in the Berkshire Mountains community of Great Barrington, Massachusetts, to a family which had been free and had intermarried with whites for generations. Though his thinking evolved later in his life, in 1909 DuBois believed in "American Democracy" and saw racism as an aberration from American capitalist values. He saw no reason why those African Americans who were intelligent and industrious (the "Talented Tenth," as he called them) could not achieve the same successes in business and the professions that whites could. He genuinely believed that American capitalist society could become "color blind" and that African Americans could — and should — become assimilated into it.

Washington, who was born into slavery in the South, was far less optimistic about the ability of U.S. society ever to assimilate its African American minority. It was his belief that African Americans could depend on no one but themselves for their own survival, and that their economic prosperity could only be achieved through their own institutions — farms, businesses, schools, etc. It was his opinion that a struggle for equality and civil rights could not be won, especially in the South, where the overwhelming majority of African Americans lived at that time. Washington therefore put his energies into the establishment of institutions of higher education for African Americans, since African Americans were up to that time excluded from most colleges and universities. Whatever one may think of Washington's role in the Black struggle, it is unquestionable that graduates from the Black colleges and universities which he promoted formed the core of the African American struggle's leadership in later years.

Today, many African American young people are choosing to attend those same

colleges and universities because they do not wish to contend each day with the racism which is ingrained in the administrations, faculties, and student bodies of predominantly white schools. Many African American professionals are choosing to live in predominantly Black suburban communities and to send their children to predominantly Black schools — because on a day-to-day level racism *hurts*, and no one can be blamed for wanting to live one's life without constant conflict or to protect one's children from the racism of white teachers and students. Washington doubted that African American integration into American white society was possible. Today — for good reason — many African Americans are questioning whether it is *desirable*.

The debate between Washington and DuBois — and later between Garvey and DuBois — was a rich and instructive one, with valid opinions on both sides. It is to be hoped that *Bulletin IDOM* readers will be inspired to learn as much as they can about this vital aspect of African American history, and that more articles on it will appear in these pages.

Tom Barrett
Sparta, NJ

Mandel-Spartacist Debate

In your "Editors' Note" appearing in the December-January issue, when you comment on the recent debate between Ernest Mandel and a representative of the Spartacist League, you state that an article about it by me will appear in a future issue of *BIDOM*. I have decided, in fact, that my lengthy account would best be made available not by taking up pages in the magazine, but rather by making it available informally to interested readers. Copies of that report can be obtained by sending a request, plus \$1.00 for photocopying and postage, to:

Paul Le Blanc
357 Gross Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15224

Paul Le Blanc
Pittsburgh

National State of the Race Conference

Continued from page 19

lion. They had a conference in Pittsburgh last summer and one in Kansas City the year before. They talked about strengthening their efforts at networking and getting young gang members into the liberation movement.

A number of prominent figures chaired workshops. Don Rojas was co-leader of a workshop called "U.S. Foreign Policy and Pan-African World Development." The workshop on "Fighting Environmental Racism" was led by Connie Tucker and Damu Smith. The "Welfare Reform" workshop was done by Marian Kramer, president of the National Welfare Rights Union.

Justice Speaks reported that an International workshop was led by BWFF's Dennis Serrette, a veteran labor and international activist, and that it "concentrated on the need to end US corporate/business interests' domination over human needs in Haiti and South Africa."

Other workshops included such topics as: transforming the "criminal *injustice* system," Black political prisoners and prisoners of war, the health crisis and Black America, "Economic Development for Community Empowerment," technology and Pan-African world development, the communications media, cultural workers and cultural institutions, and religion and spirituality.

After the workshops on Sunday there was a breakfast session on the movement for reparations to African Americans for the centuries of slavery. That was followed on Sunday afternoon with a cultural event.

Conclusion

People were really enthusiastic about the conference. A lot of people wanted to try to have another conference in a few years, building up some more resources in the meantime. The general feeling was that it had been a positive experience. People came out inspired to move and to act with some knowledge and direction in a variety of fields. □

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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 Sarah Lovell, 328 pages (1992) — \$10.00

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ground information and places the volume in a larger historical perspective.

Volume Two:

Revolutionary Principles and Working-Class Democracy

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 Diarne 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.