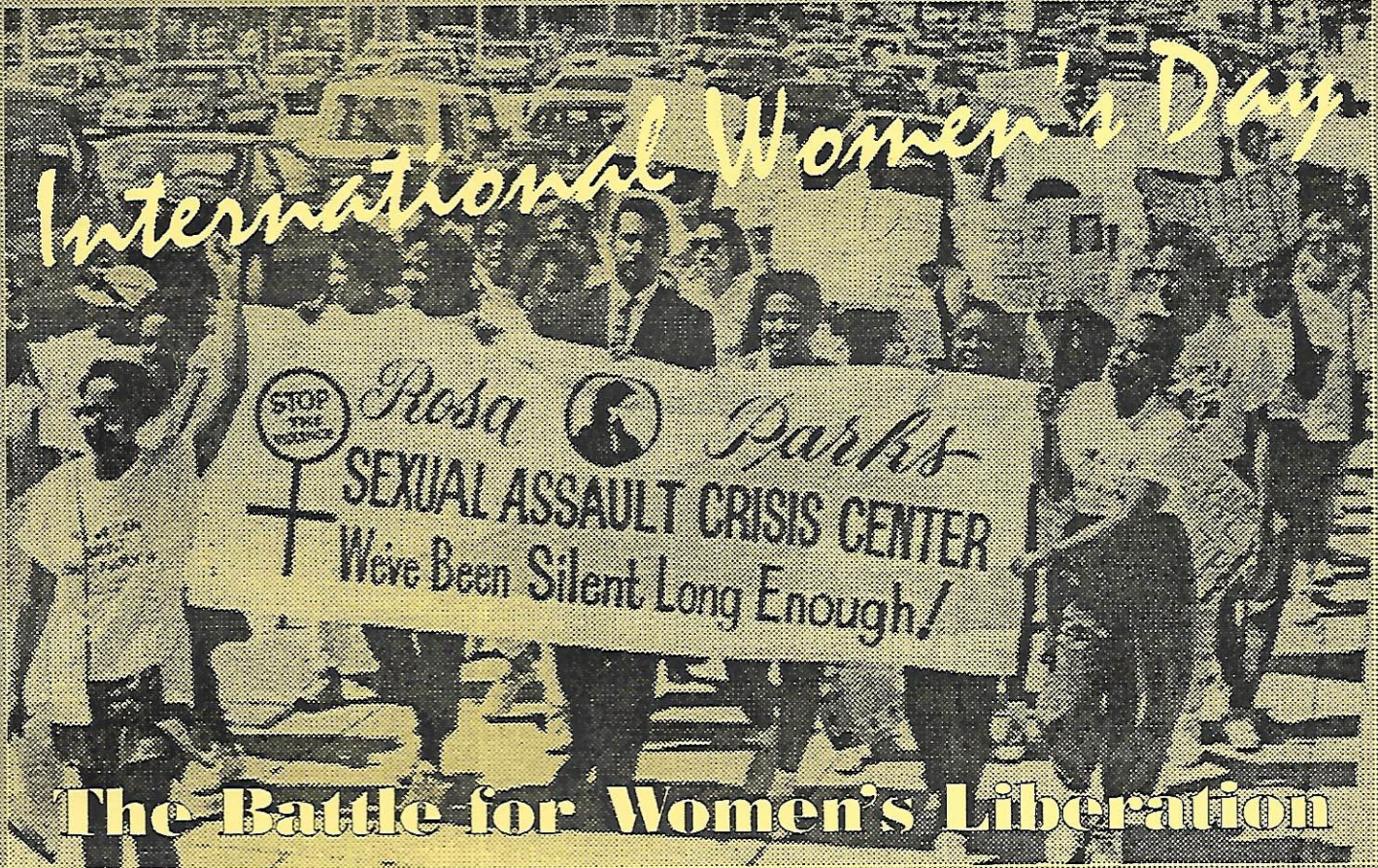


# In Defense of Marxism

\$3.00



## The Battle for Women's Liberation

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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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## New Stage in Decomposition of PRI

# Stop Zedillo's Criminal Move Against Zapatistas

by Rosendo Mendoza

In a desperate move to shore up support for the crisis-ridden Mexican government, President Ernesto Zedillo announced February 9 that he was unleashing army troops against positions of the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) and began a nationwide crackdown involving selective arrests of Zapatista sympathizers. Rather than the bold demonstration of presidential power he had hoped to make, Zedillo's criminal move has heralded a new stage in the decomposition of the ruling regime.

The pretext for the offensive was the supposed discovery of a series of EZLN "safe houses" that Zedillo charged contained "arsenals." This allegedly proved that the EZLN was preparing to launch a broader military offensive. The "arsenals" in question contained a total of one AK-47, two pistols, and a few small explosives, hardly the sort of material needed for a major offensive.

For the first time since early January 1994 the government attempted to paint the Zapatista

rebellion as a criminal affair, ordering the arrest of EZLN leaders.

The Zedillo administration tried to portray this resort to military force as an attempt to restore "the rule of constitutional law," and sought to reduce the deepgoing social and economic conflict to a "criminal" matter. This meant the administration had to go to great lengths to claim that the entire affair was being handled by the Attorney General's Office, now presided over by National Action Party (PAN) leader Antonio Lozano. Zedillo couched his

### Editors' Note: The Battle for Women's Liberation

In commemoration of March 8, International Women's Day, which began through the efforts of women's rights activists in the labor and socialist movements of Europe and America (see the account by Linda Thompson in *BIDOM* March 1994), this issue focuses on the fight for women's rights and its connection with the struggle for the emancipation of labor. To this end, we are printing an extensive interview with Genora Johnson Dollinger, leader of the Women's Auxiliary of the United Auto Workers, in the Flint, Michigan, sit-down strikes of 1936-37. She highlights the key role of women in winning those strikes while simultaneously improving their own condition. She also stresses the importance of the movement for a labor party. Other articles on Labor Party Advocates and the labor party question in the United States, by Carol McAllister, Judith Wraight, Ruth and Asher Harer, Hayden Perry, and Paul LeBlanc, likewise point to the natural alliance between the women's movement and the labor movement.

There is also a vital link between the movements of oppressed nationalities and the fight for women's rights. This point is stressed by Ashaki Binta, editor of *Justice Speaks*, in her obituary of Nat Blandon, a leader of Black Workers for Justice, who fought against sexism as firmly as against racism. The attack on Malcolm X's daughter, discussed in this issue by Michael Livingston and Vera Wigglesworth, also has sexist overtones, and the fight to defend her expresses solidarity among women as well as among those oppressed because of their nationality.

An important aspect of the fight for women's rights is the effort to stop violence against women, the theme of actions in Washington, D.C., called by the National Or-

ganization for Women (NOW) for April 7-9. Evelyn Sell reviews the facts in this struggle and provides further information about the march, which we urge our readers to help build and take part in.

#### A Socialist Perspective

Revolutionary socialists give unqualified support to, and seek to play a leading role in, all struggles by women to improve their status and achieve full liberation. We believe that to achieve such change, the emphasis must be placed on building a mass women's movement, the massive self-mobilization and self-organization of women, including self-defense. No reliance can be placed on the twin political parties or other agencies of the capitalist ruling class.

Serious socialist analysis points to the conclusion that ultimately a fundamental change in the structure of society is needed to accomplish women's liberation, since the present class division of society is intimately linked with the nuclear family structure, an all-pervading source of women's oppression and of violence against women. (The link between the patriarchal family and the existing property system, class-divided society, and class-dominated state and government structures was pointed out by many radical feminists in the late 1960s and early '70s. Frederick Engels's analysis in his *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State* was widely accepted by feminists as one that points toward the root of the problem.)

While gains must be fought for under the existing system, and while women can and have won improvements as a result of consistent struggle on a wide scale, the progress achieved remains provisional. It is distorted by the filter of ruling class political parties and governmental, judicial, and police struc-

tures which constantly seek to shape or alter women's gains to conform to the interests and needs of the dominant business class. Over the long run the gains women make can be taken back by the ruling class, which benefits from gender oppression, just as it does from racial oppression and the exploitation of labor. (In fact, gender oppression and national oppression are forms of exploitation of labor.) Ultimately the struggles to change the oppression of women are transitional toward a new society in which the full emancipation of women, of labor, and of oppressed nationalities are combined. A socialist society, one organized to meet human needs rather than the needs of the profit system (the "global market"), will provide the basis for the final elimination of gender oppression in all its forms.

The best hope for a fundamental reorganization of society lies in the independent organized force of a working class allied with the independent women's movement, the movements of oppressed nationalities, and other oppressed sectors of society. A government formed by such a working-class movement, or combination of movements, is ultimately the most realistic hope for carrying through changes that will make women's liberation fully possible. That is why women's demands must be part of the platform of a labor party and why the kinds of talks presented at, and resolutions proposed by, the Women's Rights Workshop at the Labor Party Advocates Conference in Toledo, Ohio (see pages 22-23), and the kind of testimony given by women at the Labor Party Platform Hearings in Hayward, California (see pages 12-14), point the way toward what is needed.



move in nonmilitary terms and insisted that the army's role would be simply to assist officers from the Attorney General's Office to arrest Zapatista leaders and other rebel suspects.

### "This Is War"

But the operation was clearly in the hands of the military. When asked by a reporter if the invasion of rebel-held territory was a prelude to war, the commanding general in charge of the operation responded, "This is war." Constitutional guarantees were suspended and all journalists, human rights activists, and other observers were denied access to the Lacandon forest region. Journalists and social activists in the area at the time of the invasion were either detained or forced to flee into the jungle along with the residents of the occupied communities.

Army spokesmen made pathetic efforts to put the best face on their fiasco. Progovernment television reporters, who were provided special access to the occupied region, transmitted the spectacle of a Mexican general describing how the local residents had poured out to applaud the arrival of the military. Behind him stood a deserted town.

Amnesty International and other human rights organizations reported widespread human rights violations in the region following the army occupation. Troops raided homes, the offices of social organizations, and even churches in their largely futile search for EZLN supporters or weapons.

Business leaders roared their approval, and major gains were posted on financial markets at the outset of the offensive. Economic recovery was now said to be assured.

### Fanfare Short-Lived

But the euphoria soon wore off. Though officials from both the Attorney General's Office and the army had initially bragged that EZLN spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos would be captured in a matter of hours "with the help of foreign security services," no arrest was forthcoming. Zedillo had tried to trap Marcos by promising a meeting with a presidential emissary to discuss new possibilities for peace talks in the town of Guadalupe Tepeyac the same day of the military advance. Several independent sources indicated that the army had botched this operation.

(The attempted deception was reminiscent of the trick used against revolutionary peasant leader Emiliano Zapata, when he was murdered in 1919 by federal forces in the town of Chichimeca.)

EZLN forces quickly withdrew into the jungle, along with entire communities in the region, and prepared to fight another day.

In an interview conducted shortly before the military assault on the region, Marcos told a reporter from the Mexico City daily *La Jornada*, "They have been fooling us. They have been playing for time to attack us during the dry season, the season of hunger. If no one stops them, the next step will be a guerrilla war."

By Monday, February 13, big business and the Zedillo administration were both rethinking

the costs of their latest adventure. Officials immediately began to downplay the goals of the military operation. While police and army units continued to make selective arrests of social activists around the country on charges of sedition, treason, and terrorism for their sympathies with the EZLN, spokesmen began to stress that the detention of Marcos was of limited importance. The main goal, they said, had simply been to identify the man behind the mask, thereby demystifying the EZLN's chief spokesperson and undercutting his support within the population.

### Hundreds of Thousands Protest

But the hundreds of thousands of protesters who took to the streets, chanting, "We are all Indians. We are all Marcos," offered a deafening response to those claims. The demonstrations, including marches 100,000 strong in Mexico City on both February 11 and February 15, were the largest related to Chiapas since a peace demonstration of similar size in early January 1994. But unlike the January protest, the latest demonstrations were explicitly pro-EZLN and far more radical than anything seen in recent years.

"Many of those who last week demanded that the president take strong measures regarding Chiapas are now expressing fear of what might happen," warned a front-page editorial February 14 in the slavishly progovernment financial daily *El Economista*. "The markets are surprised by the sympathy that Marcos inspires. Until last week, in [financial circles] it was believed that strong measures in Chiapas would win broad public support...It hasn't happened that way."

By February 15, less than a week after Zedillo's offensive, Mexican markets were already experiencing a new meltdown. The leading index of the Mexican Stock Exchange fell 6.4 percent in one day, taking it to below where the market stood on the day before Clinton announced the \$50-billion bailout package. With the peso plunging and interest rates surging once again, it became increasingly clear that Washington's massive "aid" package would fail not only to pull the Mexican economy out of its nose dive, but even to fulfill its immediate and primary goal of helping major corporations and institutional investors recoup billions in losses posted in the wake of the December 20 currency devaluation.

### Zedillo Backs Down

Zedillo was again forced to shift gears. By February 14 he was ordering the army to avoid any conflicts with the EZLN forces, and essentially called off the hunt for Marcos. In a move clearly orchestrated in Mexico City, Chiapas governor Eduardo Robledo asked for a one-year leave of absence. The intention was clearly to defuse ongoing protests over the fraudulent election he claimed to have won last August as the candidate of the ruling PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party).

Zedillo now claimed that everything had been designed to restart peace talks. EZLN leaders immediately denounced the move and called for

a withdrawal of government troops from rebel territory as a precondition for any resumption of negotiations.

### Why Zedillo Chose the Military Option

The big question at this point is why Zedillo tried the military option at the time when he did. There are strong indications he prepared such a move at the outset of his administration in early December, a fact reflected in both the aggressive tone he adopted in Chiapas-related speeches and the fact that top military leaders quietly bragged just after Zedillo's December 1 inauguration that they would soon return to the field of battle.

Although Interior Minister Esteban Moctezuma was dispatched to rebel-held territory in late December, ostensibly in an effort to renew peace talks, he offered the Zapatistas nothing new and was clearly aiming for a first-hand evaluation of the morale of the EZLN leaders.

But the peso devaluation crisis forced the regime to pull back on its military option, if only for a few weeks.

### Role of U.S.

Some observers have insisted that the failed military offensive was a demand imposed by the White House in exchange for new loan guarantees. There can be no doubt that Clinton, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank are making major demands on Zedillo, and taking charge of major economic policy decisions as part of the growing control the U.S. and international finance capital have been able to exert in the last decade. Documents have also come to light revealing that major Wall Street firms (Chase Bank, Bear Stearns, etc.) were insisting on the need to "eliminate" the Zapatistas and even a rethinking of the pace of political reform.

U.S. intelligence units have been actively participating in the design and implementation of major aspects of the government's dirty war against the Zapatistas and other opponents of the regime. Some Mexican newspaper accounts have reported as many as 800 U.S. agents involved in current operations.

But it would be an oversimplification to reduce the whole affair to demands from Washington.

### "Mr. Easter" and the Depth of Zedillo's Crisis

The depth of the political crisis of the PRI regime can hardly be overstated, and even before Zedillo completed his first month in office the opinion began to spread that his days were numbered. "Why do they call Zedillo Mr. Easter?" begins one of the hundreds of jokes making the rounds in Mexico. "Because he falls in March or April."

Opposition to the technocratic wing of the ruling PRI, which Zedillo represents, had continued to grow within the party and important sectors of the government bureaucracy. In an effort to shore up his regime, Zedillo has built on the PRI's alliance with the conservative PAN



## Army Offensive Continues — More Protests Needed

As we go to press, reports indicate that Mexican authorities are continuing the offensive against the Zapatistas despite (or under the cover of) Zedillo's call for an end to offensive operations and renewal of negotiations. Operations include widespread torture of alleged or suspected EZLN supporters. Ranchers and other propertied elements in Chiapas have organized violent demonstrations against chief negotiator and defender of Indian rights Bishop Samuel Ruiz.

Protests demanding withdrawal of Mexican government forces from the former EZLN-controlled area have taken place in dozens of cities in the U.S. and around the world — including three massive rallies of more than 100,000 each in Mexico City. The **U.S. National Commission for Democracy in Mexico (NCDM)** is calling for a national gathering in Chicago in March to coordinate the campaign in defense of the Zapatistas. For more information, call the NCDM at (915) 532-8382 in El Paso, Texas, or (713) 926-2786 in Houston.

and tried to cultivate a similar relationship with the center-left PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution). PRD head, Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, after signing a multiparty democracy pact with Zedillo in mid-January, bragged that the accord was designed to "provide elements of governability." But the prospect of further concessions to opposition parties and the growing prospect that the PRI will lose all state elections scheduled for this year have further fueled opposition to Zedillo within his own party.

Following the totally inept handling of the peso adjustment fiasco, the Zedillo administration began a series of continuing policy zigzags that further undermined his credibility. With his hands tied in regard to economic policy and his efforts to define a viable political project frustrated, Zedillo concluded that he needed a show of force, similar to those earlier employed by Salinas to strengthen his grip on power.

### Discontent in the Military

Another important factor was the growing discontent within the Mexican military high command. Since the 1930s Mexican presidential administrations continually eroded the military's political weight and left the armed forces as one of the most underfunded in Latin America. But during the Salinas years the military budget increased dramatically, and as doubts continue to grow, even in the highest echelons of power, regarding the future of the PRI and the traditional mechanisms of political and social control in Mexico, the army appears determined to flex its newfound muscle.

"The heads of the military [recently] told Zedillo that if he failed to decisively deal with the Zapatistas, his days were numbered as president. The military was not threatening a coup, but rather [warning] that they would throw their support behind the hard-line factions of the PRI to facilitate the job of removing him from office," reported the financial daily *El Financiero* on February 11.

Just hours before Zedillo's announcement that he had ordered the arrest of the Zapatista leaders, the head of the Mexican army delivered a speech in which he explicitly declared the armed forces' loyalty not only to the presidency

but to Zedillo personally, in a newfound display of enthusiasm.

There can be little doubt that the honeymoon lasted a few days at best. Zedillo's later order to suspend hostilities and avoid any direct confrontation with Zapatista forces has left the military high command outraged.

### To Head Off Mounting Discontent

Finally, by its military move the PRI government clearly hoped to intimidate growing signs of mass discontent and active opposition to its rule. Zedillo's most prominent campaign pledges included the creation of a million jobs per year, dramatic improvement in living conditions and in "the well-being" of Mexican families. The decision to impose a drastic austerity policy, as millions more Mexicans are plunged into absolute poverty, has greatly increased official fears of new outbreaks of working class and popular militancy.

With the regime in crisis, the traditional mechanisms of social and political control continue to weaken. The increasingly decadent character of the official labor bureaucracy appears to know no bounds. During a February 6 press conference, Fidel Velazquez, the 94-year-old head of the country's largest union federation, proposed that Mexican workers offer a helping hand to the country's billionaires by donating a day's wage toward paying off the foreign debt. Despite some grumbings, the rest of the trade union bureaucracy has simply agreed to impose the government's austerity measures, thereby fueling further discontent.

In the eyes of the regime, a turn to force was needed. The effort to break the resistance of the EZLN was to be a key ingredient in undermining the threat of mounting discontent.

### Failure of Counter-Insurgency

Zedillo was also prompted to unleash the troops by the failure of the counter-insurgency policy that has been in effect since the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari decided to declare a cease-fire in mid-January 1994.

Although Salinas's policy achieved some limited successes, the Zapatista rebellion continued to exert a powerful radicalizing force throughout Chiapas and all of Mexico. The

December 19 show of force by the Zapatistas demonstrated that broad layers of peasants and indigenous people in Chiapas identified with the EZLN. Most of those participating in road blockages and land occupations were clearly not EZLN combatants, though they wore the ski masks of the Zapatista rebels and carried their own small weapons.

With the IMF dictating a drastic austerity policy, the Zedillo administration will have fewer funds at its disposal to continue the social expenditures that made up part of its counter-insurgency efforts.

A multimillion-dollar "Chiapas Fund" raised by the private sector proved to be little more than a good excuse for Mexican billionaires to buy up local industries at rock-bottom prices — including some owned by faint-hearted foreign investors.

The depth of the mobilization of the peasantry, and the growing divisions within the PRI and among local business interests, meant that the state government of Eduardo Robledo, who took office in Chiapas on December 1, was living on borrowed time.

The decision of former PRD gubernatorial candidate Amado Avendaño to establish a rival state government "in rebellion," with the backing of the EZLN, broad sectors of the mass movement, and a large percentage of the local municipalities in Chiapas, also served to undermine the viability of the Robledo regime.

### Blaming the EZLN for the Economic Crisis

The government combined its military offensive with a renewed attempt at political spin regarding the economic crisis. Blaming the Zapatistas has been an on-again, off-again pastime for Mexican officials. Zedillo began his administration with denunciations of the EZLN for allegedly causing widespread economic hardship. His former finance secretary, Jaime Serra Puche, went so far as to accuse the Zapatistas of provoking the peso devaluation.

But that line of argument found little support, either in Mexico or on Wall Street. Zedillo switched tactics by late December, admitting that poor judgment in handling currency matters and the country's current account deficit were to blame.

It is a bit ingenious, to say the least, to blame the economic crisis, and specifically the depletion of the central bank's foreign currency reserves, on the EZLN. Following the Zapatista uprising of January 1, 1994, the Banco de México posted three consecutive months of increases in foreign reserves, for an actual total increase of approximately \$5 billion. The decline in foreign currency reserves began only after the March 23 assassination of ruling party presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, which provoked a drop of \$10.38 billion.

Other events that heralded massive capital outflows included the cryptic announcement

*Continued on page 33*



# On Chechnya as Russia's Ireland, and on Building an Antiwar Movement

by Renfrey Clarke

*This article by an Australian journalist living in Moscow was contributed to **Solidarnost**, paper of the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions.*

There is nothing new to historians in the spectacle of a large and powerful nation setting out to conquer, or reconquer, a smaller neighbor. If we are to seek something novel in the Russian intervention in Chechnya, it can only be the recklessness with which the move was conceived and carried out. As an act of Olympian presumption, what Yeltsin has done has been something to outstrip any of the tsars and quite a few lesser gods.

Without the support of the army or of any political faction except those of the extreme nationalist right, and despite a rich history of such conflicts turning into expensive, politically damaging fiascos, Yeltsin has invited Russians to join him in a counter-insurgency war in the Caucasus. The terror bombing of Grozny has thrown this presumption into even more stark relief. Awed by an act of naked will, liberal activists in Russia and governments in the West are to bow in silence before a superior force. After all, they did so before, in October 1993.

But what's this about conquest? Chechnya is an inalienable part of the Russian Federation, we are told. Constitutional order is being restored there! Indeed. So far as map-makers have been concerned, Chechnya has been part of Russia since the 1860s. That was the point at which, after almost 50 years of devoted slaughter, Russian soldiers had finally killed so many Chechens that the rest stopped fighting — more or less. When the gunfire died away, consent to Russian rule was deemed to have been given. The logic here is exquisite: if you can make a graveyard, you are allowed to annex it.

Usually, great-power chauvinists bent on imperial expansion find more subtle excuses. In my own country, Australia, the invading British preferred to argue that the Aborigines they were clearing from the land with bullets and poisoned flour were not, precisely speaking, anything but transients — the aborigines did not practice agriculture in the European sense, hence did not use the land, hence had no right to it. In Ireland, the British settled tens of thousands of their own nationals on lands cleared of rebellious Irish peasants, and continue to this day to assert the right of this enclave community to live under British rule. The Americans were more ingenious still. In seizing roughly half of Mexico in the mid-19th century, they argued that they were realizing their “manifest destiny” — that they were impelled to conquest by the abstract force of history.

International relations are governed by the realities of practical politics, and almost no one today argues that Texas or Colorado should

revert to Mexican rule. But the Russian claim to sovereignty over Chechnya remains impossibly weak. Chechnya was “Russian” for around 130 years. But Ireland was “British” for more than 700 years before the Irish Republic won its independence, and no one today seriously disputes the right of the Irish Republic to exist. The Chechens are a majority on their own historic territory, with their own language and traditions. Their right to independent statehood, should they choose it, is unassailable.

That is not to say that the Chechens should choose independence. There are many valid reasons why small nationalities may decide that it is to their advantage to cede part of their sovereignty in order to join larger federations. But the choice, in this case, is for Chechens to make, not Russians.

So far I have tried to argue from general principles of national justice, as a foreigner with friends among both Russians and Chechens. But what if I were the average Russian of my acquaintance — decent and kindly enough, but with an ample dose of the “Russian national idea”? How would I argue then?

I can say confidently that I would still call on the Russian government to withdraw its forces from Chechnya, and to let Chechens decide for themselves the question of their independence. There can be no swift, decisive victory for Russian troops in this war, and given the catastrophic state of the Russian army, probably no victory at all. The efforts by the British to maintain their hold on Ireland show that when faced with a hostile population, and subject to guerrilla attacks, an occupying army will almost inevitably commit savage atrocities, which in turn will spur even broader resistance. The death toll spirals, and international opinion, whose faculties are not anesthetized by the “national idea” of the occupying power, is in no doubt about who to blame.

The effect of British policy in Ireland during the first decades of this century, in the words of one prominent critic, was to “make the name of Britain stink in the nostrils of the world.” I need not spell out how the name of Yeltsin has smelt to non-Russians since the bombs began falling on Grozny. But can people who consider themselves Russian patriots honestly want this stench to extend to the Russian nation as a whole?

I have had it put to me that in deciding whether to intervene in Chechnya, Yeltsin faced a tough choice in the tradition of realpolitik: either to go in and crush the independence movement, or to see all the republics of the North Caucasus secede from the Russian Fed-

eration one by one. My personal view is that with the bombing of Grozny, Russia has already lost the North Caucasus. What remains to be decided is simply the mechanics of the process, the working out of a historical inevitability.

Let me elaborate. In itself, the concept of the Russian Federation is perfectly valid. But if it is to be a real federation and not a prison, it must be based on scrupulous respect for the rights of the minority nations within it, including the right to leave the federation if they wish. This latter right must not be interpreted in legalistic fashion, on the basis of such niceties as Yeltsin's failure to include in his constitution any point allowing for secession. Political facts must be faced squarely.

In the past few weeks, the peoples of the North Caucasus have had impressed on them the fact that Russia has little, if any, respect for their national rights. The Grozny bombing has made clear that the Russian state is prepared to use barbaric methods to prevent the right of secession, in particular, from being asserted. When you find yourself sharing a house with a bomb thrower, simple self-preservation dictates that you move out as soon as possible, even if the house is comfortable in other respects. If the house is more like a prison, you will probably have to wait, but you will nevertheless jump when the chance comes.

That chance is probably not far off. One of the reasons behind the reportedly high morale of the Chechen fighters is the knowledge that Russia absolutely cannot afford a war, even a supposedly small one. Wars notoriously are paid for with inflation, and in the conditions of contemporary Russia, the cost of mounting an extended campaign of counterinsurgency warfare would very likely be to create hyperinflation. Under conditions of hyperinflation, investing in production becomes irrational behavior, and the economy is swiftly devoured by speculative mania. What would be the chances of the Russian Federation holding together in such circumstances? I suspect the main question would be whether Moscow kept anything east of the Urals.

My message to Russian patriots is therefore as follows: if you love your country, then do your utmost to force an end to Yeltsin's brutal adventure in Chechnya.

I do not pretend to be able to explain in detail how this aim might be achieved. But I do have a certain experience of peace campaigning, beginning with the movement against Australian involvement in the Vietnam war. It seems to me that at least some of the lessons of that campaign



## Statement by U.S. Committee

### CDHRR Condemns Yeltsin's War on Chechnya

*The following is a statement on the situation in Chechnya by the U.S. Committee for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia (CDHRR). The Committee was formed in late 1993 in response to attacks on civil liberties by the Yeltsin government. (See BIDOM January 1994, back cover, for the text of the founding statement of the Committee, signed by hundreds of U.S. and international figures active in labor, left, progressive, civil liberties, and human rights causes.) The present statement was signed by the four coordinators: Elizabeth Bowman, Suzi Weissman, Marilyn Vogt-Downey, and Alex Chis.*

The U.S. Committee for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia condemns Yeltsin's war on Chechnya, including the carpet bombing of Grozny. Indiscriminate shelling has killed thousands of residents of the capital. Even Russian soldiers have been victims of the terror bombing of Grozny. We join those in Russia who have organized against Yeltsin's brutal adventure in Chechnya, and have demanded an end to the military intervention in the Caucasus. The war is a cynical diversion from the overwhelming political and economic failures of the Yeltsin regime.

We oppose Yeltsin's attempt to crush the resistance of the Chechens to Russian rule, just as we oppose Yeltsin's crackdown on oppositionists at home.

The U.S. State Department, while paying lip service to human rights violations, has supported Yeltsin's bloody siege of Grozny, just as it supported his military assault on the Parliament in October 1993. In the name of supporting "democratic capitalist reform," the U.S. government has supported the authoritarian, antidemocratic, and desperate actions of Yeltsin to halt the further disintegration of the Russian federation.

The U.S. Committee for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia extends its solidarity to those activists in Russia who have engaged in antiwar protests, and who have demanded an immediate end to the war and withdrawal of Russian troops from the Caucasus.

For further information, contact:

USCDHRR, P.O. Box 1890, New York, NY 10009-8911

West Coast: USCDHRR, P.O. Box 8461, Berkeley, CA 94707

E-mail: mvogt@igc.apc.org; rlrfs@igc.apc.org

a telephone booth. Fortunately, the movement remained under the leadership of people whose goal was to build a united campaign open to everyone who wanted the Vietnam war ended.

If our movement had confined itself to issuing press statements and drafting parliamentary resolutions, the government would have been irritated but not deeply alarmed, and Australian intervention in Vietnam would have continued. But our strategy was more serious. We aimed to draw people into the streets in public protest, in such numbers that the government and the mass media were forced to take them seriously, and could not dismiss them as "extremist fringe elements." This mass action strategy, we found, allowed the movement to feed on itself, as people joined in large demonstrations, they sensed their collective strength. Their enthusiasm and activism grew markedly.

The decisive demonstrations, those of 1971, were among the largest political gatherings in Australian history. This was because of a further factor: the support of the labor movement, which called stoppages and urged trade unionists to rally against the war. The support we received from the trade unions was not spontaneous. It was given because opponents of the war in Vietnam had by 1971 spent more than five years agitating in the trade union ranks, creating a climate in which timid and conservative union leaders and Labor Party politicians were forced by rank and file pressure to condemn the war and call their followers into the streets.

I do not suggest that the lessons of this Australian experience can be applied mechanically in Russia. But the general principles I have outlined do, I feel, hold true here as well. The Russian peace movement needs to focus clearly on the war in Chechnya, and to voice demands whose clear thrust is to force an end to the war. The movement needs to have a mass action perspective. And while devoting due attention to layers such as the intelligentsia, students, and religious communities, it needs to understand that the workers' movement, with its massive size and key place in the productive process, is central to the task of forcing Yeltsin to end the slaughter.

Among labor activists in Russia, the work has to begin of educating workers on the real character of the war and the real motives behind it, and of placing clear demands on trade union leaders at all levels to commit themselves and their organizations to the struggle for peace.

In many ways, the prospects before antiwar campaigners are much brighter in Russia today than they were in Australia in the mid-1960s. Public opinion in Russia is already very solidly opposed to Yeltsin's actions. The army is hostile, and business circles are aghast at the economic catastrophe the war threatens to unleash.

But it is also true that the stakes in Russia are far higher than they ever were in Australia. Here the consequences of failing to build an effective peace movement could include not just thousands of Russian dead, but economic chaos and national disintegration. □

(and of the analogous, much larger movement in the United States) deserve to be spelt out for peace activists in Russia today.

First, I should stress that in appropriate circumstances, an antiwar movement is capable of growing from almost negligible beginnings to become a massive political force. In Australia, the movement against the Vietnam war had its beginnings in 1965 with small pickets and student demonstrations. By 1971 it was capable of mobilizing as many as 100,000 people to fill the centers of major cities. From being broadly popular among voters, the Australian military presence in Vietnam became a grave liability for the political forces that had sent the troops and which kept them there. In 1972, the unpopularity of the war helped condemn these forces to electoral defeat.

Those of us who built the antiwar movement in Australia made many errors. Nevertheless, we achieved our goal; the troops were brought home. We were successful, in my view, because our basic strategies were sound. Looking back on those years, I would see the key to our success in the following elements of our practice.

First, the peace movement put forward demands whose thrust was unequivocally to end the war, and which supporters of the war could not misrepresent or coopt. Second, we restricted our demands to this central focus of stopping the war, resisting efforts to attach additional appeals around essentially distinct issues. Third, we had a "mass action" perspective,

aimed at mobilizing the largest possible number of people in public acts of protest. Fourth, we recognized the centrality to our goals of involving the forces of the labor movement.

One of the early debates in the Vietnam peace movement, both in Australia and the U.S., concerned the question of whether to call for a negotiated end to the fighting. For people unhappy about the war but frightened for their respectability, calling for negotiations represented a "soft option." But it is possible to negotiate for months about the shape of the negotiating table, while keeping foreign troops in place and continuing a war of aggression. A more radical set of demands was eventually adopted: "Stop the Bombing! All Troops Out Now!" This made clear that the US and its allies had no right to be in Vietnam, and that the essential reason for the war was the presence of foreign forces.

Keeping the focus on this set of demands required a constant struggle. There were many people, especially among militant left groups, who wanted to tie their own preoccupations — from forcing the resignation of the Australian government to "smashing imperialism east and west" — to the official slogans of the movement. But attaching a list of further demands would have obscured the antiwar character of the actions. And it would not have been hard to finish up with a list of demands so broad, and so uncompromising, that the people who agreed with all of them could have met comfortably in



# Bloodbath in Chechnya: Causes and Consequences

by Aleksandr Buzgalin and Andrei Kolganov

*Both authors are professors of economics at Moscow University, active in the Movement for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia. Buzgalin is also a member of the Council of the Party of Labor and Kolganov, a member of the Organizing Committee of the Union of Internationalists.*

**D**uring the time we take to write this article, several dozen more people will almost certainly be killed or maimed in the North Caucasus. Dozens of mothers will cry out their unending grief, no one can give them back their sons or daughters. Dozens of wives will have become widows, and their children, orphans. There are already thousands of dead and wounded, sick and homeless. And there are hundreds of thousands for whom the horror of bombing raids, the agony suffered by comrades, and the need to shoot at people who are citizens of the same country have become part of everyday life. At one pole in this conflict are several thousand fighters and hundreds of thousands of peaceful civilians. At the other are several divisions of Russian troops, together with hundreds of tanks, aircraft, and armored personnel carriers. Almost a month of senseless bloodshed. This is terrifying and amoral, monstrous and disgraceful.

However, human beings need to do more than simply show indignation and compassion. They have to understand what is happening, why, and where the blame belongs. They have to understand what can and must be done, and by whom, in order to stop the slaughter, to prevent the renewal and spread of fratricidal conflicts.

## Causes of the War

The causes of this senseless war on Russia's southern border, a war which has now become the epicenter of pain and anguish for our homeland, unfortunately run very deep.

Russia for a long time has been proceeding along the road of bloodshed and official arbitrariness. Starting with mass beatings of demonstrators on the streets of Moscow in 1993, the Yeltsin administration finally abandoned all restraint in October of the same year, trampling on the constitution and not only dispersing its own parliament but also opening fire on it with tanks, artillery and machine-guns. Tanks on city streets — we have already experienced this, a year ago. The people behind that episode were the same Yeltsin, Grachev, Yerin, and Co. who are now directing the carnage in Chechnya. At that time, however, they still had with them a number of people who now seem to have regained their powers of sight — people like Yegor Gaidar and Gleb Yakunin. Even Sergei Kovalyov, now showing genuine heroism defending human rights in Chechnya, looked on passively in October 1993 as hundreds of defenseless Moscow citizens were murdered, as

deputies were arrested and beaten, and as police savagely bashed their fellow citizens.

Both then and now, the violence was no accident. The authorities in Russia have been implementing socio-economic and geopolitical strategies which cannot possibly be put into practice through peaceful, democratic methods. These are the strategies of “shock without therapy,” which have resulted in a steep decline in output, disorganization of the economy, government corruption, legal arbitrariness, and a terrifying increase in crime. Can a president and government who are incapable of enforcing a minimal degree of order in their own home “restore order” in Chechnya or anywhere else? Is it any surprise that the peoples of Russia should want to take a different road from the one of inflation, decline, and disorganization that is typical of Yeltsin's Russia?

And what about the impoverishment of the majority of working people as social inequalities increase? Yes, we are now seeing a rise in average real incomes following their collapse in 1992. But this “normalization” recalls the “normal” average body temperature of patients in a hospital. One person has already died, another is tossing about in a fever, and their average is — normal! So it is in our country. The “new rich” in Russia are bloated with wealth, and have become living legends among the big spenders on the international scene. Meanwhile the “new poor,” who include almost half the population, pine nostalgically for the Brezhnev era — which only a short time ago was condemned as a time of low living standards. How could the policies of the present regime fail to provoke citizens to indignation, and the authorities to violence?

And what about the government's policy on the national question? When Yeltsin still needed to oust Gorbachev, he told the republics of the Russian federation: “Take as much sovereignty as you can handle!” Then when he came to power the screws were tightened, and any attempt at independent behavior was met with the rattle of automatic weapons fire. How are the nationalities and ethnic groups of Russia supposed to see this? As another of the lies of the “center”?

## Entrepreneurs and Corrupt Bureaucrats

These questions have a rhetorical character because power in Russia today lies with socio-political forces that benefit from instability,

disorganization, unjust methods of rule, and violence. Those who make up these forces are the “new Russians,” who unlike “normal” Western entrepreneurs do not aim at stable profits of 10 to 20 percent, but at rapid enrichment. Their goal is profit rates of hundreds of percent a year, the super-concentration and centralization of capital through extra-economic means — speculation, corruption, and violence. These people stand to benefit from an atmosphere of arbitrariness and coercion. (There is, to be sure, a sector of Russian private business today in which the “primitive accumulation of capital” has already been carried out. In this sector, a point in the concentration of wealth has been reached at which stability is more important than rapid enrichment. This explains the fact that some of the right-wing parties which at first gave their silent assent to a “police action” in Chechnya later came out against an escalation of the war. They need stability and order, not the chaos of an ill-prosecuted conflict.)

Another sector of these forces is made up of corrupt bureaucrats who can only receive their privileges and bribes in a general context of lawlessness and institutional chaos. The scale of these illicit gains beggars the imagination. Boris Fyodorov, sometime finance minister in the Gaidar government, let slip at one point that the market value of the dachas, hunting lodges, and other properties at the disposal of the president is close to a billion dollars — that is, to the total loan funds promised us by the world community! The cost of the fence that was erected recently around the House of Government is equal to the price for which a large Siberian oil and gas complex was sold at about the same time.

Unfortunately, very similar processes are under way in the autonomous republics and regions of Russia. The power wielded by Dudayev is a small piece of mirror-glass in which our general problems are reflected. In Chechnya we see the same low level of legitimacy. (Three years ago Dudayev, with support from Moscow, dissolved his own parliament.) We see the same massive disorganization of economic and social life, the same domination by all-powerful mafia clans, the same inability and unwillingness to solve the differences between ruling groups and oppositions through democratic methods. And of course, there are the armaments. Tanks, artillery, machine-guns, the lot. For the most part they are Russian, partly transferred to the Chechen authorities, partly sold or bartered by our army.

## Russian Great-Power Chauvinism

Yes, we now have a ruling layer which finds incessant armed conflicts unavoidable. The more savagely the Yeltsinite center behaves, the greater will be the wave of local separatism. The stronger the nationalism in the Russian borderlands, the more powerful will be the outbursts of great-power Russian chauvinism at the center, and the more real will be the danger of an authoritarian, semi-fascist regime in our country.

With the developments in Chechnya, this tendency has been manifested to the full. Who



are the people supporting Yeltsin today? Zhirinovsky, notorious for advocating a "push to the south" (an expansionist policy aimed at creating a "Greater Russia"), and Barkashov, the leader of the semi-fascist organization Russian National Unity. In addition, there are a few jingoist patriots, as well as former members of Yeltsin's administration and government. And that is all. Even Gaidar and his colleagues have turned their backs on the president.

This is no accident. Four years ago we were shouting at the top of our lungs: "Yeltsin is not an alternative, simply a pedestal for Zhirinovsky and Co. to climb up on!" Then a year ago, after the bloody events of October, the president began openly trying on the cloak of Russian chauvinism, borrowing the vocabulary and slogans of the Prokhanovs and Zhirinovskys. It remained only to be seen when Yeltsin would try his own "push to the south," or begin struggling against a nonexistent "Jewish-Masonic conspiracy." The first outburst came in Chechnya. But Russia and its army were in decay, so instead of the hammer blow of a great-power fist, what we saw was the clumsy groping of fat, blindly spread fingers.

The result was the corpses of our young men, in Russian and Chechen uniforms. The corpses of Chechen and Russian children and old people.

### Antiwar Positions of Political Groups

And what about "civil society"? To give them their due, the majority of Russian political organizations criticized the conflict, — though in different ways — almost as soon as it began. For Gaidar and his associates from the Russia's Choice Party, until recently the president's best-known supporters, denouncing the war served (in our view) as no more than a means of distancing themselves from an obviously disastrous campaign by their hero of earlier times. These right-wing liberal Westernizers, exiled from power by a president who has turned increasingly to Russian nationalism and great-power chauvinism, decided to try to conduct an independent policy, gently kicking the president (but not too hard, in case he fell). Meanwhile moral considerations (why not call them to mind, when doing so poses no danger to one's prestige and capital?) played a certain role. As a result Gaidar and his colleagues, who had supported the use of tanks to pacify Muscovites in the autumn of 1993, spoke out against using tanks in Grozny in the winter of 1994–95.

The centrists (Yavlinsky and his colleagues) adopted a much firmer position, struggling consistently both against the war and against the high-handedness of the president and his administration. The majority of human rights organizations, including the Movement for Democracy and Human Rights in Russia, Memorial, and others, took a similar stand. Among the most active individuals was the above-mentioned Sergei Kovalyov, the president's commissioner for human rights. After spending several weeks in Grozny, Kovalyov returned to Moscow and did a great deal to tell the truth

about Chechnya to the citizens of Russia and to the whole world.

Social democratic parties took a somewhat ambiguous stand on the conflict, on the one hand calling for the integrity of Russia to be maintained, and on the other pleading the necessity for the defense of human rights. By contrast, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation forgot (thank goodness!) its usual great-power rhetoric, bluntly condemning the war and the authorities who were responsible for the massive destruction and the large number of casualties.

The relatively small democratic socialist tendencies such as the Union of Internationalists, the Party of Labor, and the Russian Party of Communists were extremely active. For us (the authors are among the activists in this movement), organizing something like a dozen picket lines, rallies, and round-table discussions, as well as issuing press statements and collaborating with human rights defenders, was a matter of conscience and civic duty. It is indicative that the first antiwar picket line in the center of Moscow, held on December 10 just before the first large-scale military actions, was organized by the democratic left.

The real point, of course, is not who was the first to move into action. Far more important is the fact that practically all of the country's major political forces, with the exception of the right-wing national-patriots, were lined up on one side of the barricades. On the other side was a bloc of Yeltsin, Zhirinovsky, and Barkashov.

### No Agreement on Antiwar Demands

The opponents of the war, however, were far from agreeing on a united set of demands for resolving the conflict. All the antiwar forces, thank goodness, were in favor of a halt to the bombing and to military actions, and supported the opening of negotiations. But beyond this point, disagreements began to appear. The Gaidarites were opposed in principle to calling for the president to resign, while many of the social democrats "forgot" this demand. Democratic leftists were demanding that Russian forces be withdrawn from Chechnya, and that the Russian government respect the right of the peoples of Chechnya to decide independently and on a democratic basis whether they would remain in the Russian Federation, and if so, with what degree of autonomy. However, this demand received only feeble support. Many rightists argued that a rapid and professional "police action" in Chechnya was desirable, condemning not so much the use of the "big stick" as the "lack of professionalism" of the army's actions.

This kind of discord within a context of positive positions is not surprising. In our country advocates of the "strong state" and supporters of "great power" concepts are winning increasing popularity for their ideas. In domestic policy, these people call for "free market" economic strategies together with moderate authoritarianism and strong police forces. In the broader sphere, they favor expansionist geopolitics backed by "patriotic" ideology. There

is reason to fear that if the war in Chechnya had been organized "professionally" — that is, if the killing had been quick and silent — only the democratic left and a few human rights defenders would have spoken out against it.

### The Consequences

The war is continuing. Every hour of every day it is taking lives. But the struggle against the war is continuing as well. The citizens of Russia are more and more beginning to understand that the slaughter in Chechnya is a crime whose consequences will remain for a long time to come on the conscience of our authorities, a crime whose evils are a warning to all the peoples of Russia.

This is a crime in the moral sense. No one can bring back the dead, heal the cripples, or restore the devastated families and homes. With pain, guilt, and the burden of vengeance, this war will weigh on human souls, sowing still more seeds of interethnic hatred, nationalism, and separatism.

The war is also a political crime. It is strengthening the authority of Dudayev and his supporters, who are far from representing a democratic, popular force. The war is strengthening separatist tendencies not only in Chechnya but throughout Russia. It is exacerbating a situation in Russia that is already fraught with conflict. The war is further discrediting our army, already stained by punitive actions against its own people.

The war is also an economic crime. Billions upon billions of rubles have already been spent on senseless slaughter. The cost, in fact, is now in the trillions. Already high inflation is beginning to edge up still further, and there are signs of alarm on the money markets. The budgets for health care and culture are being cut (military needs!). It is already obvious that the "realistic" 1995 budget will have to be recalculated, cutting back even further the present miserly spending on social needs, and drawing still tighter the already suffocating noose of inflation and economic collapse.

### A Crime Against Humanity

The solidarity of people of good will in Russia and abroad is now all the more important. It is necessary to overcome one's own indifference and to say "No!" to the war and to the authorities who have unleashed it. This must be done by military personnel, refusing to carry out illegal orders. It must be done by civilians participating in acts of protest in their neighborhoods, their villages, their workplaces. It must be done by politicians, casting off their petty factionalism and uniting, at least temporarily, for the sake of peace. The world community must understand that the killing of thousands of people is neither a "police action" nor an "internal affair of Russia," but a crime against humanity.

If we can stop this slaughter, if we can learn to struggle together at least against such obvious crimes of the authorities — if this can be achieved, then at least to some degree the sufferings and sacrifices of this winter in Chechnya will not have been in vain. □



# Chechnya and the Eclipse of the Russian Liberals

by Boris Kagarlitsky

*While readers will probably disagree with the final passage in this article, characterizing the Communist Party of the Russian Federation as "the leading party of the left," the bulk of the article provides valuable first-hand information and thought-provoking interpretations concerning the war against Chechnya.*

If some reckless analyst had suggested a year ago that admirers of Yegor Gaidar would be joining on Pushkin Square with followers of the extreme Russian nationalist Viktor Anpilov to shout "Put the Yeltsin gang on trial!" he or she would have been dismissed as delirious. But Russian life is stranger than any kind of delirium.

Beginning on December 11 columns of tanks and forty thousand troops burst onto the territory of the mutinous Chechen Republic, along the way shooting up peaceful villages and killing the health minister of neighboring Ingushetia. Aircraft and artillery dumped tons of bombs and shells on the Chechen capital, Grozny.

Despite a television propaganda campaign, the antiwar movement quickly began to gather strength. Nor were the government's hopes of exploiting the racist prejudices of Russians against Chechens borne out. On the contrary, surveys showed that the attitude of Russians toward Chechens, who had become the victims of aggression, became more favorable. Press reports of the bombing and shelling, from which the Russian population of Grozny suffered as much as anyone, played a considerable role.

The weakest spot in the authorities' new scenario was the lack of combat readiness of their own army — demoralized, poorly trained, and without the slightest idea of why it was supposed to fight against citizens of its own country. The soldiers were sleeping in open fields during winter, and going into battle beneath the automatic rifle muzzles of special forces troops. They refused to carry out orders, deserted, and committed acts of banditry. Tanks became stuck in bogs. During the first days of combat several colonels surrendered.

After the first skirmishes with Chechens, the group of forces that was advancing on Grozny from the east halted its advance and dug itself in. Soldiers and officers began fraternizing with the population. Warriors of the Russian army often began appearing in marketplaces in the suburbs of Grozny, where the besieged population fed them and gave them cigarettes. Supposedly super-accurate laser gunsights constantly failed to work. Bombs and rockets missed their targets sometimes by several kilometers, or even fell on the territory of neighboring republics.

Failing to take Grozny with a quick assault, the commanders of the Russian forces took out their wrath on the peaceful population, mounting an incessant bombardment of the city. The number of victims grew by the day. One of the first air raids on Grozny saw the devastation of Moskovskaya Street, where there was not a single military installation. The casualties included journalists who were in the battle zone.

Although the whole world, including inhabitants of Russia, saw on television how Russian aircraft were dropping bombs on Grozny, the official Russian propagandists claimed to know nothing of any bombing, accusing the Chechens of engineering it themselves.

Just before new year Yeltsin promised to halt the bombardment of the Chechen capital. Immediately after the end of his speech, when residents of Grozny, whose hopes had been raised by the Russian president's promises, emerged from their bomb shelters, the most ferocious air raid of the entire war was unleashed. This was followed by a massed assault using tanks and infantry.

The new year attack on Grozny turned into one of the most shameful defeats in the history of the Russian army. The tanks that forced their way into the city were quickly cut off from the infantry and destroyed. The paratroopers who had taken up positions near the railway station were surrounded. The army lost half the equipment it had thrown into the battle, along with hundreds of dead and wounded. The Russian forces retreated in disorder, even as the official propaganda was telling the world that the city had been taken and the presidential palace seized.

Following this debacle, the federal forces began systematically destroying Grozny. Unable to capture the center of the city, the attackers deliberately used artillery fire to demolish block after block, trying to make their way gradually toward the presidential palace. Meanwhile, almost the entire territory of the republic was engulfed in fighting. Skirmishes also began occurring in neighboring Dagestan. The drawn-out siege of Grozny allowed the Chechen fighters to develop a guerrilla war in the rear of the Russian forces.

The Chechen volunteers fought professionally and with selfless courage, which is more than can be said of the Russian army. Federal soldiers refused to go into battle, deserted, and in some cases crossed over to the Chechens. Journalists reported that at night, troops used bayonets to slash the tires of their own armored personnel carriers. According to Chechen sources, more than twenty Russian soldiers were shot by firing squad for trying to desert from the line of battle. The fact that government news sources constantly stressed that there were no "defeatist moods" in the army, and that the soldiers were "ready to carry out any order," indirectly confirmed that discontent was ripening in the federal forces.

It was not only enlisted troops and junior officers who were grumbling. After arriving in the Caucasus and familiarizing himself with the

situation, Deputy Commander of the Russian Land Forces Colonel-General Eduard Vorob'yov resigned his commission. Deputy Defence Minister General Boris Gromov came out with a public criticism of the war in Chechnya. Then national television showed the commander in chief of the Russian paratroop forces, General Yevgeny Podkolzin, delivering an antiwar speech at the funeral of a colonel killed in Grozny.

Such actions by military officers in a country at war are virtually unknown in world practice, but perfectly natural in Yeltsin's Russia. After the country's ruling circles had spent five years destroying and humiliating their own army for the benefit of the West, they discovered to their surprise that this army was no longer willing or able to fight.

The war on Chechnya was still more absurd for the reason that the Russian government had spent three years allowing the Chechen regime of General Dzhokhar Dudayev to do whatever it liked. After proclaiming independence from Moscow, Dudayev had done nothing to make independence a reality. Russian laws continued to be enforced on the territory of Chechnya, and the Russian ruble remained in circulation. There were no border checks, and the Chechen government did not set up its own customs system. The inhabitants of Chechnya remained Russian citizens, dealing with their problems through the structures of the Russian Federation. Chechnya did not pay taxes, but other regions of Russia also refused to forward tax revenues from time to time.

The only thing that Dudayev did that was at all out of the ordinary was to set up armed formations under his personal control, like Yeltsin and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov. In addition, he delighted philatelists by issuing a series of Chechen stamps bearing his portrait, and with a quality reminiscent of matchbox labels.

It is quite clear that Dudayev was not so much seeking independence as aiming at winning special status for Chechnya within the framework of Russia or of a future Eurasian Union, the need for which the Chechen general stressed repeatedly. The Moscow politicians for their part watched the events unfolding in Chechnya without particular alarm. The semi-independent republic was an ideal place for laundering millions stolen in the capital and for cutting deals in smuggled weapons. More than a few people from Moscow ruling circles were warming their hands at this particular fire.

However, the crisis of the Russian regime, the economic collapse and unrelieved failures in all spheres of domestic and foreign policy forced Yeltsin's associates to look for a way out.



While the Yeltsin government had bungled any attempts it made at constructive activity, it had invariably emerged victorious from political crises. The more certain the prospect of defeat in elections became, the more necessary it was to provoke a political crisis.

A victorious little war seemed like an attractive way to increase the popularity of the authorities, to crush the opposition, and at the same time perhaps, to postpone the elections and get rid of the faint-hearted within the government's own ranks.

As military actions began in the country for the second time in little more than a year, the nerves of many "democratic" politicians predictably gave way. Gaidar and the majority of the Russia's Choice parliamentary fraction began to protest. Against all their expectations, they found themselves in the same camp with leftists and Communists. A rally on Pushkin Square on 12 December was attended by everyone from supporters of Anpilov to followers of Gaidar. But red flags predominated, and the Duma liberals felt acutely uncomfortable.

Of the deputies to the State Duma, those who were most active in denouncing the war were the Communists and the centrist "Yabloko" fraction around Grigory Yavlinsky. But neither group was prepared to head an extraparliamentary antiwar movement. The social democratic politicians generally preferred to remain silent, and did not show up at demonstrations. The leadership of Russia's largest trade union federation, the FNPR, could not even make up its mind to condemn the bombing of Chechnya, limiting itself to expressions of "concern." The antiwar campaign was initiated by radical democratic and pacifist groups, by the Party of Labor, and by Trotskyists and anarchists.

Not for the first time, Yeltsin was supported by ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. Another person to declare his solidarity with the government was Alexander Barkashov, leader of Russian National Unity, the country's best-known neo-fascist group. In 1993 the presence of Barkashov's followers at the "White House" was enough for state television to accuse all supporters of the parliament of "fascism." A year and a half later, Barkashov was speaking on state television in support of Yeltsin. Meanwhile the "democratic" mass media, which in October 1993 had been united in supporting Yeltsin, were subjected to fierce attacks from the authorities.

History is an honest judge. Can it really be true that the people who a little over a year ago fought for a super-presidential constitution, for unlimited executive powers, and for the use of tanks did not suspect that once set in motion, the mechanism would not stop of its own accord? For some psychologically incomprehensible reason these people were sure that the crushing of the parliament, the shooting of demonstrators, and the contempt shown for the law would

have no bearing on their own rights. They saw nothing reprehensible in the fact that troops were opening fire with artillery in their own capital, nor in the fact that the representative organs of government had been turned into a pointless appendage of an uncontrolled executive power. It was only when these people saw the tanks in Chechnya on their television screens that they became outraged at the violence and arbitrariness of the authorities.

It is paradoxical that this time, unlike the case in 1993, Yeltsin has acted strictly within the framework of his constitutional powers. The leading defenders of these powers once included people like Gaidar. They, of course, imagined that these provisions would be used only against leftists. But justice triumphed. The time has at last come to recognize that to a police baton all heads are equal.

The scenario for the Chechen crisis is not an original one. The authorities are using old methods which proved themselves thoroughly in 1993. The level of tension and violence is gradually increased; street actions are provoked; hysterical emotions are incited in the camp of the opposition. The only difference is that in October 1993 the coercive measures were employed in Moscow, and the political crisis unfolded there as well. This time the two parallel processes are going forward at a distance from one another. The tanks are on the move in Chechnya, and Grozny is under attack, but the political hysteria is bursting out in the Russian capital.

It has been striking to observe how Gaidar and other liberals from the president's circle, who themselves took part in preparing earlier provocations, have proven so helpless when the provocations have been directed against them. They have been driven swiftly and unerringly into the same trap in which earlier parliamentary oppositions became enmeshed.

The need for a constant struggle against internal and external enemies is part and parcel of authoritarianism. This is why former allies and fellow-travelers of the regime have sooner or later become its victims. The circle has continually contracted. First the Communists were defeated; then wavering democrats were thrown overboard; now the turn has come of the privatizing "Westernizers" themselves.

The task of seizing property has been successfully fulfilled. The ideology of liberalism, which allowed the regime to create a mass base for itself, has been totally exhausted and discredited. This has made the ideologues themselves unnecessary ballast for the regime. First, these people were forced out of the corridors of power into the lobbies of a decorative parliament. Now that even this parliament has become a burden to the authorities, the ideologues of liberalism are threatened with a final political catastrophe.

"Serious people" understand that the time for seizing property had come to an end, and that the era of consolidation has begun. It is therefore time to replace liberal slogans with conservative ones. The idea of change is being replaced with the idea of order, and human rights by a police state.

The situation is complicated, however, by the presence of democratic institutions. On the one hand, the new social order is incompatible with democracy, while on the other, open dictatorship is impossible as well. Moreover, a certain heed must be paid to the West. The organs of repression, meanwhile, are unprepared for really broad and systematic work. They are capable only of episodic actions — raids, assaults, and blockades.

With democracy impermissible, and dictatorship impossible, the regime has been forced constantly to create democratic structures, and then when they have fulfilled their immediate purpose, to abolish them. If these structures were to survive and acquire strength, they would be dangerous and destructive for Russian nomenklatura capitalism. The Duma is less dangerous than was the old Supreme Soviet, but it has begun to take on an independent significance as well.

Cast off by the regime, Gaidar and other liberal ideologues are now concentrating on their work as Duma deputies, and despite their own best intentions have finished up in the role of defenders of parliamentarism. They understand very well that the use of force in Chechnya is to be the starting point for a new settling of accounts in Moscow. But like the members of the former Supreme Soviet, they are merely reacting to the initiatives of the executive power, and are playing according to its rules. As a result, they are bringing their own downfall nearer with every step they take.

Appearing now in the unaccustomed role of an opposition, the right-wing liberals are repeating all the errors of Yeltsin's earlier adversaries. By contrast, the leaders of the Communist Party, after suffering two defeats, appear to have learnt a good deal. They appreciate that you cannot frighten the authorities with hysterical declarations and with little gatherings on Pushkin Square. Might the Communist Party, which is rapidly gaining strength in the Russian provinces, act as a democratic alternative along the lines of the post-Communist parties in Poland and Hungary, which emerged as the force that made it possible to prevent a slide toward a new conservative dictatorship?

The crisis in Chechnya has confronted the Communists with a new political situation. They are now losing some of their allies in the "patriotic" camp. But in speaking out against the war, they are once again acquiring their own face as the leading party of the left. □



# U.S. Government Agent at Center of Charges Against Malcolm X's Daughter

by Michael Livingston and Vera Wigglesworth

As the U.S. government escalates its attacks on social services and civil liberties in the 1990s it sometimes carries out these attacks in seemingly strange and unexpected ways. But seen within the context of its ultimate agenda of rolling back the gains of the civil rights movement in order to return African Americans to the status of a pariah caste to further divide working people, the frequency of events such as prosecutions against prominent Blacks begins to make more sense. Take for example, the drama that has unfolded in the courts of Minneapolis.

Qubilah Shabazz, the 34-year-old daughter of slain African American leader El Hajj Malik El Shabazz (Malcolm X), was indicted on January 12, 1995. A federal grand jury charged her with making eight long-distance phone calls to a Twin Cities (Minneapolis and St. Paul) man in July and August 1994 to set up a murder-for-hire scheme. Shabazz, who moved from New York to the Twin Cities in September 1994, then allegedly gave the "hit man" a partial payment of less than \$1,000 (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 13, 1995). On Wednesday, January 18, Shabazz appeared in federal court in St. Paul to plead "not guilty" to the charges. She is currently out on \$10,000 bail and, as one of the conditions set by the court, must remain in Minnesota. The government is offering her no protection (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 19, 1995). If found guilty, Shabazz could face up to 90 years in prison and up to \$2.25 million in fines (*New York Times*, January 13, 1995).

### The Government's Agent Provocateur

The key to the government's case is alleged hit man Michael Fitzpatrick. It was Fitzpatrick who notified the FBI that Shabazz wanted to assassinate Louis Farrakhan. And it was Fitzpatrick, a paid government informer, who, in collaboration with the FBI, collected 20 audiotapes and one videotape of a meeting between himself and Shabazz. These tapes and a statement the FBI got while questioning Shabazz in December constitute the only other evidence against Shabazz. She did not have a lawyer present when she gave her statement (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 20, 1995).

While much remains a mystery, what is known about Fitzpatrick and the tapes casts doubt on the government's charges and points to government entrapment. Fitzpatrick was a high school classmate of Shabazz at the United Nations school in New York. In 1978, at the age

of 18, he was convicted of trying to bomb a New York City bookstore that sold Russian language titles. High school classmates remember Fitzpatrick as a person who brought guns to school and showed friends his homemade bombs. After being convicted of the attempted bookstore bombing, Fitzpatrick became a government informer who was key in the 1978 conviction of two Jewish Defense League militants who plotted to blow up the Egyptian tourist office in New York. *Newsday* (in a story reprinted in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 14, 1995) found that a transcript of a conversation between Fitzpatrick and the two men convicted of the crime revealed that it was Fitzpatrick who said he could obtain the explosives, knew how to use them, and made suggestions about how to carry out the scheme. The conversation was recorded by Fitzpatrick while he was wearing an FBI recording device.

After the Jewish Defense League trial, Fitzpatrick entered the federal Witness Protection Program. The program gave him a new identity and moved him to Minneapolis. He returned to New York in the early 1980s, where another former friend of his reported that Fitzpatrick claimed to work for the Revolutionary Youth Movement of the Communist Workers Party (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 14, 1995).

Most of Fitzpatrick's activities during the last 15 years are obscure. Public records collected on the basis of both his identities and social security numbers (see *City Pages*, February 1, 1995) reveal that Fitzpatrick has moved extensively in the last 15 years. He has been married twice and divorced. He declared bankruptcy in 1993, listing the cost of three cocaine treatment facilities as debts.

Of particular interest is a January 19, 1986, arrest in Minneapolis for driving while intoxicated (DWI). The arrest report states that in the course of patting Fitzpatrick down, the police discovered cocaine in his pocket. He was arrested for DWI and probable cause narcotics. An undated handwritten note at the bottom of the arrest report reads, "Viol. drug ordinance dismissed." No reason is given for the dismissal. Given what happened later that year, it is quite likely that either Fitzpatrick struck a deal, trading his services for freedom, or the FBI wanted this effective agent provocateur free to carry on his macabre activities in its sinister behind-the-scenes service.

Later that year, Fitzpatrick turned up as a member of a Twin Cities anarchist group called the Back Room Anarchist Collective. The approximately two- to three-month period that he was involved with the collective is perhaps the best-known period of Fitzpatrick's shadowy past. Fitzpatrick brought a shotgun to the Anarchist Bookstore (where the collective was based). Unbeknownst to Fitzpatrick, other members of the collective removed the gun. Police mysteriously arrived shortly thereafter looking for a "runaway teen." They went directly to the closet where Fitzpatrick had placed the weapon. When they didn't find it, they left (*City Pages*, February 1, 1995). Members of the group at the time recall that Fitzpatrick tried to get them drunk and encouraged them to shoot people or spray a polling place with bullets. When members of the collective argued against this he suggested that they throw human feces at a polling place (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 23, 1995).

Fitzpatrick was suspected by some members of the anarchist group of being an informer and provocateur. Fitzpatrick, while not successful in getting the Back Room Collective to engage in violence, sowed dissension and conflict in the group, which had previously been stable (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 23, 1995). Fitzpatrick was kicked out of the group, but not before he significantly damaged it.

In November of 1993, Fitzpatrick was arrested and charged with possession of cocaine, which carries a penalty of up to five years in prison. The person arrested with Fitzpatrick has stated that they were both cocaine addicts, who spent up to \$1,200 a week on cocaine (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 14, 1995). Fitzpatrick's case is still pending.

### The Set-Up

According to former roommates, Fitzpatrick claimed to have dated Qubilah Shabazz for a short time (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 17, 1995). After they got in touch with each other in the summer of 1994 (it is unclear who actually initiated the contact, the government alleges that Shabazz contacted Fitzpatrick) friends of Shabazz report that she started to talk about moving to Minneapolis to get married. The man she said she was going to marry — Michael Fitzpatrick (*New York Times*, January 22, 1995). It is likely that Fitzpatrick, faced with cocaine possession charges, either proposed



this scheme to his FBI — or else they, knowing his past links with Qubilah Shabazz and knowing his “interpersonal skills,” proposed it to him. After moving to Minneapolis, Shabazz apparently had difficulty getting in touch with Fitzpatrick. Roommates report she repeatedly called and left messages for him in September. The roommates had kicked Fitzpatrick out of the apartment (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 17, 1995).

A key piece of evidence against Shabazz is a videotape made of Shabazz and Fitzpatrick in a hotel room in Minneapolis. A federal official with direct knowledge of the videotape (quoted in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 18, 1995) said: “He [Fitzpatrick] talks at length and she listens. She’s not pleased. She’s coming up with objections, reasons why he shouldn’t do it. He’s talking about ‘righteous’ sanctions to have Minister Farrakhan killed. She objects that innocent people could be killed. She’s worried that there might be retaliation — by Farrakhan’s people against the Jews.” The official spoke only on the condition of anonymity.

### The Defense

A skilled legal defense team has been assembled for Qubilah Shabazz. Famed civil rights attorney William Kunstler (who defended the Chicago Seven and the Wounded Knee defendants) is part of the team, as is Larry Levanthal. A local attorney, Levanthal worked with Kunstler on the Wounded Knee case and is well known for defending Native Americans. Scott Tilsen and Dan Scott, federal public defenders, are also defending Shabazz. Participating on the defense team is former independent presidential candidate Ron Daniels (who is currently director of the Center for Constitutional Rights) and Percy Sutton. Sutton was Malcolm X’s lawyer. All of the defense team members are providing their services free to Shabazz (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 19, 1995). As of this writing, no political defense campaign has been organized.

The defense has suggested in the press that Shabazz was entrapped and that the real objective was to divide the Black community and undermine Farrakhan. “When you get a little sophisticated about this, you realize that Farrakhan is on the firing line,” Kunstler said. “They’re worried about him. He’s getting too big for his britches. This Shabazz thing is all part of the same thing.” (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 20, 1995.) [It is noteworthy that the time when Fitzpatrick, after his cocaine bust, contacted Qubilah Shabazz was the same time when there was massive media publicity around Farrakhan, including publicity about a statement by Betty Shabazz, Malcolm’s widow and Qubilah’s mother, blaming Farrakhan for his role in Malcolm’s assassination. It was at that very time that Fitzpatrick went to work on this “assassination of Farrakhan” scheme. It is also noteworthy that just when this burst of media publicity over Farrakhan’s anti-Semitism erupted, Farrakhan had begun promoting a plan

for a 1995 march on Washington by one million Black males.]

### The Prosecution

The U.S. attorney who brought the charges against Shabazz is David Lillehaug. Lillehaug is a Harvard Law School graduate who at the age of 30 was an adviser to Walter Mondale during his 1984 run for the presidency. In 1990 Lillehaug was a key adviser to Paul Wellstone during Wellstone’s successful run for U.S. Senate. It was Wellstone, considered the most “left” member of the Senate, who recommended Lillehaug for the U.S. attorney’s job. Within the legal community Lillehaug is considered very bright, well organized, and thorough. He is rumored to have ambitions for higher office, possibly governor or U.S. senator. Lillehaug will not be the attorney who actually tries the case. He has given that task to Jeanne Graham, chief of his violent crime division, and Andrew Dunne, who came to Lillehaug’s office from the prestigious Minneapolis law firm of Faegre and Benson (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 23, 1995). Lillehaug notified the Justice Department of the case with three “urgent reports.” Urgent reports are required for high-profile cases. Lillehaug sent the first such report to Washington on November 3 (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 17, 1995). We may assume from this that the Justice Department both knew about the upcoming indictment and permitted it to go forward.

### In Solidarity with Qubilah Shabazz

In responding to the case, many African American leaders have voiced support for Shabazz and mistrust of the government. Speaking at a rally in New York’s Riverside Church on Tuesday, January 31, Coretta Scott King said: “Unable to discredit him [Malcolm X] in life, those who would disparage his legacy now seek to stigmatize his family and undermine their effort to promote his teachings.” The wife of slain African American leader Martin Luther King also told the crowd that “we stand in unshakable solidarity with Qubilah’s family” (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 1, 1995).

In an act of sisterly solidarity and basic human compassion, a legal fund has been started by the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, a group founded and chaired by Jewell Jackson McCabe. Others who were expected to join in the effort include the Rev. Bernice King, daughter of Coretta Scott King and Martin Luther King, Jr.; Reena Evers, daughter of Medgar Evers; Rebecca Walker, daughter of African American author Alice Walker; Santita Jackson, daughter of the Rev. Jesse Jackson; and Lisa Jones, daughter of Amiri Baraka. Ms. McCabe is the daughter of pioneer Black broadcaster Hal Jackson. She was quoted as stating: “These peers can speak to the agonies that Qubilah and her sisters have gone through. They knew the realities of their mothers trying to shelter them ... and people trying to exploit them” (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 25, 1995).

Earl Shinhoster, interim executive director of the NAACP, voiced suspicion of federal authorities while declining to say Qubilah Shabazz had been set up by the government. Commenting in Minneapolis on Thursday, January 19 (where he was visiting to discuss plans for the NAACP’s annual convention which will be held in Minneapolis this summer), Shinhoster stated:

Deliberately-plotted government attempts to destabilize leadership within the African-American community happened as a deliberate policy design. That was not a figment of somebody’s imagination. It happened. Any African-American who does not believe that there is still a residue of commissions [and] intelligence gathering for the sake of control is not living in the real world. [*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 20, 1995.]

Perhaps the most interesting response came from Louis Farrakhan himself. Speaking in Chicago Tuesday evening, January 17, to a crowd estimated at 2,500, Farrakhan criticized the federal government for causing discord among Blacks and plotting the death of such leaders as Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X. Farrakhan called on the Black community to close ranks and demand that the government open all files concerned both with the Shabazz case and the assassination of Malcolm X. He also asked Blacks to pressure the government to release her and stated, “It is easy to send a trained setup artist to manipulate her” (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 18, 1995).

### What’s at Stake

The key question everyone should ask is “why?” Why did the government bring these charges against Qubilah Shabazz, a struggling and poor single mother? If it is an intentional plot to discredit and undermine Farrakhan, as the Shabazz defense maintains, there is no reason to believe that it would not serve the government’s interests. Even though it would be an indirect way of undermining Farrakhan (a more direct method would be to attempt to frame Farrakhan or one of his followers), the confusion and suspicion such a plot could sow would be beneficial to a government intent on atomizing movements of the oppressed.

A more plausible motive for this attack on Qubilah Shabazz is to attack the legacy of Malcolm X by taking the spotlight off the government’s responsibility for Malcolm’s assassination. The government exploited Farrakhan’s repeated denunciations of Malcolm during the last year of Malcolm’s life to deflect popular consideration of the government’s role in his assassination. The use of the government’s agent provocateur to frame up Qubilah parallels the infiltration of the Nation of Islam by government “Cointelpro” agents in the 1960s. The frame-up of Qubilah Shabazz is the government’s 1990s version of pinning the blame for Malcolm’s assassination on “internecine feuds” between Malcolm’s followers and the Nation of Islam. In a cruel twist, Qubilah Shabazz’s next court appearance is scheduled

*Continued on page 30*



## How We Saw the Hayward LPA Hearings

# An Inspiring Meeting — It Shows People Want Action

## Interview with Ruth and Asher Harer

*The following is an account of the Labor Party Advocates First-Regional Hearing: Program for the Labor Party, January 14, 1995, held in Hayward, California, at Carpenters Union Local 713. The interview by telephone was transcribed for BIDOM by Lee DeNoyer.*

**Ruth:** Carpenters Local 713 acted as the hosts. However, all the Carpenters locals in the whole Bay district were listed as supporting LPA, and they also gave \$1,000 to LPA. They supplied food and a lovely meeting hall. They had 300 chairs set out and there were always standees. They announced that 375 had registered and more people came in after the registration was closed. The total must have been more than 400; some said nearly 500. And that was in spite of a week of rains and storms and all kinds of bad weather in California. The meeting ran from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. They had to close then, because another event was scheduled in the hall.

### Open Mike Through Lunch Hour

What they did — because there was not enough time in the end for the open mike session — was to take up a suggestion from the floor that the open mike be kept going through the lunch hour. So while some people were waiting in line to be served or sitting down at the tables to eat, others were speaking on the open mike. The whole idea was to have a hearing where rank and file workers could say what they thought a labor party program should include. In the end, I think anybody who wanted to say something got a chance to say it for at least three minutes.

**Asher:** By the way, I and a friend of mine were official observers to these hearings from the Pensioners Club of the ILWU (International Longshore and Warehouse Union). There are 3,000 ILWU pensioners in the Bay Area. I took my three minutes, and gave greetings from the Pensioners Club and expressed my support. The International itself hasn't taken a position on LPA, although the last ILWU caucus (which is like a mini-convention) took a position in favor of a workers party.

### An Angry Meeting

We should say something about the general atmosphere of the meeting. It was an *angry*, *angry* meeting. And it represented a broad spectrum. There were people from all sorts of unions and groups. Latino groups. More so than ever. Gay groups, women's groups, teachers, environmentalists, etc. Many young people. They all got up and said, "We've got to do something; we cannot continue supporting the Republicans

and Democrats." One of them repeated something that has been said previously, that the difference between the Republicans and Democrats is like the difference between a terrible headache and a terrible toothache. Neither one can do you much good. And there were a lot of talks along that line. We've got to break with them. We can't go on this way. And I think this impressed the people on the platform.

**Ruth:** This was very different from December, a month ago, when there was a meeting here and many naysayers said, Now is not the time for a labor party. At this meeting there was nobody saying that.

### Seven Labor Councils Co-sponsored

The meeting was chaired by Stan Smith of the San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council. He had greetings from co-sponsoring councils: Alameda County Building Trades Council, Alameda County Central Labor Council, Bay Counties District Council of Carpenters, Napa-Solano Counties Building Trades Council, San Francisco Building Trades Council, San Francisco Labor Council, and San Mateo Labor Council. Later he announced that there were people there from as far down as San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Inyo-Kern County. There was an official from the Santa Barbara—San Luis Obispo Counties Building and Construction Trades Council (Andrew J. Moynagh). Present from the Los Angeles LPA were Kathleen O'Nan and Dave Campbell, the chapter organizer and chapter chair, staffing a table with T-shirts and buttons all the way through. (They sold over \$600 worth.)

There was a lot of anger, a lot of pressure — people saying, We're disgusted; we don't want any more of this. No more support of Democrats. They want action; they want something to do.

### Labor and Global Production

One of the main speakers was a professor from U.C. Berkeley, Harley Shaiken, who talked about labor and global production. He pointed out many things about the global economy and NAFTA, and he also attacked the people who call labor rights "protectionism."

Tony Mazzocchi, national organizer of LPA, also spoke. One thing he emphasized was that

there would be a founding convention of a labor party in the coming year.

**Asher:** Then we heard from Jack Henning, executive secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation. He called it a very impressive assembly in the name of the labor party, the most impressive conference in recent history. He said that the reply to global capitalism is global unionism, and that the essential nature of the Democratic Party was compromising.

Henning went into a whole history of the union-based labor party in San Francisco in the early 1900s. (Incidentally, it was affiliated to the Second International. The drawback was that that was the anti-Chinese time. Somebody later corrected Henning, saying it's true that labor organized its own party then, but don't forget about the racist aspect of it.) Henning also said that you've got to begin at the local level of government and start to identify candidates with the labor party. And he added: "Labor is a beggar at the table of wealth. That must end."

### Reach Out to Non-Union Workers

An especially interesting statement by Henning was this: "The labor party that we are building cannot have only trade union members. We must reach out to other workers." That's new. Henning hinted that he's still ambivalent about the Democrats. He said: "We can support and vote for candidates endorsed by the AFL-CIO, but the AFL-CIO does not dictate our policy." That's a way of leaving the door open to vote for Democrats in the future.

Another speaker was labor attorney Victor Van Bourg. He has been representing unions in the area for at least 20 years. He gave a resounding speech, harking back, it seemed, to the radicalism of his earlier days. Here are some things he said: "Bosses believe that workers should not control their own destiny, because that would be bad for profits. But this whole century has been a battle by them against labor to increase profits at the expense of the workers ... We must repeal Taft-Hartley [and he got big applause for that], and we must have a return to the secondary boycott [big applause again]... A labor party will be the spearhead of government, not the captive of government... Labor should have its own foreign policy... *We are not the middle class, we are the working class.*" That's how he ended his speech, and he got great applause, some people even stood up for that.

Leo Seidlitz, the LPA organizer for Northern California, said some things very much to the point: "We are fighting the bosses the world over, and we would be fools not to defend ourselves at home politically through a labor party... People are waiting for us to lead, and if we don't do it, the boss will eat us alive... The labor party must be built within the next year.[!!] We in the labor movement have the ability to fill the vacuum politically."

### Jerry Brown "Testifies" on Labor Party

There was one prominent Democratic politician who testified about a labor party. That was Jerry



## LPA Interim Executive Committee Meets

The first meeting of the Interim Executive Committee of Labor Party Advocates (LPA) was held in St. Louis, Missouri, on January 21, with an attendance of about 65, including local leaders from a broad range of unions across the country. There was unanimous consensus at the meeting to go forward with an LPA-called founding convention for a labor party in the United States. No specific date was set for the convention, with proposals ranging from October 1995 to May 1996. The site is still to be determined.

A committee of 13 was designated to work on determining the time and place for the convention. The committee includes one representative each from the three national unions now supporting LPA: the Oil, Chemi-

cal and Atomic Workers, the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, and the United Electrical Workers. The other 10 committee members are leaders in many different unions (such as transit workers, teamsters, carpenters and other building trades, machinists, nurses, and federal, state, county, and municipal workers). The committee includes at least two African Americans, two Latinos, and four women, two of whom are local leaders of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). Three of the 13 committee members are from California, where the labor party movement is gaining significant momentum. The Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, and Southwest are also represented.

Brown, the former California governor. He was given a fulsome introduction by Stan Smith. But Brown spoke in a radical vein. He said, "If I did so much [as governor], how come we're so screwed up?" Also: "In the last election the labor movement spent \$20 million in supporting Democratic candidates, but is getting no dividends whatsoever."

Brown said he talked to Clinton recently and told Clinton what he thought, and that Clinton didn't have any answers. He said Clinton never does have any answers.

Brown went into the question of unemployment rates being tied to interest rates. He said it is considered unnatural (by the corporations and the government) if unemployment falls below 6 percent. That's policy. To keep at least 6 percent unemployed. If there isn't a big reserve army of the unemployed, of at least 6 percent, inflation starts. (Of course the 6 percent figure doesn't mean much, because of all the people they don't count when they compile their unemployment statistics.) Brown went on to say that actually the unemployed are very good for capitalism; they're saving capitalism. He said: "The unemployed and the hungry should be remunerated for saving capitalism. But they are called welfare bums!" He said capitalists must have unemployment; it's part of their whole system.

There was a similar column by Russell Baker in the *New York Times* on January 17, about how capitalism needs people on welfare ("Those Vital Paupers"). It's interesting that these establishment figures, Brown and Baker, are suddenly talking like radicals about the capitalist system.

Brown also made a point about how the economy does better by putting people into prisons, and went on about the growth of "the correction industry." He says they're now on the stock market, the prison corporations, competing with one another, and they want to privatize all the prisons. He said a man earning \$12,000 a year earns for the corporations \$24,000 — if he's in prison. That's going to be a growing industry.

Opportunist capitalist politicians like Brown see something brewing in this labor party movement. They want to get in on the ground floor. Why? They want to operate the gas pedal, so we won't go too fast. Eventually they want to control the steering wheel. We can't let that happen!

### Testimony from the Floor

After the main "testimony," people started speaking from the floor, and the general tenor of their remarks was to back up what had been said. Many of them brought out statistics and specific examples of what the corporations are doing in Latin America and the Far East, including material about Reebok (which makes shoes in the Far East, paying nothing in wages, but charging big prices here).

It was a determined meeting. Everyone who got up from the floor said, We can't have any more of this. We can't stand for this. We aren't going to do it any more.

**Ruth:** After the main speakers that were listed the program called for testimony from invited organizations. They had a speaker from the A. Phillip Randolph Institute: a Black man from SEIU Local 790, which represents city employees. They had someone from the Asian and Pacific American Labor Alliance. Two different women spoke for the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), one from Sacramento and one from San Francisco. The latter heads the Labor Studies program at San Francisco State University. It turns out that she's a Britisher, who lived with the British Labour Party for many, many years, which gave her her first ideas about a labor party.

They also had speakers from the Federation of Retired Union Members (FORUM), the Labor Coalition for Public Works Jobs (Jerry Acosta from Los Angeles), and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement.

### Latinos Speak Up

Many Latinos spoke up in support of a labor party. I think it has to do with the fight against Proposition 187. They were very outspoken. Ed Rosario, a member of the pressmen's union,

which just went through a big strike here, is an active supporter of LPA. Another Latino unionist was from SEIU Local 790.

Howard Wallace of the Lesbian-Gay Labor Alliance gave a particularly good presentation. And this kind of testimony from invited organizations went on and on, with three minutes apiece.

Then they had what they called scheduled testimony: there was Labor Neighbor, the people who worked on the single-payer health plan initiative on the California ballot in the November elections. (It got 2 million votes, although it didn't pass.) And they had a speaker from the Alameda chapter of the California Teachers Association (CTA), Gretchen Mackler, and Millie Phillips, president of an IBEW chapter; and Gerda Miller from the Gray Panthers; and Cameron Austin from the Decatur, Illinois, UAW local that is on strike against Caterpillar; and Karen Talbot from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Also, there was a woman from the Pile Drivers Union Local 34, who talked about worker health and safety. Like her, all the speakers brought in various issues which they believe should be part of the platform of a labor party. They all described how they are under attack, and emphasized that we have to fight back on the political arena.

### Women in Nontraditional Jobs

The woman from Sacramento CLUW is a member of the Operating Engineers union, so there were several women in nontraditional jobs speaking up. Also there was somebody from the Jobs for Youth Campaign and a representative from the Green Party, who brought greetings.

The whole general idea was, We have to get together in the community with all these different groups. They need us, and we need them. It was a very inspiring meeting.

I don't know how many people signed up to join LPA, but when you registered you were given a sign-up form. Also a packet with reprints about LPA, including Ralph Nader on the LPA, and the *Toledo Blade* article about the December 10-11 Labor Educational Conference in Toledo, Ohio, and a little article from the *San Francisco Examiner* of a few weeks ago, headlined "Labor Leaders Question Alliance to Democrats," with the subhead: "Move to Form a Third Party Is Gaining Interest in Bay Area." It was all very positive.

We forgot to mention Walter Johnson, secretary treasurer of the San Francisco Labor Council, who has been supporting LPA all the way through. He was there, although he wasn't listed on the program.

If anyone had stood up at that meeting and said, Wait a minute now, we still have friends in the Democratic Party, let's not break away completely, they would have been booed off the platform. That audience of over 400 wouldn't have taken it. They would have said, Sit down!

Someone said at the meeting, There's a powder keg here. Somebody has to ignite it. □



# For Launching a Labor Party

by Hayden Perry

In a union hall in Hayward, California, roughly 500 working men and women met on January 14 to help set American labor on a new political course. Rejecting the Democratic Party as the twin of the Republicans, these union members and leaders proposed to challenge both parties by launching an independent labor party.

### Not a New Idea

This is not a new idea. For years it has been pointed out that labor in every other industrial country has its own party. Tony Mazzocchi, a leader of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers (OCAW), has been proselytizing for a labor party for the last several years through the organization Labor Party Advocates (LPA). He has found it slow going to assemble the forces necessary to actually launch the new party.

Now with the November elections, and the Republicans coming in with Newt Gingrich and the Contract "on" America, Washington has delivered an electric shock that has jolted even conservative labor leaders out of their comfortable chairs. Every gain that labor has made in the last 60 years is in danger. Clinton and the Democrats have made their position clear. They are riding with the Republicans on a tide of reaction that threatens to engulf not only the poor, the elderly, the marginalized but also the better-off workers in the union movement.

### Union Leaders Alarmed

The alarm and concern felt by union leaders was demonstrated in their call for the LPA conference. Seven labor councils sponsored the meeting, among them building trades councils and central labor councils in San Francisco and cities and towns around Central California. (See the accompanying article by Ruth and Asher Harer for a full listing of the sponsors.)

The speakers' roster included many of the major labor leaders of the state. John F. Henning, secretary-treasurer of the California Federation of Labor, set the positive tone of the meeting. He pointed out that labor has put its own people in office in the past. In 1901 the Union Labor Party elected Eugene Smith, a member of the Musicians Union, to be mayor of San Francisco. In 1905 all 18 members of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors were members of the Union Labor Party. In 1909, P.H.

McCarthy, a union carpenter, was elected mayor along with 12 union members on the Board of Supervisors.

Prominent among the speakers was Jerry Brown, former governor of California and a national figure in the Democratic Party. He spoke in a very radical way, describing himself as a "recovering politician," and claimed to be testifying in support of a labor party. He scored labor's relations with Clinton. Labor had asked Clinton to support five pro-labor issues, including a higher minimum wage and a law banning "striker replacements" (scabs). After pumping \$20 million into Democratic coffers, labor ended up with a lousy score, Brown said: Clinton — 5, Labor — 0. He advised the assembled unionists, "Don't take it any more. Mobilize. Fight back!"

### Reaching Out to the Community

Dozens of union leaders and community activists took the floor to sketch out the dimensions and platform of the proposed labor party. First, it must not be limited to union members. Welfare rights groups, senior citizens, gay and lesbian groups, and members of all minority nationalities must find a home in the labor party.

The labor party must also embrace the cause of women: for freedom of choice, for equal pay, for affirmative action, said Gretchen Mackler, president of the Alameda Teachers Association. She added: "We must counter the threat to public schools and oppose the voucher program."

Several speakers pointed out that a labor party would facilitate the union's major task: recruiting the millions of workers who are unorganized. To do this, we must repeal the Taft-Hartley Act, they declared.

### Foreign and Latino Unionists

Visitors from abroad strengthened the arguments for a U.S. labor party. Simon deJong, a member of the Canadian House of Commons from the New Democratic Party (Canada's union-based labor party), described how that party started in Saskatchewan and spread from province to province, finally becoming a national force that played a major role in bringing universal health care to the Canadian people.

Ricardo Teixeira, a teacher from Brazil, told how Brazilians had formed their own inde-

pendent Workers Party, the PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores), in the late 1970s and early '80s. Before that, he said, they had only the capitalist parties, "one party of yes and the other of yes, sir." Now the Workers Party can deliver a resounding "No!"

There was significant input from several members of the Latino community. They sounded the alarm over passage of Proposition 187, which seeks to stigmatize and illegitimize workers from south of the border. But they did not limit their concern to this issue.

Frank Marco Del Campo, president of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LACLAA), said: "Politics is more than just electing people. It involves issues of civil rights, affirmative action, etc.... We in LACLAA will be firm allies in building a labor party in the U.S." It is predicted that Latinos will soon constitute 25 percent of California's population.

### Call for Global Unionism

GATT and NAFTA were condemned by several speakers as compacts by the rich to rob the poor, on both sides of the border. John F. Henning responded to this international threat by declaring, "Our reply to global capitalism must be global unionism."

The 500 participants adjourned in a very upbeat mood. No negative notes had been struck, even though an open mike invited every participant to address the assembly.

No one expressed such tired old bromides as, "We must vote for the lesser evil, the Democrats, to defeat the greater evil, the Republicans," or, "A labor party is a great idea, but now is not the time."

Rather, these unionists seemed to realize that the labor party is an idea whose time has come. While it remains to be seen how far the old-line labor leaders at the head of this effort will go with it, in the weeks after the Hayward conference they continued to promote the idea strongly. They said they would be sending reports of the Hayward conference to other central labor councils around the country. And they apparently intend to keep the ball rolling toward a national LPA convention as the next historic step. □



# Campaigning to Stop Violence Against Women

by Evelyn Sell

Pioneer women's liberation activists raised the issue of violence against women in the late 1960s — many years before the media called attention to events such as the assaults against women at the 1991 Tailhook convention, or the current focus on domestic abuse.

A workshop on "Karate and Self Defense" took place at the first Women's Liberation Conference in Michigan, held June 14, 1969, on Wayne State University campus. The conference brochure explained, "We are afraid to go out alone at night — because we're women..." Such workshops and classes were organized by women's liberation groups around the country. The Southern Female Rights Union (headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana) included in its program the following:

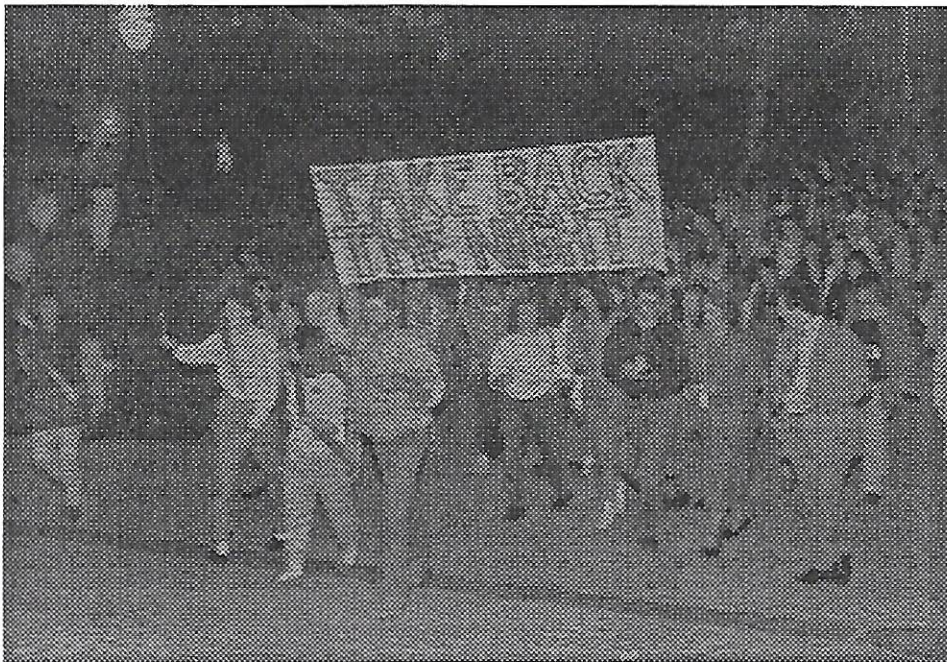
We demand free self-defense instruction for females of all ages in the public schools. Considering the heinous crimes by men against thousands of females every year, something must be done. The majority of these "sex" crimes are committed by men known to the victims — husbands, lovers, "friends"... Crimes against women will stop only when women are no longer helpless and defenseless, and no longer dependent on men economically and socially for their protection. Karate is the most practical method for learning the physical and psychic responses to attack.

Self-defense was discussed by feminists attending the November 21–23, 1969, Northeastern Congress to Unite Women, held in New York City. Cell 16, publishers of the magazine *A Journal of Female Liberation*, organized self-defense classes in Cambridge. The Women's Liberation Front in Austin, Texas, was another feminist group involved in self-defense classes during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Learning physical self-protection was only one of the tactics pursued to cope with the multitude of problems involved in rape. In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s and 1980s, many successful campaigns were carried out to improve the treatment of rape victims by medical personnel and police officers, to change court procedures and legal statutes, to establish rape crisis centers and hotlines, and to counter sexist myths (for example, women "really want it!" and "no truly nice girl gets raped").

In an article published in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* (No. 63, November 1989), I noted:

The record of the past twenty years shows what strategies have been most effectively utilized to address women's needs regarding rape. Instead of getting trapped in the pitfalls of vigilante groups or attacks on individual rapists, most women's rights supporters employed united action campaigns against those institutions in our society which encourage and perpetuate the abuse of women. Instead of relying



"Take Back the Night" Demonstration at UCLA

on the police for protection, women indicted the police for their sexist practices, and increasingly learned how to protect themselves. This helped undercut the traditional police tactic of using rape as an excuse to harass oppressed minorities (as happened to Black men at the University of Pennsylvania in 1973)...

There has been significant progress in the efforts to aid rape victims — but there is a continuing need to prevent sexual assaults against women. The February 1990 issue of *Together*, a feminist newsmagazine published by students at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) was devoted to "Rape on Campus." Articles covered student actions such as "Take Back the Night" marches and vigils, prevention tactics, legal options for rape survivors, services available to Black women who have been assaulted, university policies, date rape, a critical review of how television movies depict rape and its consequences, and resources such as self-defense workshops and a rape survivors support group. The concerns of UCLA students have been echoed on campuses across the nation.

An April 23, 1991, article in the *Los Angeles Times* noted a grim reality in its headline: "Date-Rape Gains Attention After Years as Taboo Topic." One of the outstanding victories of the women's liberation movement has been its success in breaking through the silences and lies which make women afraid or ashamed to reveal problems. Exposure is a precondition for a vigorous struggle. The facts need to be repeated

over and over, however, in order to maintain everyone's consciousness and to provide a firm foundation for battles still required. While we welcome what has been accomplished, we need to assert and reassert the serious situation which still exists. The June 1990 issue of UCLA's *Together* reported:

IT happens every six minutes to every third woman in Los Angeles County — most often during the day.

35% of ITS victims are African American women.

IT is rape.

According to the Rosa Parks Sexual Assault Crisis Center, South Central Los Angeles has the highest number of reported cases of sexual assault in the state.

The U.S. Justice Department reported 207,610 rapes in 1991 — but acknowledged that rape is a dramatically underreported crime. Government officials have repeatedly noted that 84 percent of rape victims never report the crime. Responding to the 1991 Justice Department figure, the National Victim Center estimated that 683,000 females were raped — three times the number cited in the federal report. Based on its research, the Center said in 1992 that one in eight adult women in the country had been raped at least once during her lifetime; 29 percent of the females identified a friend or neighbor as the rapist; 22 percent said the assailant was a stranger, and the remaining 49 percent were boyfriends, former boyfriends, or rela-



tives; and 29 percent of all forcible rapes took place when the female was under 11 years old.

### Battered Women

During the last part of the 1970s, the media and federal government agencies credited the women's rights movement with focusing attention on battered women. A *Los Angeles Times* article explained, "Across the country, women form coalitions and hold seminars to press for an end to battering. Feminists are in the forefront of the movement, much as they were for rape reform." (January 2, 1977) A paper published by the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor opened with the statement, "Marital discord and violence between spouses are not new to the human experience. What is new, however, is the attention that has been focused on 'battered women' by the women's movement in the past few years." (February 1978)

Pressured by feminists, facts about violence within the family began to become public knowledge. Early in 1978, at a three-day hearing held by a subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representatives, one witness explained, "Violence occurs between family members more often than it occurs in any other setting except with armies in war and police during riots." Citing a national study of violence in U.S. families, one expert testified that more than 1.8 million wives were beaten by their husbands. The chief of the National Institute of Mental Health Crime and Delinquency said that as many as 2,000 spouses were involved in the 20,000 homicides committed annually in the U.S. A year later, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reported that domestic violence was the most common as well as the most unreported crime in the nation. (*Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 1979) After twenty years of studying the matter, the director of the Family Research Laboratory concluded that "the family is the most violent institution in society," and noted that, "A woman is at worst risk of assault in her own home." (*Los Angeles Times*, December 9, 1983) (Note: The general term "family violence" includes all varieties: spousal beatings, child abuse, incest, altercations between siblings, and "granny bashing," that is, abuse of older family members. I have excerpted the facts regarding women. —E.S.)

In a special issue on women published by *The Guardian* newspaper in the spring of 1984, Robin Kovat pointed out:

The startling fact that two million women are beaten up in the U.S. every year is no longer a secret, thanks to a growing movement to eliminate the epidemic of domestic violence. But the movement's accomplishments in bringing the facts to light and giving battered women assistance is still new, and it has a long way to go before it can claim lasting success.

The battered women's movement is an outgrowth of the women's movement of the 1960s, when women joined together to discuss their problems and discovered, among other things, that woman battering was not an individual, isolated problem, but that it happened to many women and cut across racial, ethnic, and eco-

omic barriers.... Women began to educate their communities about the issue and to establish shelters — places of refuge and safety for abused women and their children.

The first shelter solely for battered women opened in Minneapolis in 1975. With inadequate funding forcing many shelters to lead a hand-to-mouth existence, no reliable up-to-date figures exist, but there may be as many as 700 shelters for battered women throughout the U.S.

...Many groups organizing against domestic violence have formed local, state, or national networks to expand their work beyond providing shelter services into the areas of prevention and education, and to deal with the growing difficulty of obtaining funding.

Efforts to alleviate violence against women continue to this day — because the same serious problems remain. As part of its 1991 STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN CAMPAIGN, the Fund for a Feminist majority sent out a letter containing the following statistics:

Every 15 seconds a woman is beaten by her husband or partner.... More than one-half of all homeless women are fleeing domestic violence. More than one-half of all American women will be victims of sexual assault and/or domestic violence in their lifetimes.... Each year women require, it has been estimated by experts, more medical treatment for injuries from battering than from auto accidents, rapes, and muggings combined. An estimated 2,000 to 4,000 women are beaten to death each year in their homes.... Like rape, domestic violence is among the most underreported of crimes.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported in its June 17, 1992, issue: "Domestic violence against women has become so prevalent that physicians should routinely question their female patients about whether they have been abused, according to new guidelines issued by the American Medical Assn. [AMA]" This procedure was recommended on the basis of a series of studies which showed that about one in four women will be attacked by a partner at some point in the relationship, and more than four million U.S. women are severely assaulted by husbands or boyfriends during an average 12-month period. The senior AMA vice president for medical education and science said that one in three women admitted to a hospital emergency room has been attacked, and 23 percent of pregnant women seeking prenatal medical care have experienced some sort of domestic violence. Several months later, the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee reported: domestic disputes accounted for 16 percent of all sexual assaults and 20 percent of all aggravated assaults reported in 1991 — however, an estimated 3 million additional domestic murders, rapes, and assaults were *not* reported. The U.S. Surgeon General stated that violence was the leading cause of injury to women aged 15 to 44.

In January 1994, the U.S. Justice Department drew public attention to a study it had conducted from 1987 to 1991 which included the following findings: over two-thirds of violent attacks against women in the U.S. were committed by a person known by the victim; in a typical year, 2.5 million females older than 11 were as-

saulted, raped, robbed, or were targets of attempted violent crimes; the likelihood of violence was higher for young, Black, and Latina women; and, violence against women was overwhelmingly intra-racial, that is, 80 percent of the violence against Anglo women was committed by Anglo males, and 90 percent of the violence against African American women was caused by African American men.

### Women of Color

The terrorism directed against women in general is compounded for women of color. The Multicultural Alliance for Reproductive Freedom (MCARF) is one of the groups paying special attention to this aspect. One MCARF sheet, providing guidelines for caregivers aiding Black women who survived sexual attacks, emphasized their specific needs because of racist attitudes towards African Americans — which affects how a Black female victim is treated by medical personnel, the legal system, and her own community. It was noted that African American women "may hesitate to take official action because she may feel reluctant to expose a man of her race to racism in the criminal justice system. She may also be under pressure from family, friends, or community members to handle the matter within the community and may be seen as disloyal if she does not." Another MCARF sheet, entitled "DOUBLE JEOPARDY: CULTURAL BARRIERS AND SYSTEMIC BARRIERS FACED BY LATINA BATTERED WOMEN," described institutional and community obstacles hampering a battered Latina "in her struggle to become violence-free," and stressed the need for battered service providers to recognize ethnic, racial, and cultural differences in order for "the Women's Movement [to] live up to its principle of ending violence in the lives of *all* women."

Domestic violence against Asian American women was addressed at a Los Angeles conference in August 1994. The public forum was sponsored by the Network Against Asian Pacific Domestic Violence and the Asian Pacific American Legal Center. Organizers said that the subject of domestic violence was suppressed in traditional Asian cultures, that in some cultures it was "an accepted practice for men to batter their wives to train them," and "Even when victims know they have a right to be free from abuse, they put up with it because they don't want to bring shame to the family." A family law specialist at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California explained, "As tragic as spousal abuse is for white women, born here... with friends and relatives, you just can't compare that to [the plight of] immigrant women."

The complex situations enmeshing women of color must be taken into account by those involved in building a movement to halt violence against women.

### Battered Women's Movement

A 1987 report noted: "Starting with a handful of battered women's programs in the early 1970s, the battered women's movement has



developed over 1,200 programs — shelters, safehomes, hotlines, and advocacy programs — throughout the country.” Written by Kerry Lobel, Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the report included detailed information to show the progress made between 1977–1987. The battered women’s movement had:

- **Generated statewide funding for battered women’s programs in 49 states** through marriage and divorce surcharges, court fees, and appropriations through state legislatures, beginning in the late ’70’s and continuing to the present.
- **Worked with federal legislators to develop priorities for Victims of Crime Assistance funds** — priorities which have provided funding for battered women’s programs and sexual assault programs nationwide. The VOCA Act was passed October 1984.
- ...Served as advisors (late 70’s through early 80’s) to officials from the Department of Housing and Urban Development on the needs of battered women in such areas as Section 8 Housing, and shelter eligibility for Community Development Block Grant Funds; also advised other federal policy makers to ensure that battered women in shelter were eligible for food stamps.
- **Starting in 1981, developed materials and strategies for annual promotion of Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October) and National Day of Unity**, a time to recognize the work of advocates for battered women, celebrate battered women making new lives for themselves, and mourn battered women who have lost their lives.
- **Established a national toll free hotline for battered women and their families...**
- **Called attention to the needs of battered rural women, women of color, and lesbian women**, and supported organizing by battered and formerly battered women, lesbian women, rural women, women of color, prostitutes, older women, and differently-abled women. [From *Decade of Achievement 1977–1987*, a project of THE NATIONAL WOMEN’S CONFERENCE CENTER.]

### The Current Struggle

The National Organizing for Women (NOW) is among the national groups involved in long-term activities addressing violence against women. NOW chapters helped initiate the first shelters for battered women in dozens of cities, set up the first rape crisis lines in many states, and organized the first Take Back the Night marches. The February issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* carried information about — and urged participation in — NOW’s April 7–9 Spring Actions Against Violence in Washington, D.C. The actions include a Young Feminist Summit Against Violence and a mass “We Won’t Go Back!” Rally for Women’s Lives. The events are designed to mark Women’s Equality Day and celebrate passage of the Violence Against Women Act. This legislation: provides \$1.6 billion to help ensure safe homes and streets for women; allots \$325

## Stop Violence Against Women’s Right to Choose!

The Washington, D.C., mass action on April 9, called by the National Organization for Women, “will reaffirm NOW’s longstanding commitment to ending violence at clinics that provide abortion services,” according to NOW’s SPECIAL RALLY ISSUE circulated to help build the national mobilization. Within hours after an anti-abortion gunman killed two people and wounded five others at women’s health clinics in Brookline, Massachusetts, NOW activists organized a vigil of one thousand at one of the clinics. The following day, four thousand participated in a NOW-organized protest in downtown Boston.

The December 30, 1994, shootings by John Salvi were preceded by other murderous attacks by those who claim to be “pro-life”: on July 29, 1994, a doctor and his bodyguard were assassinated outside of a Florida clinic; on August 19, 1993, a doctor was shot in both arms as he drove out of a clinic parking lot in Wichita, Kansas; on March 10, 1993, a doctor was shot and killed outside of a Pensacola, Florida, clinic. A wide range of weapons have been used against clinics and health care personnel in the ongoing and escalating terrorism against women’s legal right to reproductive choices. Planned Parenthood Los Angeles detailed numerous acts of violence in a full-page ad published on January 8, 1995 (*Los Angeles Times*):

In just the last few weeks, a Planned Parenthood center in Brainerd, Minn., was totally destroyed by firebombing.

Arson severely damaged a Planned Parenthood Center in Chico, Calif. Here in Los Angeles, all the phone lines were deliberately chopped at a Planned Parenthood health care center. Unknown chemical substances were sent to us in an unmarked envelope, and last week, security cameras at the front door were vandalized.

More than 1,000 wanton acts of violence and disruption occurred at women’s health care centers across the U.S. last year! Firebombings, death threats, butyric acid attacks, harassing phone calls, stalkings, hate mail, arson attacks, clinic blockades, vandalism.... *Women should not have to think about murder when they go to the doctor’s office!* Dedicated employees providing health care services should not have to think about potential physical violence.

Assaults have had profoundly negative effects on a woman’s right to choose. Many doctors have stopped providing abortion services, clinics have been shut down, and women have been frightened away from seeking safe medical procedures. Although laws and court decisions are valuable in asserting women’s rights, experience has proven that they are not sufficient to guarantee vitally necessary access to health care services. Along with clinic defense activities, massive public demonstrations are needed.

To get information about the national Rally for Women’s Lives, contact NOW at the local or state level, or call the Rally Office at the National Action Center: (202) 331-0066.

— E.S.

million for battered women’s shelters; authorizes \$220 million for rape and family violence education, starting in junior high school; improves the way the criminal justice system handles domestic as well as other forms of violence against women; authorizes \$3 million for a toll-free hotline; earmarks existing funds for increased lighting and camera surveillance; and, allocates \$30 million for family violence, child abuse enforcement and victim aid in rural areas.

Winning the Violence Against Women Act has been a key NOW goal over the past six years. The organizing lobbied Congress, testified at Senate Judiciary Committee hearings, and worked to elect candidates who would vote in favor of the law. Recognizing that legislation alone is not sufficient, NOW called the April 7–9 actions to push *the* four-point plan for ending violence against women: “protect, fund, and implement the Violence Against Women Act; pass new federal measures to prevent violence against women; change the culture so that it

teaches respect, not violence; and organize to elect more feminist women in 1996.”

### Controversies Within the Movement

This NOW plan includes points which have been — and still are — hotly debated within the women’s rights movement. United in their determination to aid victimized women and prevent violence, activists have long disagreed on tactics and the causes of violence against women. For example, should resources be devoted to electing Democratic or Republican party candidates labeled “feminist” (who often betray campaign promises once they are in office) or should women’s rights fighters be engaged in building a new independent party? Is lobbying and passing new laws the primary method for gaining results or should feminists give a higher priority to massive public demonstrations to “change the culture” and reshape attitudes?

*Continued on page 34*



# The Role of Women, and of Radicals, in the First Sit-Down Strikes

Interviewed by Kathleen O'Nan

The following edited text was transcribed for *BIDOM* by Lee DeNoyer.

**Q:** You were a founding member of the United Auto Workers Union (UAW) in 1936, and you were a leading figure in the 1936–37 Flint, Michigan, sit-down strike. Can you give us a little background on how both of those events occurred, the formation of the union and the reasons behind the strike?

**A:** I think everybody knows that during the Great Depression of that period workers were in a state of fermentation. They were talking about needing better conditions not only at home and in the streets but in the shops, where they were treated with less care and less respect than the machines in the automobile factories. Having read again just recently a reminder of what the conditions were in those shops, I remember that the men would complain — and I say men in this case because there were only men employed in the shop in the Flint area where the sit-down strike first began and where it was won — so I'm talking about this one part of the UAW which decided the great victory of the organization.

The men in the shop were recalling in the 58th anniversary issue of their union paper that the conditions in the shop then were so vile that they were not only coming down with diseases, like tuberculosis, and injuries, like losing fingers and hands, but the air was so thick with black fumes and smoke, and so bad from the fumes of the chemicals in the shop, that even when they took a bath and washed off and put on clean clothes, when they perspired they had brown sweat because of the chemicals that had gone into their system.

### Worsening Conditions

The worsening of conditions in the shops made these men feel that they could no longer live this way. And of course their families suffered just as much, because they were not getting adequate wages for their long, long hours and unpaid overtime. They had no control over the hours they worked in the shop. If production was low, they were called in for two hours, then they were sent

## Introduction to the Interview with Genora Dollinger

*Kathleen O'Nan is the chapter organizer of the Los Angeles Metro Chapter of Labor Party Advocates (LPA). Genora Dollinger, now in her 80s, is an active member of the LPA chapter, along with her husband Sol Dollinger, also a veteran of the 1936–37 Flint, Michigan, sitdown strikes. The interview was done on February 4, 1995.*

Genora Dollinger played a pivotal role in the formation of the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the crucial strikes of 1936–37 in Flint, Michigan. It is often said that without her work during the auto sitdown strikes, the UAW might not exist today. Dollinger was recently inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame. At the ceremony, Sophie and Victor Reuther said:

Genora is of the great tradition of Mother Jones, who in an earlier generation was to the Mine Workers what Genora became to the Auto Workers. A living legend in her own time.

Dollinger was only 23 years old when the strike against General Motors began. She immediately saw the necessity of developing a support system for the beleaguered strikers and started a Women's Auxiliary, in which women played a role beyond the traditional one of setting up soup kitchens, the main role of women's support groups of the time. She saw that it was necessary to explain that the spouses of the strikers had as much to lose or gain as the strikers themselves and therefore had as much business on the picket lines as the striking men.

The police and the company escalated their tactics to try to break the strike, in what became known as the Battle of Bulls Run,

which left 13 unionists shot and many others injured. Dollinger likewise escalated the tactics of the women, founding the militant Women's Emergency Brigade. These women became the backbone of support for the strikers, with duties ranging from walking the picket lines, even when attacked with billy clubs and tear gas, to outreach in Flint and other GM cities to gather broader support.

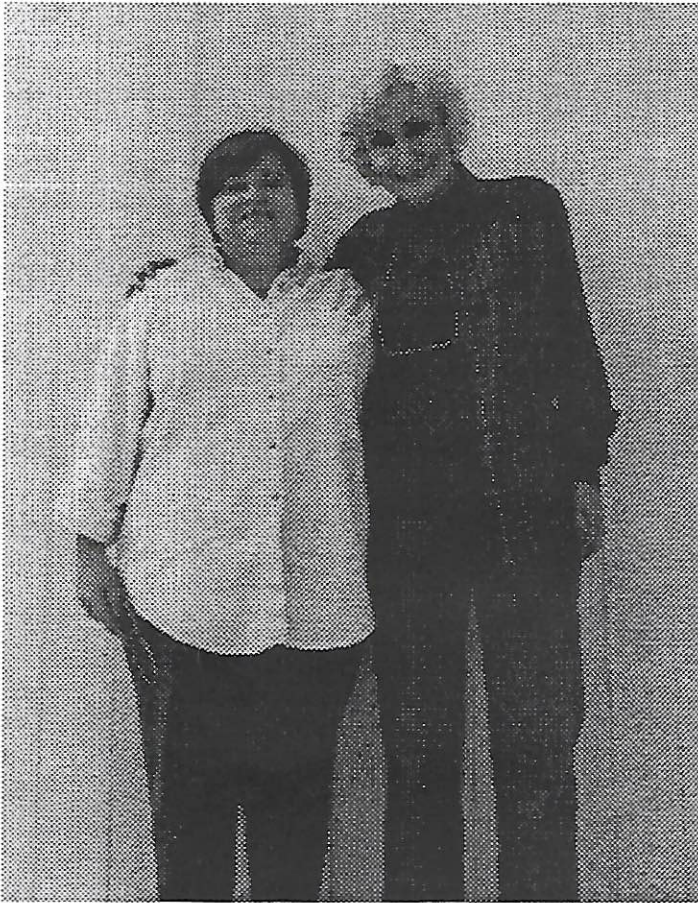
Just after leaving the Dollinger household, having completed this interview, I turned on the radio and caught part of a speech by a UAW retiree, who was talking about how changes have come about in America. He said he had been reminded recently of how the UAW had been formed. His story is dramatically different from Genora's: he said that Henry Ford had vowed that he would shut down all of his factories all over the world before he would ever "permit" a union to exist in one of them. His wife, "that sweet, quiet woman," looked at him and "with gentleness, but firmness" said: "Henry, if you do that, I shall have to leave you." The speaker applauded the courage of Mrs. Ford and credited her with being the critical factor in the strikers' victories. I think that the account which follows is a much more accurate reflection of history and of truth.

— Kathleen O'Nan

home, no call-in pay, no nothing. Or they could be asked to work 20 hours. Just keep them right on the job.

So they had no feeling of any human dignity at all — whether inside the shop or in the streets outside the shop. If a man became ill — and this happened of course in my case too — and called in and said he was ill (and he had to be very ill to miss a day in the shop), they would send a man out to investigate, and I mean with a gun. They would send a man out from General Motors, and he would come up on your porch and demand to come in your house and see the employee who was ill.





Kathleen O'Nan (left) with Genora Dollinger

It was a threatening situation, where you had no power. The city was controlled lock, stock, and barrel. The city council and all of the courts and all of the city administration were controlled by General Motors. You had no feeling of security on the job at any time. If you made some remark or some stool pigeon attributed some remark to you, the boss could come in and just fire you. No question about it. You had no rights, and you had no seniority. Whether you had been there a long time or a short time, they put you on any job they decided they wanted you on.

### Total Company Control

If you had to go to the bathroom, these men had to wait for a relief man sometimes so long that their kidneys and their bladder systems were really wrecked. In one case a man brought in a chamber pot and set it up on the line as a joke about this whole business, and he was immediately fired just for joking about these things. You were clocked from the moment you left the line when you went to the bathroom — a pretty dignified name for this hole in the wall. There was only one bathroom on each floor of this huge plant employing thousands of workers. Immediately after you came out someone would pop in to see if there were any cigarette butts in the toilet bowl, to see if you used a couple of extra minutes to smoke a cigarette.

So tremendous speed-up was occurring. General Motors wanted more and more production. There was less and less consideration for the work force. And the speed-up became so bad that men were actually cracking up on the job. They would take a wrench and go after the foreman. Then they would have to appear before a committee in the city, and they would be sent to what in

those days was called an insane asylum, in another city close by. We had a lot of auto workers committed just because they were strung out so bad that at the least little thing they would react violently. They had some shutdowns in departments over such incidents, and this was a harbinger of the future, but it didn't make any difference to GM. There was no discussion with the workers about anything, any of the conditions under which they had to work.

It became so unendurable that one plant sat down for a few hours and got away with it the first time. This encouraged everybody else, because they realized that as one person there was nothing they could do, but as a department or a group organization they had more strength.

**Q:** Let me go back for a minute. Did you say there was one sit-down that lasted several hours? What did it accomplish?

**A:** There were several incidents like that, for immediate solution of a problem on the job. One was over a couple of brothers, the Perkins brothers, who were fired by Fisher Body Company without any reason whatsoever. The workers just decided that was it. And they sat down and refused to work. They sat down at their workbenches and on the line and refused to work until those boys were brought back in and reinstated. They were two young men, and General Motors actually had to send people out all over the city to locate those guys and bring them back into the department and show that they were on the job again in order for that section of the plant to start operating again.

It was always a local issue: it was the speed-up, it was somebody getting injured unnecessarily because the machine wasn't functioning properly. And these were the things that began to encourage workers to thinking that if you got a group to demonstrate, you got results a hell of a lot quicker than just by pleading and begging on your own.

### The Role of Radical Organizations

During this whole period of ferment, there is one thing that many historians don't stress. I'm sure they have been told about it many times, but they think that this is something separate and aside from the general development. That was that in Flint we had a number of organizations of minority political parties. I was a member of the Socialist Party. I was one of the founding members of a branch that was reconstructed after a lapse of several years. We had had a socialist mayor elected in that city in 1913. And we had a Communist Party, and during the period of their "red trade union" days they actually organized a walkout at one Fisher Body plant and they were chased by the police over the county line.

The Proletarian Party had classes constantly, around the clock, in Marxism, in genuine Marxist study, of *Das Kapital*, volume one, volume two, etc. That didn't include the majority of the workers, of course, but you had a group in the Proletarian Party that was very active in Fisher Body in talking to workers, telling them why these things were coming about and what had to be done.

The Socialist Party organized classes in labor history. It happened that the headquarters for the Socialist Party, the Proletarian Party, and the Socialist Labor Party were all in the same big historic building where the union offices were on one floor. It was an old, rickety building, but it was something we could afford. And workers were coming up to find out what could be done and we would get to know them. We gave classes in labor history to let them know that there were gains that had been made and that there were



labor leaders who had given their lives for the organization of labor.

Then we had a number of old-time Wobblies, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), who were coming to Flint to work in the factories, and they were not so much political as what you'd call just damn good "rabble rousers." That was a very affectionate term for anyone who had the courage and the guts to get up there and blow off against the corporation and dared them to do something about it.

### The Workers Get Some Training

In the beginning the people who came down to the union hall were very new and were intimidated by the corporation and the whole city apparatus and felt threatened. Many of them were followed when they would come to talk with the unionists, and when they came out they were beaten badly and would end up with black eyes and broken bones. In our first strike we noticed that the secondary leaders in the plant and groups of people, especially in Chevrolet, who had gone to classes in labor history, parliamentary procedure, and public speaking and had all this training before, that they played a big role. We knew that was part of the reason why we had such a tremendous victory in our first strike against the corporation.

I'm emphasizing the political preparation that was made for such an event, a strike such as this. For instance, the Reuther brothers, who have become famous now because of their role in the UAW from the beginning to even the present day (in the case of Victor Reuther), all attended the Bookwood Labor College, which was a socialist college, and many of the speakers who were there were also active in an organization called the League for Industrial Democracy.

From 1934 to 1936 we socialists organized these big meetings. We held them in the basement of the largest Methodist church in this area, and the biggest meetings would be close to 500 people. We used to get good turnouts for them. Great discussions were held on the sidewalks after the meetings. We had such speakers as Norman Thomas, Harry W. Laidler — he was a fine educator — and Tucker Smith, who later became prominent in the UAW-CIO. And these speakers were good. They gave the workers a vision of a possible society beyond their suffering day in and day out and made you feel that there was something there if you were organized. So this was a preparation that was very important.

### Backward Attitudes Toward Women

We had a few women that would come down to these meetings, but they were most generally not welcome because they were not members of the union, and so they were not involved from the beginning in the union organization. If women came and wanted to help set up the strike, they were sent to the kitchen. You know, that's where they "belonged," carrying on the same duties that they did at home.

That's what happened to me. The people in charge of assigning volunteers, men and women, didn't know me. I was known to the

workers in the shop and I was known by all of the political elements, but these people told me to go to the kitchen. They didn't know that I was trained as a public speaker and I was an organizer. I just shook my head and said, "I see you've got a lot of skinny men who say they can't stay too long on the picket lines and you can send them out to the kitchen. They can peel potatoes just as well as a woman."

And so I started talking to the women. Many of them had just come from the deep South and they had very little formal education or political activity outside of what they got from us at the union hall. Also the women of the Socialist Party became active. I got them involved in the union activities instead of just coming to political meetings for a lecture, and they began to talk to other women. The first time that the shops went down was December 30, 1936, and there were some angry women who came down and said to their husbands, "You come on out of there. You're going to lose your job. You're not going to have your house, your family, or anything else." And they threatened divorce.

### Q: So is this when you formed the Women's Auxiliary?

A: Yes. I was down there that night and I saw these men come down with their tails between their legs like a beaten dog and their buddies up there sitting down, shutting the plant down, hooting at them. And I realized that such women had a lot of power in the home, and unless somebody got to them, it would weaken the strike. Of course, General Motors had the newspapers and the radios and all other means of information — the union had very little money. So we made the announcement at the big mass meetings that we were organizing the Women's Auxiliary. The core group decided that whereas all of the other AFL auxiliaries were called Ladies Auxiliaries and they had their box socials and little parties and things like that, but really didn't know anything about labor or conditions in the country, we decided we were *women* and we didn't want any of this *lady* stuff, so we called ourselves for the first time in the American labor movement the Women's Auxiliary of the UAW.

The UAW wasn't really yet formed and hadn't had elections. It had workers from Chevrolet, from Fisher Body, from AC Spark Plug, from Buick, and so on, but they hadn't even separated into their locals yet. We were able to organize and elect our officers and by-laws and things like that and start up classes and start a child care center and a first aid station with a registered nurse who had joined our ranks. She used to come down there in her white uniform, and after we formed the militant part of the Auxiliary she'd come down in her red beret and red arm band on her white uniform and she was treating people who were injured on the picket lines.

### Q: At the height of the activity, how many strikers were there and how many women were in the Women's Auxiliary?

A: I can tell you that at the height of our organization there was close to 1,000. This is a difficult figure for me to give or for historians because, for instance, we would get letters, maybe unsigned, or maybe signed by one person who represented a whole department of young women. And they wanted us to know about them, and they would give us one number in case of emergency, and they would come immediately. They wanted to be part of our organization.

### Q: So these were women workers?

A: Yes. In the shops.

### Q: Plus there were women who were spouses?

A: Or grandmothers, or daughters. In the Auxiliary we had young women from the age of about 16 or 17, daughters or sisters of workers in the shop up to women in their late 60s. They were considered old women in those days.

### Q: How many people were on strike in Flint?

A: We had 17 GM plants that eventually went down after we shut down Plant No. 4. There were 14,000 workers alone in the 10 Chevrolet plants. The Fisher Body Plant No. 1, which made bodies for Buick, had 7,000. Fisher Body Plant No. 2, which made bodies for Chevrolet, I think would be about 2,000 or 3,000. They were smaller because Chevrolet had plants in other parts of the country. Buick probably had around 12,000. AC Spark Plug had probably about 7,000. This was an auto company town. Either you were an auto worker or you were just eating peanuts.

Two Fisher Body plants went down on December 30. The smaller Fisher Body plant went on strike because of some big grievance, some aggravation they couldn't talk any more and just shut the plant down, sat down. General Motors thought, "Don't pay too much attention to them. We've got other body plants. We can handle it." But then the big Buick Fisher Body plant had a lot of accumulated grievances, too, and the same thing happened when they found out that the smaller Fisher Body plant went down.

### Q: When the sit-down strikes were going on what role did the women actually play, and why did you form the Women's Emergency Brigade?

A: We wanted to get the women involved, because we knew they were a big factor, and many husbands knew that they were — in the home it became impossible because the women were so frightened. They had to put the food on the table for the children. They had to have the milk. They couldn't just say, "Your dad isn't working." They became very frightened, and they were very much against the union for shutting off their income. And for some men it was a big problem that needed to be solved.

But other men remained as macho as ever and as chauvinistic as ever. They said, "This is our



fight and these damn women don't know what's what." They didn't discuss these things with their wives, and they kept them at home even though women could come up to the union hall and could even sit in on the meetings and listen, but they wouldn't let them.

We had to work on the men. And I did that primarily by going in when they were having their mass meetings, when the "rabble rousers" would get them going, rah rah rah and singing "Solidarity Forever" and so on. I would go in there with the same enthusiasm and tell them, "We're going to win this and we're going to win it together and we're going to give you hell till you bring your wives down here and we'll convince them that we're going to have a victory." Many of the men began to encourage their wives to come down. After so many years of men telling them it's none of your damn business what we do at union meetings they came down thinking, "What can I do about it? I don't belong here, I don't work in the plant."

Then we told them, "Well, you can get a lot of other women to come along with us and we can walk the picket lines and we can encourage and show the city of Flint that they're not going to smash our strike."

### Union Day Care Centers

As we brought them in, if they had children, for instance, they could bring them to our day care center. The woman in charge of the day care center was pregnant with her ninth child, and she would be there with these mothers and their babies and she would be all enthused — she was a socialist, too — and she would tell them, "We're the ones concerned with what we have to live with in the home and we haven't enough to get a washing machine in our home." And the others would start talking and saying we don't have this and we don't have that. There were only about 30 percent of the homes in Flint that had actual plumbing and bathrooms in them. We still had outhouses and things like that in this city, this great company town!

They didn't have a number of things that would make women's lives easier. There was no possibility of their older children thinking about going to college. They couldn't afford such a thing. The minute one would turn 18 he or she would stand in the long lines and try to get a job. There were times when you could drive past these great big factories and see hundreds of men sitting out on the lawn in front of the factories just waiting for somebody to come to the company door and call them in, maybe for 3 or 5 hours of work. So if the children, when they grew up, could get a job, they considered it a great success. It was another income, and young people were very proud to become an auto worker. What else was there in that city?

### The Women Become Active

The women became very active. The only thing that they had been active in before was perhaps their churches and that sort of thing but never where they had a chance to get up and speak or

to convince somebody else to join. That wasn't their job in their churches. The Pentecostal churches from the South and the big churches, all of them with the exception of one, were preaching against the unions — they would tell them this was Communism coming right over from Godless Moscow, that all the union leaders were influenced by Communism — and they were preaching this every Sunday. Of course, you've heard of Father Coughlin and the Church of the Little Flower, the Catholic Church. He had a radio program that had thousands and thousands of listeners, and they were militant anti-unionists. Then they began an organization called the Worker's Alliance, which were all the scabs, and they were signing them up and giving them special privileges and promises and so on.

So we needed the women, and the women knew that. Participation in the union began to make it much easier for the women within the family. And the husbands wouldn't mind the children getting taken care of in the neighborhood and getting a second car.

There's another factor here. At the time of the strike the president of the bus drivers' local called a strike, so it was very difficult for some workers to get into work. Because even in this auto town there were an awful lot of workers who couldn't get a second car. Women on the outskirts of town would have to organize cooperatives where some of them would stay and take care of the children, and the men would have to organize as to how many of them could get a ride or how many women could get downtown. It was not an easy thing for them, and when they came down they wanted to make the most of their time and we wanted that too. So we put them in classes, and we had the most wonderful group of women who were changing almost day by day. You could see them standing a little taller and talking to the men a little more sure of themselves.

Many of the men, not all of them, had this chauvinism that went right straight through this strike and the whole period. Some of them thought women shouldn't be there at all, and we were called dykes, and some of them said the young women were just down there seeking out a man. And all kinds of things were said by some of the men. But others who were really union men and were much more open to having the forces to build a union and to win a strike were very grateful and told us many times how happy they were in their homes since their wives got active. And some of the wives, believe me, got very active!

### Battle of "Bulls Run"

There was a police attack on the Fisher Body Plant No. 2 strikers. The police came down there and started throwing tear gas canisters into the plant, and picket lines were formed to hold the police back, and barricades were set up, and we had an ensuing battle for a number of hours, into the early morning. It was affectionately called

the Battle of Bulls Run, because at the end of it the bulls [the cops] ran.

I happened to be the only woman on the picket line at the time when they started firing buckshot and bullets and throwing fire bombs and tear gas canisters. All that the workers in the shop and on the picket lines had were big heavy car hinges (the kind they used to have on the old cars). They would throw those at the police. And they had water hoses that they got from the plant and they would shoot water at the police. Now this was in about 16 degree weather — very cold — and water along the curb would freeze. As the battle raged on, the men were urging the people on the sidelines to join them, telling them what they were really fighting for, because the radios were saying that revolution had practically broken out in the city of Flint.

People came and gathered in big groups on the sides of the barricades, but they were afraid of the firing. My parents came down because they thought sure as hell revolution had broken out and I was a socialist and we were having a revolution! (My father was very anti-union.) Then Victor Reuther came over to a group of us at one point. My brother was there, and some other young socialists, and we were all busy making up songs, parodies of familiar melodies, to get people to sing them, keep their spirits up. Victor came over, and he said — to try and prepare us — that we may lose this battle but we're going to win the war, so don't worry about it. And why we were going to lose this battle was because the batteries in the sound car were running down and we might not be able to keep this source of inspiration for the strikers going.

When he told me that I thought, "My God, this is terrible." Because I had just seen the president of the transportation workers jump over the curb that had water on it and about the time he looked down blood was running down his leg into the water, and I thought, "After all of this sacrifice." There was something like 16 union people injured that night, either shot or beaten, and a number of cops injured by the hinges and things.

### Appeal to Women to Join the Strikers

I decided that the only way we could get out of this was to get more women down, and if we ever got up and made an announcement that mothers of children were fired on I knew that the men would break in from the sidelines. I said I wanted to give a speech while the sound was still working. I started out talking to the women of Flint — first I called the cops cowards for shooting into the bellies of unarmed men and into the mothers of children — and then I asked the women to break through. I said, Stand with your brothers and your husbands and your sweethearts. Come down here and stand with us. And one woman started to cross the barricade. A cop grabbed her from the back, but she slipped out of her coat and got away from him and started walking down toward us — in that

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# We Are Half of the Working People of This Country

by Carol McAllister

*The following article is based on a presentation to the Workshop on Women's Rights at the December 10, 1994, Labor Educational Conference (sponsored by Labor Party Advocates and other organizations) in Toledo, Ohio. Carol is a member of the Executive Board of Local 3414 of the American Federation of Teachers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The previous speaker was Terry Halfacre, a leader of Cleveland NOW.*

In many ways I'm going to take off from where [the previous speaker] Terry posed the question, "Is there a way to merge the concerns of women with [the concerns of] labor?" Her answer was "Maybe." I want to talk about three things and this is my first. I think the answer has to be "Yes." It has to be. Because we are labor, we are the working people of this country, and we are the labor movement, and therefore our concerns, the concerns of half of all of that, have to be taken up by the labor movement.

The first thing I want to talk about is exactly that, that I believe that the labor movement, to be revitalized, must give attention, serious attention, to the issues and concerns of women. I think that means at least two things. One is that they must look at what's happening in the independent women's movement and support those struggles. The second thing is that they must bring into the labor movement — into struggles of labor — issues and struggles around gender. And I would also add, around race, because I think these two things are very closely intertwined. In other words, added to the class perspective that the labor movement brings, or should be bringing, to its struggles, there also needs to be a perspective around gender and around race.

I think this needs to be done, first of all, because it's a simple matter of justice. Why should half or more of the population of the working people be cut out of the struggles and the campaigns of labor? Second, it's the only way that the alienation that women have historically felt from the labor movement and that people of color have historically felt from the labor movement will be overcome. And third, I think it's also important because it will transform those struggles, and by that I mean both the struggles of labor and the struggles of women.

## Labor Should Support the Right to Choose

I want to give an example of that, and this is just one example; you could have others. I want to use the example of the prochoice, or reproductive rights, movement. If what I'm suggesting happens, if labor becomes involved in a serious way in the prochoice and the reproductive rights movement and if that issue comes in and is seen as an issue of the labor movement, I think it will transform that struggle.

Step one, it will make very clear that having a choice does not simply mean keeping the right to abortion legal. It does not simply mean keep-

ing clinics open physically, although both of those things are very important. It also means creating an economic system and creating economic access to the right to have an abortion and the right to other kinds of contraceptive use.

But even that's too narrow, because it will lead to looking at health care in general. You can't have the right to choice if you don't have the right to reproductive health and, in fact, to health as a whole. It leads down the road, it seems to me, to talking about national health care. That's one track.

Having the right to choose also means having the right to choose to have a child or children and to raise them in a decent and safe environment. It means having communities that are not wracked by violence and alienation and hopelessness. It means your child has a future in the school system and beyond — not in jail and not in debt. It means things like overcoming this report that was just published in Pittsburgh that one out of four children in our city — 15,000 children — was either hungry or at risk of hunger. This is not having a choice. This is a reproductive rights issue, I would suggest.

And, finally, there's jobs. And it seems to me that's a reproductive rights issue. You cannot raise children or take care of your own health if you do not have a job. And you cannot raise children if you have to have two jobs or if you have to work 50 or 60 hours a week to make ends meet.

## Part-Time and Unemployed Women Workers

That leads directly into my second point, which is that the labor movement has to pay special attention in this period to two layers of the working class which I think are particularly disadvantaged and which are disproportionately made up of women and people of color. What I'm referring to is people who are unemployed, on at least a semipermanent basis, and therefore dependent on some form of public assistance or so-called "welfare," although people don't fare very well on welfare. And, secondly, what is often commonly referred to as the "working poor," or, increasingly, the "contingent" work force — something Terry referred to. People who work part-time when they need a full-time job. People who work for temporary agencies. All the major corporations in Pittsburgh now hire all their clerical workers through temp agencies. People who work full-time, year round, sometimes more than a 40-

hour week, get minimum wage or a little bit above, and cannot make ends meet and do not have benefits. This is what I'm referring to.

It seems to me the labor movement must take up the struggles of these people. We must engage in the debate about so-called "welfare reform," and we must transform the terms of that debate so that we're not talking about reforming the welfare system but about providing a job or a guaranteed annual income, talking about shortening the workweek so that people have jobs, so that we're recognizing that people who are unemployed still work, they just don't get paid for it. It seems to me these are women's issues. They are also labor issues, and they have to come together.

## Women Need a Labor Party

My final point is that I think it is particularly important for women that we have a labor party. One reason is because all the things I've just talked about and also the issues Terry has referred to will in no way be addressed, let alone resolved, without an independent political vehicle for the working class.

Second, because if we continue on with the lesser evil politics that we've been going down the track of, what we're going to see, it seems to me, is increasing division among the people I've been talking about: those on welfare and those who have a lousy job — that group versus the people who are somewhat more securely employed. Between the people who are concerned about how to raise children in a good environment and the people who are concerned about having the choice to control their reproduction. These groups and these issues should not be counterposed, and that's what's happened with Democratic and Republican politics.

I want to end by reinforcing something that Terry, the previous speaker, said — if we're going to have a labor party and it's going to address these issues, then it must include women and people of color in membership and in leadership roles. Terry also said she thought there was a problem when women's issues were addressed in separate workshops such as this one. She advocated that women's issues be taken up in the general presentations, not in separate workshops. In my opinion, a labor party will have to take up these issues *both* in special workshops like this one and in plenary sessions — we need *both* — it's not an either/or choice. □



# Organizing Labor's Power to Fight for Women's Economic Needs

by Judith Wraight

*The following article is an edited transcript of a presentation made by the author to the Workshop on Women's Rights at the December 10, 1994, Labor Educational Conference (sponsored by Labor Party Advocates and other organizations) in Toledo, Ohio. Judy, a Detroit auto worker for more than 16 years, is a member of the Executive Board of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 600 Tool & Die Unit. She is an alternate to the UAW-New Directions National Organizing Committee, vice chair of UAW-New Directions Region 1-A, a member of Workers Unity Network, and a supporter of the Trotskyist League.*

**A**s a skilled-trades auto worker, I make \$21 an hour in the UAW. However, I used to be on welfare, so I have a pretty broad perspective on some of the situations women can face economically.

I agree with the speakers today who have said we have to redefine the issues and, to some extent, change the language being used to talk about women's needs. For example, I think "personal survival" issues are not just "personal." In earlier societies, women producing children were looked on as social producers, and they were taken care of as such. Today, women are dependent on the family structure, usually with just one other person. If dad breaks his leg, or dad loses his job, or dad's an alcoholic, all of a sudden you have a chaotic situation where a woman who has dedicated her life to working at home is left without anything.

## A Job Should Mean a Living Wage

I also think we have to redefine what a job is. Minimum wage "jobs" are not jobs — they are starve-yourself-to-make-somebody-else-rich rip-offs. We need to define a job as something with a decent wage — I think the \$12.50 per hour proposed by the previous speaker sounds great!

We also have to remember we're dealing today with a capitalist market economy. What happens is that the bosses say: "We're paying this woman what she's worth." Well, a woman is "worth" exactly what she and her family need to live on. And what they need to live on includes everything that is socially necessary. That includes all the modern necessities and conveniences that have been developed — I'm not talking about living in the Stone Age — including rights to education and similar things.

Furthermore, the market economy we're dealing with is worldwide. Women traditionally have been given jobs that pay less because they have been less organized, and women worldwide still are not organized. The women who make the tennis shoes and the shoes that I'm wearing and most of these clothes are working for 3 to 30 cents an hour, and they often are fired when they are 25 years old. (Too old to keep up the pace!) We need to be thinking about ways to unite globally with the women who are working in these plants, as well as women working in the plants here in the U.S.

## From Women's Rights Workshop at Toledo LPA Conference

### Resolutions on Women's Issues for Labor Party Platform

*The following text was reported from the Women's Rights Workshop to a plenary session of the Labor Party Advocates conference held in Toledo, Ohio, December 10-11, 1994, where it was adopted in a straw vote.*

Among those at the Women's Rights Workshop, there was unanimous agreement to present the following resolutions for consideration on the Labor Party platform.

Given that:

- (1) there are 44 million women workers in this country, which means that more than 6 out of every 10 adult women are employed for wages, and 5 out of every 6 of these 44 million are not organized; and
- (2) approximately 80 percent of employed women are in routine, low-paid, mostly dead-end and often stressful, unhealthy, and insecure jobs; and
- (3) only 20 percent are covered by private pension plans.

We recommend:

1. The Labor Party should take a strong pro-choice position in favor of a woman's full reproductive freedom. This includes her right to choose abortion without legal, economic, or other impediments. Full reproductive freedom also requires universal access to comprehensive health care. In addition, women should have the choice to bear and rear children in a social and economic context which supports the needs of all types of families.
2. The Labor Party and trade unions should promote quality, worksite child care, as well as provide child care at Labor Party meetings, union meetings, and other labor gatherings. Both men and women should be responsible to see that this is

done, as well as to care for children's needs in general.

3. The Labor Party and the labor movement must promote meetings and discussions concerning domestic violence and violence in the workplace. We must create an atmosphere which supports women who resist violence and which condemns perpetrators.
4. Women and People of Color must have central leadership roles in the Labor Party and the labor movement. Their issues must be integral to the discussion of all agenda and platform points. For example, any discussion of jobs is incomplete without discussing pay equity, job segregation, and the exploitation of women's unpaid labor in the home. There should be conscious and active efforts to recruit women and People of Color as members and leaders of the Labor Party.
5. The Labor Party and trade unions should promote the organizing of all working women — waged and unwaged — and seek new strategies for organizing women based on their particular work situations and real interests and needs. For example, this may include working with women to link community and workplace struggles, and political strikes and demonstrations over issues such as a \$15.00 minimum hourly wage. The only effective way to bring women and People of Color into activity in the Labor Party and the labor movement is to support and participate in their struggles.

## Employers Who "Can't Afford" a Decent Wage

Another issue we need to address is the claim by business owners that they can't afford to pay a living wage. Small businesses employ over 50 percent of the workers in this country. I've

worked for a lot of small businesses. The first thing they'll tell you is, "We can't afford to give you a decent wage... we can't afford to do this." So we need a program that addresses the needs of the people who work for these small busi-

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# New Teamster Elections: Will the Rank and File Win Again?

by Charles Walker

...we reaffirm our belief that only through their unions can workers be protected and prosper and only with the allegiance of its members and the mutual support of united labor organizations can the Union survive....

— Preamble, *IBT Constitution*

Three years have rushed by since Teamster President Ron Carey's stunning election victory swept the Old Guard from the international union's highest offices. As a group, the losers were one of the most outrageous, self-serving bureaucratic cliques ever to fasten and fatten itself from the dues dollars of American and Canadian trade unionists. On balance, Carey has demonstrated a remarkable first-term leadership, despite the toughest times since the Great Depression, and a bitter, unforgiving Old Guard opposition.

In three national contract negotiations, Carey won non-concessionary agreements on major cost items and job security and secured compensating trade-offs on secondary items. The Carey administration courageously broke with labor's postwar policy and defied a federal court injunction, as well as scores of regional and local union officers, when the union struck United Parcel Service, caught welching on a freshly signed national agreement (ratified 61,387 to 30,640). Then the New Teamsters struck the master freight contract employers for twenty-four days and won a major defensive victory (ratified 67,784 to 15,729).

Whether finessing a respectable agreement, despite an adverse relationship of forces, as during the 1992 carhaul negotiations (ratified 8,526 to 685); or striking hardnose bosses, the ratification votes indicate that Carey did not disappoint the affected members.

However, two months before the freight strike, the membership defeated Carey's dues increase proposal by a unionwide 3 to 1 margin. The Old Guard claimed credit for organizing the rejection, which meant that the strike fund would go broke, due to the looming freight strike. Clearly many members had not seen enough critical changes to offset the view that the union is just another hand in their pockets. Carey agreed and said, "Whether they voted Yes or No, members are frustrated because there are still officials who hold great power but are not accountable to the members they serve."

From day one, Carey has had to fight the Old Guard's junkyard dog opposition to every major issue that separates the New Teamsters from the past. To the misleaders' red-meat concerns of collecting dues and maintaining labor peace, they added their unrelenting opposition to Carey's reforms. Finally, Carey said, "I've tried to work real hard to build relationships with local union officers, whether they were on my team or not. I want them to know that Ron Carey

represents all Teamsters. But the reality is that the olive branch approach is not working." So thirty months after taking office, Carey abolished the union's area conferences, a secondary layer of bureaucratic privilege and abuse which cost the members \$15 million a year, was a hothouse for cronyism, nepotism, and business unionism, and later served as bunkers from which to waylay Carey as he sought to parry attacks from employers.

## Carey's Opponents Regroup

With the conferences gone, Carey's opponents now use the joint councils and local unions as they used the conferences, where they organized scabbing on their own union's strike against United Parcel Service. They also took a page from the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) and cobbled together a unionwide political caucus led by regional and local officers, including R.V. Durham, Joe Hogan, Larry Brennan, and Chuck Mack. Their declared intent is to act as a "shadow government" and "support vulnerable officials in the Fall 1994 elections and go on to elect delegates in 1995 and fight the election of 1996."

Central to their election strategy is promoting James Hoffa, Jr., son of the well-known Jimmy Hoffa, as their banner-bearer. They hope to trade on the father's reputation for gaining bountiful contracts. Whatever Hoffa's achievements actually were, Hoffa did not create the post-World War II economic boom, which was ending when Hoffa was jailed. In fact, all major unions obtained contract improvements during the boom years. Nevertheless, the Hoffa name and myths are an added obstacle Carey did not face in 1991. There's a saying that honest folks may benefit when crooks fight among themselves. In 1991, Carey's opponents were split and warring against each other. No one should assume that Carey's opponents will repeat their 1991 stupidity in the upcoming election.

Hoffa will seek to benefit from the widespread anti-incumbent mood, especially among the hundreds of thousands of Teamsters who work under local contracts that are outside of Carey's authority. Hoffa also will seek to draw to himself the votes that defeated Carey's dues increase proposal. With Hoffa's name recognition, a unified slate, a political caucus funded with union dues, and the Old Guard's control of most joint councils and a majority of the local unions, Carey's opponents might split the anti-incumbent vote just enough to drive Carey from office.

## A Rank and File Proposal

The freight strike experience reveals a powerful answer to Carey's problem of how to offset or reduce the Old Guard's election strengths. During the freight strike, Carey's communications with

the ranks were blocked by many regional and local officials. Carey partially solved the problem by organizing a unionwide fax network that operated on a volunteer basis. Daily bulletins were faxed to localities, and the volunteers hurried to the picket lines to pass on the news. As a result, the freight pickets were among the most knowledgeable Teamster strikers in recent times. What was learned was that Carey needs a way to be in close contact with the ranks, or the members will remain in the grip of the local misleaders.

Above all, what was learned is that there are dedicated members who are ready to answer Carey's call to join in and help out. The freight strike experience can be built upon by Carey establishing an official arm of the union where union builders join together on projects ranging from member education, picket-line solidarity, community outreach, and of course, the important matter of organizing the unorganized. Such a bold initiative would undermine, if not break down, the business unionist barriers that surround local unions and prevent would-be activists from drawing inspiration and strength from common endeavors.

Carey has the staffs from the organizing and educational departments, as well as the Teamster Leadership Academy to draw on for planning and allocating resources. Carey has vice presidents and international representatives to provide oversight. And certainly there are enough members likely to be attracted to a program of real union activism, for many locals have some self-sacrificing members who show up on picket lines, distribute organizing flyers, staff phone banks, and much, much more. What is needed is the recognition that just as Carey boldly abolished the conferences and curbed the power of the Old Guard, Carey could now move boldly in the localities and expand the power of the membership. A union organization of activist members who are a daily face-to-face link with the inactive majority could go a long way toward reducing the cynicism that underlies the apathy and the raw anti-incumbent feelings that could work against Carey's re-election.

Make no mistake: this is not a proposal for another union caucus with a political agenda for gaining union office and using the power for better or for worse. Nevertheless, such an organization would naturally be a barrier to the return of the fat cats who once saw the international union as their country club, complete with condos, limos, and jets. Carey has a lot of power, but he still lacks the transmission belt to connect his power to the power of the ranks.

The 1991 Teamsters election raised hopes in the labor movement that a sea change in labor history was in the making. And today, Carey's supporters are more numerous than they were three years ago. No one's hopes were higher than that of Teamster reformers and activists. Of course, they are not so numerous as to vote Carey into office all by themselves. But they can be the gear that turns the wheel. It's Carey's job to align the gear and the wheel and to set them in motion. □

January 24, 1994



# Rutgers Students Rise Up Against Racism

by Tom Barrett

Rutgers University, once an elite private men's college, has been since 1965 the state university of New Jersey. Some 47,000 students are now enrolled at its three campuses — in Camden, Newark, and New Brunswick, the original and largest campus. As in most state universities in the Northeast, the majority of students come from working-class families, and nearly 70 percent receive some form of financial aid. About 31 percent of the students are people of color; about 10 percent are African American.

Rutgers's liberal president, Francis L. Lawrence, has during his tenure supported active recruitment of freshmen from the state's large African American and Latino populations. In discussing the issue in a report to the faculty senate at the Camden campus on November 11, 1994, he said, "The average SATs [scholastic aptitude test scores — combined verbal and mathematical] for African-Americans is 750 [the highest possible combined score is 1600]. Do we set standards in the future so we don't admit anybody? Or do we deal with a disadvantaged population that doesn't have that genetic, hereditary background to have a higher average?"

His remarks were leaked to a Newark newspaper on January 31, causing a storm of protest. The most dramatic occurred at halftime during the Rutgers — University of Massachusetts basketball game on February 7. A lone woman student sat down in the middle of the court and refused to move. In a spontaneous outpouring of solidarity with the African American students, over 200 students joined her, forcing suspension of the game. Though Rutgers's basketball coach forbade his players from commenting on the protest or the controversy around Lawrence, it has been revealed that the players not only supported the demonstration but had considered refusing to play as a protest against Lawrence's racist remarks.

A much larger rally, called by a broad antiracist student group called the United Student Coalition, was held on campus the following day. It demanded that Lawrence resign and that the university's Board of Governors fire him if he refused.

## Lawrence Attempts to Retreat

Because his words were captured on audiotape, President Lawrence could not credibly deny them. Instead, he apologized and attempted to claim that he "didn't mean it," and that his career record demonstrates his dedication to providing higher education to minority students. That was sufficient for Republican Governor Christine Todd Whitman, for the editors of the *New York Times*, and even for Paul Robeson, Jr., the son of one of Rutgers's most distinguished alumni. However, it was not sufficient for the United Student Coalition. Though state

politicians, African American faculty members, and even the Board of Governors' only African American member, attempted to portray the affair as a mere "misunderstanding," the antiracist students have refused to retreat from their demand that Lawrence quit or be fired.

The protests culminated in a demonstration outside the Board of Governors meeting at the Newark campus on February 11. After five hours of speeches on both sides of the issue, the Board unanimously refused either to fire Lawrence or to ask for his resignation; it did "repudiate" his remarks and called on the university administration to propose a blueprint for "multicultural life" at Rutgers.

The United Student Coalition is not buying it. As long as Lawrence is president of Rutgers, the Coalition says that protests will continue.

## Should the Students Demand Lawrence's Ouster?

Francis Lawrence is, to be sure, not a strident reactionary nor an open white supremacist. He has his defenders, within the student body and within the African American community. A *New York Times* editorial (February 8, 1995) best summarized Lawrence's defenders' point of view:

Mr. Lawrence apologized for the comments in an eloquent and convincing fashion, describing the remarks as accidental and unrelated to his beliefs. This claim is buttressed by his distinguished record as an advocate of minority students, both at Tulane University, where he served as vice president, and at Rutgers, where he assumed the presidency five years ago. Members of the university community have rallied to his defense. Paul Robeson Jr., son of the noted black singer and Rutgers alumnus, said yesterday that he was "absolutely convinced" that Mr. Lawrence's remarks bore no real relationship to his beliefs.

That seems a sound inference, given Mr. Lawrence's record. That record, together with the unqualified apology and the vigorous support shown by Mr. Robeson and others, suggests that Mr. Lawrence still deserves a chance to save his presidency....

It is difficult to understand how the *Times's* editorial writer and other defenders of Lawrence have become so completely divorced from reality. First, on the remarks themselves: it is difficult to believe that a university president — presumably an intelligent and educated man — could allege that African Americans are intellectually inferior for biological reasons unless he had considered his words carefully and believed what he said. Such "scientific" justifications for racism are not new, and reputable scientists have proved them conclusively false over and over again. Anyone claiming the qualifications to be president of an educational institution, particularly a state university with a 31

percent enrollment of students of color, would without a doubt be familiar with this old and rotten controversy, especially in light of the publication last year of *The Bell Curve*, a thoroughly racist and reactionary book by Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein.

Such genetic "theories" have been used to justify the Nazi Holocaust, the imprisonment of Soviet dissidents' families in the Gulag (on the basis of the false notions of Lysenko, a favorite of Joseph Stalin), Jim Crow segregation, and South African apartheid. It is absolutely inconceivable that anyone, especially a university president, would even hint at legitimizing them *carelessly*. The only thing Lawrence was careless about was keeping his words hidden. Either Lawrence truly believes what he said, or he is not qualified to be president of Rutgers on the grounds of simple stupidity.

Second, the problem of racism at Rutgers goes far beyond President Lawrence and the remarks he made at Rutgers-Camden last November. In fact, as United Student Coalition leader Otis Rolley explained on NBC's "Today Show" on February 9, Lawrence's statement is completely consistent with racist policies which are institutionalized at Rutgers. His so-called "distinguished record as an advocate of minority students" is actually a record of paternalism and assimilationism toward African American students. He has failed to consider the possibility of cultural biases built into standardized tests and indeed pervading the entire higher-education curriculum; he is oblivious to the reflection within the university community of the racism of the broader society, which is overt and brutal in the state of New Jersey. Lawrence might as well have added, "Some of my best friends are Negroes" to his so-called "apology"; he is that far out of touch.

Lawrence's completely racist and stupid remarks demonstrate conclusively that he is unfit to be president of Rutgers; the United Student Coalition deserves credit for mobilizing students of color and antiracist white students around the demand for Lawrence's resignation.

Even if the student protests are insufficient to force Lawrence to reconsider and resign or to force the Board of Governors to reverse itself and fire him, the students have every right to be proud of what they have accomplished already. Especially by creatively seizing the opportunity of a nationally televised basketball game, they have called the entire country's attention to the problem of racism which is inherent in American capitalist society, and made a big contribution to educating non-African American working people on the need to reject racism and to respect the right of people of color to determine their own destinies. □

February 12, 1995



# In Memory of Nathaniel Blandon (1952–1994)

by Ashaki M. Binta

*Ashaki Binta is editor of Justice Speaks, the monthly newspaper of Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ). She is also a leader of the BWFJ. Her tribute to Nat Blandon was given at a memorial service for him at All Souls Church in Washington, D.C., on January 14. An earlier article by her about Nat appeared in the January 1995 issue of Justice Speaks. (To subscribe, send \$10 a year for individuals, \$15 for institutions, to P.O. Box 26774, Raleigh NC 27611.)*

It is with the greatest sadness and pain that we gather here this afternoon, for we already miss our brother. And we will go on missing him, honoring him, respecting him, and remembering him. And we know that it takes a generation to produce the kind of African American manhood, the kind of freedom fighter, the kind of trade unionist, the kind of husband, father, friend, brother, and comrade who was Nathaniel Blandon. So while we mourn, we are also here to celebrate his life. And what a life Brother Nathaniel gave us — all of us who loved and appreciated him.

Brother Nathaniel was a member of BWFJ's National Steering Committee. He leaves us a great legacy...a legacy of discipline, commitment, humility, and selflessness that we value and cherish in the Black Workers for Justice. He leaves us a legacy of uncompromising dedication to the struggle against the exploitation of working people and for effective trade unionism; against the oppression of all people and especially for the liberation of the African American people, as represented by the movement to "Organize the South" and to establish an independent political movement in the South which truly represents the aspirations of the African American and oppressed people.

Brother Nathaniel also leaves us a clear legacy of the stand of the most sincere and conscious African American men, and men in general, who resolutely oppose sexism and male chauvinism, and who without fanfare, attempt to put their words into practice. Nat not only believed in women's equality, but, in my opinion, he also understood its true political significance to the next stages of the struggles of oppressed people *all over the world*. And he wasn't afraid of this question, but sought to understand it and embraced it.

Nat, as he liked to be called, was firm and clear in his stand against racism and white supremacy. His ability to study important questions from every angle and in practically every aspect was one of his qualities that gained our respect and admiration. And we were relying on and looking forward to his continued growth and contributions to our understanding of key questions as a workers movement. One of the questions he was studying thoroughly for the Black Workers Movement was the question of the South African liberation and trade union struggles. Black Workers for Justice had as-

sessed the South African struggle as centrally important to the new stage of the worldwide liberation struggles — led by the working class. Brother Nathaniel was leading the work of ongoing analysis for us.

I want to quickly read a few passages from some of Brother Nathaniel's writings and analysis — so that we can more deeply understand his legacy to our future and ongoing work. About the struggle for women's equality he wrote:

The BWFJ Women's Commission has noted how patriarchal tendencies are manifested in a variety of ways. Some of them are blaming the larger society for sexism and refusing to carry out a struggle within our midst, refusing to acknowledge the specific oppression of women and seeing only wage slavery, making the struggle against sexism purely verbal, silent conciliation to male dominance, refusing to deal with criticism of male chauvinism because it is "too harsh," vacillating in following the leadership and guidance of women. These are all forms of male resistance to the struggle for women's equality and rights. And they must be challenged.

He went on to say:

We are not seeking unity just for unity's sake. We seek unity in the battle against patriarchy, male supremacy, and sexism, and for women's equality. When Black women struggle to defeat such oppression, a byproduct is forging a higher level of unity within the larger Black community. For men to be allies, real...unity is determined by their concrete actions against male dominance everywhere....Understanding that Black males share many of the "typical American sexist views of women" doesn't relieve us of the responsibility of fighting against such views and behavior. If anything, it places a greater burden upon us to be more vigilant and consistent.

On the struggle against racism and white supremacy, Brother Nathaniel wrote:

Organized labor has often urged Black workers to ignore the issue of racism for the sake of "unity" in the ranks of labor. Rarely has it taken the lead in actively combating racism and discrimination within its ranks....It is time for organized labor and progressive workers to mount a conscious counterattack against the resurgence of racism and white supremacy. Most importantly, white workers must begin to see the fight against racism and white supremacy as a crucial part of their own program for libera-

tion. No fundamental issue facing the working class — whether wages, anti-concession contracts, health care, unemployment, runaway shops, housing, education, etc. — can be solved without dealing with the injustices against Black Americans.

And in one of his last studies on the South African struggle, Brother Nathaniel wrote:

To many people in the world, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has come to represent more than just a trade union but also a movement of working people and the poor for freedom. During the "liberation elections," there was fear among many that with the loss of a substantial section of its leadership into Parliament and the pressures from the imperialist and business community, COSATU would be too weakened to effectively continue. Pleasantly, this has not been the case. The post-election strike wave has shown COSATU's intent to transform political democracy into economic democracy for the masses of people....Over 100,000 workers from the metal, mining, textile, commercial, and public union sectors have gone on strike in South Africa since the elections.

For Black Workers for Justice and for the workers', women's equality, and Black Freedom movements, these words and writings reflect the high level of thinking and analysis that Brother Nathaniel was helping to provide for us. This level of thinking can only be produced — not by fancy self-centeredness — but only by hard work, dedication, commitment...and correct politics.

Our hearts go out to Brother Nathaniel's family: his wife Mindy and his sons Derek and Andre, and to his mother and his sister and to all of his friends and coworkers who shared life on a daily basis with him. We deeply share his loss with you, and we will never forget him. We remember, Mindy, how warm, generous, and hospitable you, Brother Nat, and your family were to us all the time, with us ganging up at your house on so many occasions. And we'll still be coming whenever you'll have us, sister. We love you and the boys. We are all part of the same family. Rest assured we will carry on the work he dedicated his life to.

Thanks so much to everyone for enduring this heartfelt tribute to Nat. □



# Labor Party and Revolutionary Marxism in the United States

by Paul Le Blanc

Some critics of the labor party idea complain that it is too “Marxist,” while others condemn it for not being Marxist enough! This article is addressed to both such critics. It is also offered as a contribution to the discussion among all thoughtful activists on how to build a party capable of bringing about the genuine democratic rule of the working-class majority in the United States.

## The Influence of Marx in the U.S. Labor Movement

It is false to assume that “Marxist” ideas are simply the monopoly of the discredited bureaucratic dictatorships of the USSR and Eastern Europe — which dishonestly claimed to be “socialist republics” and “people’s democracies” and “Marxist” in order to cover up the ugliness of their own corrupt rule. The fact is that for many years, some of the most prominent representatives of the American labor movement have looked to Karl Marx and his comrade Frederick Engels as being the source of valuable ideas for the working class. This is because they understood that Marx and Engels were *not* in favor of some kind of dictatorship over the working class, but instead were in favor of democracy: they defended the interests of the working class — and wanted workers, the majority class, to be in control.

Samuel Gompers, a founder and the longtime president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), described Karl Marx as a “genius... [whose] influence contributed to emphasize the necessity for organization of wage-earners in trade unions and the development of economic power prior to efforts to establish labor government through political methods.” Marx’s influence can be found in the preamble which Gompers and others put forward for the AFL’s constitution in 1886: “a struggle is going on in all the nations of the civilized world, between oppressors and the oppressed of all countries, a struggle between the capitalist and the laborer, which grows in intensity from year to year, and will work disastrous results to the toiling millions, if they are not combined for mutual protection and benefit.” According to Gompers: “Some of my early shopmates were zealous Socialists of the Marxian school. They were as high-minded a group of idealists as can be

found. They were working hard to establish trade unions.” Among “the Socialists who were personal students of Karl Marx,” Gompers noted, were immigrant workers “who helped to lay the foundation for the American trade union movement... I learned to appreciate these men as friends and to value their counsel.”<sup>1</sup> These are things that the elderly Gompers wrote in his autobiography. Long after he became a conservative figure in the labor movement, he retained his respect for Marx!

A similar respect was expressed at the founding convention of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) by Eugene V. Debs, the founder and president of the American Railway Union who became a popular socialist leader: “Karl Marx, the profound economic philosopher, who will be known in future as the great emancipator, uttered the inspiring shibboleth a half a century ago: ‘Workingmen of all countries, unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains; you have a world to gain.’” Elaborating on Marx’s thought, Debs continued: “You workers are the only class essential to society; all others can be spared, but without you society would perish. You produce the wealth, you support government, you create and conserve civilization. You ought to be, can be and will be the masters of the earth.” In later years, Marx’s influence was strong among many of those who built the unions on which was based the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), and later the AFL-CIO — unions of mine workers and steel workers, garment workers and clothing workers, auto workers and electrical workers, transit workers and teamsters, longshoremen and maritime workers, office workers and hospital workers, teachers and social workers, and many others.<sup>2</sup>

A majority of unionized workers have never been socialists, and a majority of AFL-CIO union leaders have never read Karl Marx. But this doesn’t mean that because a particular idea is associated with Marx, it is something that should be rejected. Had that happened in the past, the American labor movement would never have been built.

## What Marx and Engels Thought

From the 1840s onward, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were partisans of the working class

“winning the battle of democracy.” They believed that working people (including men and women of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, those who were employed and unemployed, young and old, individual breadwinners and all family members) should build a mass movement of the great majority that would fight for the interests of the great majority of the people. At the heart of this mass movement, they believed, would be strong trade unions and an independent labor party. This working-class party, Marx and Engels urged, should take political power and initiate a series of far-reaching social and economic reforms that would lead to the transformation of society along socialist lines. The economy — especially the major financial institutions, the factories, mines, transportation and communication systems, etc. — would be owned and democratically controlled by society as a whole. This would make possible a new way of life in which all people, not just a relatively rich minority, could live in dignity and freedom: the free development of each person would become the condition for the free development of all.

These ideas are drawn from their pamphlet the *Communist Manifesto*, but they can be found in all of the major writings of Marx and Engels, including their writings about the United States. In the wake of the mass strike wave that swept the United States in 1877, for example, Marx correctly predicted that the workers would be defeated but hoped that the upsurge might “form the starting point for the establishment of a serious labor party in the United States” which — because of the betrayal of Black Reconstruction and the initiation of anti-farmer policies by the ruling Republican Party — would turn ex-slaves and small farmers into “allies of the workers” in such a new party.<sup>3</sup>

Despite some labor party ferment in the late 1870s and early 1880s, the party Marx hoped for still hadn’t come into being when he died in 1883. But workers needed such a party, he and Engels believed, because the existing Democratic and Republican parties were not capable of consistently and genuinely representing the interests of the working class. Their view was clearly expressed in the early 1890s by Engels, who observed that “wholly different strata and interests are represented in each of the two big parties, depending on the locality, and to a very large extent each of the two parties contains representatives of nearly every particular section of the possessing class [i.e., Big Business], though *today* big industry on the whole forms the core of the Republicans, just as big landed property in the South forms that of the Democrats.” He added that “the apparent haphazardness of this jumbling together provides

1. Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor*, Vol. I (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1926), pp. 51, 381; “The AFL, 1886 Preamble,” Albert Fried, ed., *Except to Walk Free: Documents and Notes in the History of American Labor* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1974), p. 153.
2. Eugene V. Debs, “Industrial Unionism,” *Writings and Speeches of Eugene V. Debs*, ed. by Joseph M. Bernstein (New York: Hermitage Press, 1948), p. 235. Popular histories documenting the Marxist influence in the U.S. labor movement include Sidney Lens, *Radicalism in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1969); Thomas R. Brooks, *Toil and Trouble, A History of American Labor* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1971); James R. Green, *The World of the Worker, Labor in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980).
3. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Marx and Engels on the United States*, ed. by Nelly Romyantseva (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979), p. 272.



the splendid soil for the corruption and the exploitation of the government that flourish over there so extensively.”

According to Engels, “Nowhere do ‘politicians’ form a more separate and powerful section of the nation than precisely in North America... [W]e find here two great gangs of political speculators, who alternately take possession of the state power and exploit it by the most corrupt means and for the most corrupt ends — and the nation is powerless against these two great cartels of politicians, who are ostensibly its servants, but in reality dominate and plunder it.”<sup>4</sup>

For a short time, in 1886–87, there was an impressive upsurge of labor party activity in several U.S. cities, which made Engels optimistic. “The first great step of importance for every country newly entering into the [labor and socialist] movement is always the constitution of the workers as an independent political party, no matter how, so long as it is a distinct workers’ party,” he commented. Noting that the initial program of the labor party in the U.S., influenced by the “single-tax” panacea of Henry George, was “still confused and extremely deficient,” he stressed: “The masses must have time and opportunity to develop, and they have the opportunity only when they have a movement of their own — no matter what form so long as it is *their own* movement — in which they are driven forward to learn by their own mistakes and learn from their experience.” Making reference to the Knights of Labor, which was a component of this labor party ferment, Engels insisted that the confusion and shortcomings of this first nationwide labor organization were unavoidable: “They are constantly in full process of development and revolution; a heaving, fermenting mass of plastic material seeking the shape and form appropriate to its inherent nature.” He saw this as being true of the labor party movement as a whole: “The great thing is to get the working class to move *as a class*; that once obtained, they will soon find the right direction, and all who resist, Henry George or [the Knights of Labor leader Terence] Powderly, will be left out in the cold with small sects of their own.”<sup>5</sup>

Engels was also concerned that some socialists in the United States would be left out in the cold with a small sect of *their own*. He complained that they “do not know how to use their theory as [a] lever to set the American masses in motion; most of them do not understand the [Marxist] theory themselves and treat it in a doctrinaire and dogmatic way as something that has got to be learned by heart and which will then satisfy all requirements without more ado. To them it is a credo and not a guide to action.” He viewed the Socialist Labor Party, with its several thousand members but limited influence

within the working class and nonexistent electoral presence, as “a party in name only.” Too many would-be Marxists, turning theory into holy dogma, tended “to keep aloof from any movement which did not accept that dogma.” No better were those who “make the inevitable confusion of the first start [in the new labor party] worse confounded by forcing down people’s throats things which, at present, they cannot properly understand, but which they will soon learn.”<sup>6</sup>

Rather than indulging in abstention or stri- dent interventions, revolutionary socialists should act “as a ferment, and at the same time undergo, themselves, a good deal of useful and necessary fermentation.” In order to teach, it was necessary to learn, to interact, to grow as part of the living movement of the working class. Socialists should “go in for any real general working-class movement, accept its actual starting point as such, and work it gradually up to the theoretical level by pointing out how every mistake made, every reverse suffered, was a necessary consequence of mistaken theoretical views in the original program [of the labor party]: they ought, in the words of the *Communist Manifesto*, ‘to represent in the movement of the present the future of the movement.’” Engels predicted that — because “the causes that brought into existence the abyss between the working class and the capitalist class” are the same everywhere — the platform of the labor party would eventually “proclaim, as the ultimate end, the conquest of political supremacy by the working class, in order to effect the direct appropriation of all means of production — land, railways, mines, machinery, etc. — by society at large, to be worked in common by all for the account and benefit of all.”<sup>7</sup>

### Trotsky on the Labor Party

Among the most important Marxists of the 20th century were Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Leon Trotsky. They helped build the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party and in 1917 led its revolutionary wing — known as the Bolsheviks — in making a workers revolution in their own country. This, they believed, would help spark working-class uprisings throughout the world capable of establishing working-class rule in all countries. In Russia and elsewhere they were opposed by more moderate socialists (who came to be known as Social Democrats) inclined to make deals with or even sell out to the capitalists. To differentiate themselves from these moderate socialists, those adhering to Lenin’s and Trotsky’s orientation called themselves Communists, and large Communist parties in many countries were organized for the purpose of leading the workers to victory.

Capitalism proved to be more durable than anticipated, and the moderate Social Democrats

in many countries proved able to retain substantial working-class support. What’s more, the powerful policies of military and economic hostility by the capitalist world isolated the economically impoverished Soviet Union, whose Communist government under Lenin and Trotsky felt it was necessary to strictly curtail democracy in order to survive. By 1924 Lenin had died, and a growing Communist Party bureaucracy under Joseph Stalin moved to strengthen its increasingly conservative and authoritarian dictatorship, also establishing rigid and undemocratic controls over the Communist parties throughout the world. Leon Trotsky and others who fought for the original revolutionary and democratic ideals of the early Communist movement were driven out.

In the United States, the foremost Trotskyist was a seasoned veteran of the IWW and a leader of the early Communist Party, James P. Cannon. With a handful of followers who were expelled from the Communist Party, he established the Communist League of America in 1929. In the next several years, the U.S. Trotskyists combined with several other groups of leftward-moving socialists, finally forming the Socialist Workers Party in 1938 with a little over 1,500 members. At the same time, they were involved in various major trade union struggles during the 1930s, especially in the teamsters union and in various unions belonging to the CIO. Originally they hoped that thousands of radicalizing workers would simply join their organization and that they could become a mass revolutionary party similar to what the Russian Bolsheviks had been. By 1938, however, Trotsky and Cannon had come to the conclusion that this was unlikely, and that the strategic orientation sketched by Marx and Engels in the late 19th century provided guidelines.

The CIO had established an electoral organization, Labor’s Non-Partisan League (LNPL), which was formally open to the idea of independent labor candidates but actually funneled support to the liberal New Deal candidates of the Democratic Party. Cannon felt that significant sentiment existed among radicalizing workers for a labor party, and he wanted SWP members to “join the LNPL and become aggressive fighters for the constitution of a labor party, as opposed to the policy of endorsing capitalist candidates.”<sup>8</sup>

Trotsky embraced this perspective and, in discussions with SWP members, elaborated its theoretical connection to the Bolshevik tradition. Some SWPers were concerned that a labor party would automatically be a reformist (non-revolutionary, Social Democratic) organization that would become an obstacle to any mass struggle for workers’ power. Also unclear was the relationship of the SWP to the projected labor party.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 298–299, 327.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 312, 287, 314.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 311–312, 287, 314, 315.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 310, 315, 285.

8. Leon Trotsky et al., *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, 2d edition (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974), p. 115.



First of all, Trotsky argued that the labor party might or might not be reformist, suggesting “in schematic form three types” to which it might conform. “The first type, an opportunistic, confused, loose party; the second possibility: an opportunistic but sufficiently centralized party directed by fakery and careerists; the third type is a centralized revolutionary party where we have the leadership.” He added: “We do not expect to have a clear and pure type. There will be different stages, different combinations, different parts, different kinds of labor party, etc....” A goal of revolutionaries would be “to become the predominant tendency,” although it was also possible that “it can crystallize into a reformist party, and one that will exclude us.” In that case, it would amount to “a labor party by social composition, a capitalist party in policy.”<sup>9</sup>

Making no promises that a labor party would become revolutionary, he urged that “we will do everything to make it possible.” Noting that such a party could result from mass pressure overcoming the conservative resistance of official trade union leaders, he added: “A revolutionary organization occupying in relation to this progressive movement a negative or neutrally expectant position will doom itself to isolation and sectarian degeneration (emphasis added).” It is necessary for a revolutionary socialist minority not to wait for the struggling workers to come to it, but rather to go to where the struggling workers are and to become fully involved in those struggles. “We can’t say to the workers: Wait till we become more authoritative, more powerful. We must intervene in the movement as it is.”<sup>10</sup>

Trotsky emphasized that electoral and nonelectoral political struggles must be interwoven, and that revolutionary-oriented transitional demands were a key for a Marxist orientation in the labor party:

We are for a party, for an independent party of the masses who will take power in the state. We must concretize it — for the creation of factory committees, for workers’ control of industry through the factory committees.... Naturally we must make our first step in such a way as to accumulate experience for practical work, not to engage in abstract formulas, but to develop a concrete program of action and demands in the sense that this transitional program issues from the conditions of capitalist society today, but immediately leads over the limits of capitalism. It is not the reformist minimum program, which never included workers’ militia, worker’s control of production. These demands are transitory because they lead from the capitalist society to the proletarian revolution, a consequence insofar as they become the demands of the masses as the proletarian government. We can’t stop

only with the day-to-day demands of the proletariat. We must give to the most backward workers some concrete slogan that corresponds to their needs and leads dialectically to the conquest of power.<sup>11</sup>

In any event, the revolutionary socialists must participate in the labor party in a manner which helps to build it, and strengthen it, as a vehicle that will advance the interests of the working class and bring the workers to power — which means focusing not on maneuvers against or negotiations with reformist leaders, but rather on winning a majority to a programmatic orientation that should guide the labor party.

The organizational relationship of the SWP to the projected labor party was a point to which Trotsky gave special attention. “The dissolution of our organization is absolutely excluded,” he explained. “We make absolutely clear that we have our organization, our press, etc., etc.... At every meeting I will say: I am a representative of the SWP. I consider it the only revolutionary party. But I am not a sectarian. You are trying to create a big workers’ party. I will help you but I propose you consider a program for this party. I make such and such propositions.” Building the labor party would become a way to advance the class struggle and — in the process — to increase the influence of the revolutionary vanguard organization: “For the Socialist Workers Party the labor party should on the one hand become the arena for recruiting revolutionary elements, on the other hand a transmissive mechanism for influencing ever wider circles of workers.”<sup>12</sup>

Trotsky was convinced, on the basis of historical experience, that a loose, open labor party would not endure for long. Either the reformist or the revolutionary elements would consolidate their leadership. The labor party would become a mass revolutionary party under the Marxist leadership (with any remaining reformists taking leave of the party), or there would finally be a split-off by the greatly strengthened revolutionary forces. Regardless of “through what stages and splits it will pass, ... the further sharpening of the revolutionary situation will inevitably break the shell of the labor party” and — one way or another — the SWP would rally to its banner “the revolutionary vanguard of the American proletariat.”<sup>13</sup>

### Cannon on the Labor Party

In 1942, the SWP leadership perceived a significant erosion of the working-class vote for both capitalist parties, which with other circumstances indicated increasing the possibilities for a labor party during the coming period. “The labor party is the central issue around which the

drive of the workers for class independence can be best expressed in the next period,” according to a resolution put forward by Cannon. “By becoming the active champion of the labor party the Socialist Workers Party will link itself to an instinctive class movement which is almost certain to have tumultuous growth, and thus multiply its influence and recruiting power.”<sup>14</sup>

In commenting on the intensification of SWP efforts for a labor party, Cannon argued that “when the workers begin to make a break from the capitalist parties toward a labor party, it is quite possible that they will not give it the reformistic connotation which has been associated in the past with the labor party, but that it will symbolize to them, even if vaguely, a break with the whole regime and a move for a new one, a regime of workers’ power.... Under present conditions the labor party idea can have far more revolutionary implications than in past periods when it was advanced as a reformistic measure.”<sup>15</sup>

Cannon characterized this as a particular kind of maneuver, which he defined as “a tactical turning aside from a predetermined path which has been blocked off, in order to accomplish the original objective, to reach the same goal by another road.” More than once, Cannon noted, U.S. Trotskyists had been compelled to turn away “from the path of building the party by direct recruitment, because a certain set of circumstances confronted us where the most eligible and logical candidates for Bolshevism refused to come into this party. We had to turn around and join them.”<sup>16</sup> The previous cases — the fusion with the American Workers Party and the entry into the Socialist Party — had been on a much smaller scale than would be this new labor party effort. In this new variant

we are going to try once again to build our party through another party. We will be inside of it for a long time, although not in the same technical and precise way as in the other two maneuvers. This time there will be no fusion and no entry. We will maintain the independence of our party all the time. But in some places we can conceive of the SWP being affiliated to the labor party, in other places where we may be denied entrance as a party, we will participate in the labor party through unions, etc. But, in every variant, we will be trying to build a revolutionary party through a political movement of the masses which is not clearly defined as revolutionary, or reformist, or in between.<sup>17</sup>

Avoiding rigid expectations regarding the labor party while holding firm to the importance of the SWP, Cannon commented that “we are working to build a labor party not as a substitute for our party, but to build our party as the party

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 155, 124.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 242.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 118, 119.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 123–124, 243.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 242–243.

14. James P. Cannon, *Writings and Speeches, 1940–43: The Socialist Workers Party in World War II*, ed. by Les Evans (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), p. 303.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 311.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 314.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 315.



that must lead the revolution. The labor party may never come to full-fledged shape at all.” Nonetheless, because masses of class-conscious workers may identify with the struggle for a labor party, “we must think in terms of thousands — and eventually tens of thousands — of recruits who will come into our party from the labor party movement.”<sup>18</sup>

Cannon speculated that there might be even more possibilities than those identified by Trotsky in 1938. “The conflict between the two wings — the revolutionary and the reformist — can reach such a state of tension that the movement will split before the party is fully formed on a national scale.” It was even possible that two labor parties, one revolutionary and one reformist, would come into being. A majority of workers probably would prefer “a labor party with Roosevelt at the head of it.” At the same time, “a sharpening of the class struggle” could be expected, and the Trotskyists should be prepared to “help to give it a political expression.” It would be impossible to predict the outcome of the SWP’s labor party initiative. “The developments of the labor party movement in the United States, with the stormy developments of the class struggle which are clearly indicated, will least of all follow a predetermined pattern.” Regardless of the outcome, Cannon emphasized, “the key to the next period of our party and the expansion of its membership, lies in the self-confidence, speed, and energy with which we plunge into an organized labor party campaign.”<sup>19</sup>

### The Test of Real Events

No less important than a review of quotations is the test of real events. As it turned out, mass labor parties did not become a durable part of the U.S. political scene in the late 1870s, the 1880s, the 1930s, or the 1940s. Reasons for this

deserve careful analysis (both Engels and Cannon have offered insightful explanations that are useful starting points), in part for the purpose of critically evaluating the relatively optimistic perspectives summarized here.

At the same time, the substantial intellectual labor of Marx, Engels, Trotsky, and Cannon are an important part of the heritage of the labor and socialist movements. They suggest a general strategic and tactical orientation that is worth considering for those who want to bring about genuine changes in the politics and society of the United States. In order to make the best use of this orientation, it is necessary to consider differences between our reality and theirs.

Obviously, a substantial difference between our situation and the situation discussed by Trotsky and Cannon is that the small but substantial Leninist-Trotskyist party that was a key part of their perspective no longer exists in the United States. The left-wing groups are fragmented and — to a very large extent — disoriented and demoralized. On the other hand, large sectors of the population have been undergoing experiences which in important ways have been making them potentially receptive to left-wing ideas. Following the line of thought that Trotsky and Cannon developed, and that Engels more boldly advanced, is it possible to forge such a revolutionary vanguard organization through the experience of building a labor party?

Another difference is that the U.S. working class as a whole is less well organized, less class conscious, seemingly less combative in 1995 than was the case in 1938 and 1942. Many workers don’t even recognize themselves as “working class” (as opposed to the fuzzy notion of “middle class”), and some identify more strongly along the lines of race, gender, age, sexuality, religion, and/or one or another special

social concern, than along class lines. This is reflected in the diminished extent to which the idea of a labor party strikes a chord among many working people who are inclined to support some kind of political independence from the Democratic and Republican parties. How can the resulting diversity be harmonized into a coherent and effective working-class insurgency?

There are other important questions. For example, the dramatic advance in the globalization of capitalist production seems to give much greater power to the capitalist class in thwarting the local and national organizations of the working class. Trade unions, labor parties, city governments, national governments — no matter how revolutionary, no matter how reformist — all seem to be incapable of resisting the power of capital, at least through traditional means. The multinational corporations can simply shift operations, starving, strangling, abandoning, or successfully strong-arming insurgent challengers. Obviously the effective means for advancing workers’ power exist, but these have yet to be recognized, taken hold of, and advanced. What are the transitional demands (demands that can also become part of a labor party program) which can connect with the consciousness of today’s working masses in a manner leading out of the quicksand of global capitalism?

These are questions that must be discussed, but there are no ready-made solutions. The answers can be found as we commit our lives and ideas to the test of real events. It would be foolish to plunge into these “real events” without making use of what Engels called the “guide to action” that was provided by the revolutionary socialists whose ideas we have examined here. □

## U.S. Government Agent at Center of Charges Against Malcolm X’s Daughter

*Continued from page 11*

for February 22, the day after the thirtieth anniversary of her father’s murder, before her four-year-old eyes, in the Audubon Ballroom in New York City.

The divide and conquer tactics of the state’s destabilization program are the visible aspects of a policy to prevent a successful fight for justice and economic rights in this country. We know that serious demographic projections into the future is a central feature of routine tasks such as city planning and national policy formulation. Thus, the capitalist class, being very conscious of itself as a class, is well aware it cannot meet the continued aspirations of the population for a decent and fulfilled life. The U.S.’s post-World War II prosperity, exceptional because it was built on a near-total absence of international competition during the

1950s, has long since melted away. American capital can only regain its pre-eminent position by forcing downward the expectations of the working class as a whole and oppressed peoples especially.

The most vulnerable segments of the population are necessarily the first targets. But rolling back the gains of the civil rights movement cannot be accomplished all at once. Beyond obstruction of civil rights and affirmative action enforcement, methods such as creating an image of a “troubled people,” a pariah caste whose prominent members find themselves embroiled in controversy and legal entanglements, deepen the marginalization of African Americans.

On the face of it, it would seem strange that the government is so open about its methods that the initial reaction of even conservative workers at one of the authors’ workplace was to

conclude that Qubilah Shabazz was a victim of a government setup. But a terror campaign — a campaign to build hopelessness and helplessness — requires that the victims know who’s in control. The state’s message, “We can take any of you out, high or low, prominent or obscure,” can be effectively conservatizing in the absence of a mass Black liberation movement.

Building such a movement is the response needed to the political, economic and social attacks that will continue to mount against African Americans. One of the key ways to begin is to build, and advance politically and financially, a broad, democratic-rights defense campaign on behalf of Qubilah Shabazz. □

*February 2, 1995*

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 315, 309.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 315, 317, 316, 309.



# Capitalism and Your University Education

by Robert Nowlan

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In order to understand the purpose and structure of any social institution, it is necessary to understand the society which produces and supports it. The purposes served by an institution, that is, are not merely its own but are also broader social purposes; furthermore, the structure of any institution tends to reflect the structure of social relations in society as a whole. In order to understand the university in capitalist society, then, we must understand capitalism as an economic and social system. In this article, we will outline the general features of the capitalist system, then show how they are connected to the institution of the university.

There are three main aspects of the capitalist economic system. First, capitalism is characterized by generalized commodity production. That is, the social division of labor has become so extensive under capitalism that the vast majority of the products of human labor are produced not to be used by the producer, but instead for the purpose of being exchanged for other products (and ultimately for money).

Second, capitalism is characterized by the class division between capitalists and workers. In other words, the means of production in capitalist society (the factories, technology, scientific knowledge, etc., required for production) are owned and controlled by a small minority of people who also appropriate the profits which result from the operation of these means. Meanwhile, the vast majority of the population in capitalist society consists of those who own no private property, and therefore have no way to earn a living but by selling their capacity to labor to some member of the capitalist class.

Third, capitalism is characterized by reproduction on an increasingly expanded scale; to put it another way, capitalism must continue constantly to grow. It must constantly find more labor power to exploit, and it must constantly find more human needs that can be transformed into needs met by commodity production and exchange.

Finally, the political relations in capitalist society follow from its economic structure. The capitalist state [i.e., government] exists to protect private property relations: first, by preventing the masses of people exploited and oppressed by them from challenging them; second, by protecting capitalists from the consequences of their own actions and of the system itself, through the maintenance of a monetary and credit system, and through a system of government spending that "stabilizes" the system in the interests of profit for the corporations.

## Unevenness of Capitalist Society

The history of capitalism is, furthermore, characterized by the uneven, combined, and contradictory nature of the capitalist mode of production. What this means is that, due to the anarchic and competitive structure of capitalist market relations, the drive for profit necessarily sets one company, one region, one part of the world in opposition to others. One section (i.e., the "advanced" or "developed" one) of the global capitalist economy gains precisely through its contrast with and advantage over other (less "advanced" and "developed") sections. Thus, the "First" and "Third" worlds are not merely "developed" and "underdeveloped" countries which happen to be contiguous in space and contemporaneous. Rather, the "First World" is the "First World" because of the "underdevelopment" of the "Third World," and the advantageous conditions for trade, the exploitation of cheap labor, and the extraction of raw materials and agricultural products this situation provides for the "First World."

The contradictory nature of this situation, meanwhile, is demonstrated by the fact of "overproduction" in the First World (for example, of food) alongside of "underconsumption" (i.e., hunger and starvation) in the "Third World."

This unevenness also applies to the fields of knowledge and ideology production. It is not a coincidence, for example, that while scientists in the academy debate the origins, physical structure, and possible future development of the universe, a substantial number of Americans continue to believe in "creationism," flatly rejecting the same work going on in the academy. This situation is a result of the relative isolation of the academy, its alienation and separation from other areas of material life. This separation and alienation is itself a consequence of the university's function as the site at which the resources and labor necessary for the production of knowledge have been concentrated, placed under the control of a small elite, and subordinated to the economic and political ends of the capitalist class.

## University Reflects Society

In other words, as we indicated earlier, the university reflects the structure of capitalist society. It produces the advanced scientific and technological knowledge required for late capitalist production, as well as the skilled labor power and managerial functionaries needed to run the production apparatus. It also, as we shall see in a little while, produces the kind of ideological domination required for the maintenance of class rule. In addition, the very

separation of knowledge production from other sites in culture aids capitalist domination. To the extent that the academic scientist and creationist meet, they meet as adversaries, with each having something at stake which is threatened by the other. This "struggle" prevents them from perceiving interests which they might have in common: for example, those resulting from their common exploitation by, and subordination to, capitalist and imperialist interests.

The political significance of the unevenness of the capitalist system is enormous. First of all, the contradictions of the capitalist system are more intense, concentrated, and visible at some social sites than at others, and it is therefore at such sites that political eruptions are most likely to take place. It was according to this logic that Lenin could claim for Russia in 1917 the status of being the "weakest link" in the "chain" of global imperialism. Today, such sites as the American semi-colonies in Central America and the South Pacific, due to the immense investment by Western (especially American) capital, an extremely unequal social structure (in terms of class polarization), and the political bankruptcy of American-backed governments there, might claim a similar status. Second, it means that within the global order, and within particular countries, political opposition is not only more likely to exist, but to be more informed and effective at some social sites than at others. We think that the university is such a site, as we will now try to demonstrate.

The university has become, almost exclusively, the predominant site of knowledge production in advanced capitalist countries today. The "independent" inventor, social critic, radical intellectual, novelist, and so on hardly exists today. All of these functions have become almost entirely dependent upon the academy for any kind of economic, institutional, and intellectual support. To put it another way, the university exercises a virtual monopoly on theoretical and scientific knowledges.

This situation has the effect, on the one hand, of making the production of these knowledges far easier to regulate and control; it also, as we suggested above, serves to "cordon off" and isolate intellectual work from society, i.e., from any democratic function. However, at the same time, it serves to transform the university itself into an extremely heterogeneous and contradictory arena — a place where the greatest demands for conformity (for the production of good subjects who accept the authoritarian relations inherent in capitalist institutions and do not inquire into the implications of their knowledges and practices) compete with the most powerful emancipatory discourses, such as



those of feminism, Marxism, gay and lesbian liberation, and Black liberation.

### Not an "Ivory Tower"

The university, then, rather than an "ivory tower," or place of escape, speculation, and personal "growth," is in fact more of a microcosm, intensified, as it were, for "effect," and given theoretical articulation, of social struggles in which the entire society is implicated. It is in fact the contradiction between the dominant ideology of the academy as a "neutral" institution and its real functioning which lies behind the current "controversy" over so-called "political correctness" — that is, what disturbs conservatives and dominant interests is that intellectuals committed to challenging the power relations systematically embedded in the university uncover the mendacity and contradictoriness of the university's claims to be serving the "common good" rather than some "special interests." Such revelations are potentially dangerous to those interests which actually depend upon the work done in the academy for the perpetuation of their rule.

It is in relation to this particular situatedness of the university, and intellectual work, in capitalist culture, that we urge students and instructors to take upon themselves the responsibility of political and intellectual leadership in struggles for social change at this point in time. For students, especially at the moment at which the "finishing touches" are being completed in the manufacturing of them as "productive" obedient subjects, this should be a time not merely to be "exposed to" radical and oppositional modes of knowledge, but rather to learn how to participate, and to enable others to participate, in the construction and dissemination of emancipatory forms of theory and practice, to intervene effectively in the (re)production of ideology, culture, and social relations.

### Theoretical Struggle Is Indispensable

We would now like to elaborate upon this argument, especially in relation to the specificity of the university as a site of knowledge production. One available mode of political intervention is, of course, through oppositional organizations, such as socialist, feminist, gay, lesbian, and Black liberationist groups struggling for change. Such work is absolutely necessary, and students should be encouraged to dedicate their time and energy to such worthwhile efforts. However, such work, by itself, is not enough. No less indispensable is the work of theoretical activity and ideological struggle, of contesting dominant modes of thought and interpretative models which serve to reproduce the "common sense" of culture upon which bourgeois ideological domination rests.

Bourgeois thought is dominated by what the Marxist philosopher Georg Lukacs termed "reification." What this means is that objects, rather than being grasped as part of a broader process which unites and interrelates them all, are viewed as separate, autonomous, and isolated

"things," with no necessary or discernable connection between them. Furthermore, these "things" — including "knowledges" — are understood as inert, static, and alienated from human activity, rather than as the product of human practice and the realization of human purposes.

Lukacs saw the division of labor within the factory, with its absolute differentiation of tasks, and the subordination of each individual worker to a broader process over which she or he has no control and of which she or he has no comprehension, as both the model and one of the main determinants of reification. The factory division of labor, of course, only reflects the conditions of life in capitalist society as a whole — our existence under such conditions is "distributed" among a wide variety of institutions and activities which seem to have no connection and which appear to stand "above us," and to be irrelevant to our needs and our capacities. This whole division of labor is reproduced, then, in the ideological world of capitalism.

The division of labor, and intellectual activity in general, within the university corresponds precisely to the logic of reification. Thus, "economics," "political science," "literature," etc., are seen as inherently separate and autonomous disciplines — no need is felt to integrate them within an understanding of society as a whole. Furthermore, the objects of study which correspond to these disciplines are treated mechanistically and reductively. Thus, sociologists can speak about "deviance" without having to question the "norms" which are being "deviated" from; psychologists can speak about "learning" as if it were detached from whatever material is actually being learned; and political scientists can theorize "power" and "interests" without inquiring into those material and historical relations which ground these categories.

### Effects of Disconnectedness

There are two main effects of reification. The first is the absolute separation between theoretical knowledge and actual practice. Not long ago, in an interview with *Newsweek*, Milovan Djilas argued that with the "death of Communism," Marxist theory will in the future be relegated to the university, along with all other political theories. For a bourgeois thinker such as Djilas, it seems only "natural" that "politics" can be practiced without any political theory. American leaders, with their emphasis on "pragmatic" politics and "competence" (without "ideology"), are, of course, in full agreement with this conception: rarely, if ever, do they find it necessary to account for their actions theoretically. However, into the vacuum left open by this eclectic "anti-ideological" stance, there rushes the actual correspondence between the needs of dominant interest groups and political practice. In other words, the emphasis on running "things" well excludes the question — which is necessarily an ideological one — of in whose interests these things are being "run" in the first place.

Second, reification serves to reproduce, in individuals, a highly fragmented consciousness. Systematic thinking is made impossible. The division of labor in the university is reflected in the inability of the majority of citizens to make connections between different spheres of activity. So, the "drug problem" can be isolated and thought of separately from the "crime problem," the "S&L problem," the "race problem," the "urban problem," and other neatly categorized problems. Only the most local and limited change or intervention can therefore be imagined, and this only on the condition that the foundation of the whole not be questioned. As Lukacs observed, a partial rationality (the conscientious and detailed "analysis" of "problems") coexists with and reproduces an irrationality of the whole, which appears uncontrollable and incomprehensible.

The bourgeois academy is grounded in this contradiction. On the one hand, it is predicated upon the commitment to rational discussion and debate. On the other hand, what the majority of those located within the academy rarely comprehend is the irrationality of the university's basis in class exploitation and domination and in commodity production and exchange (the material roots of reification), which subject knowledge no less than other products of labor to the logic of exploitation and the market. In other words, the rationality practiced by academics is almost invariably of a partial kind; a kind that is interested in its own sphere of "problems," but does not ask how these problems get formulated or whose interests the "solutions" which are found are going to serve.

### Why Academic Blindness?

It is not difficult to understand the reason for this blindness. In order to fulfill their commitment to rationality — of a general, not a partial and contradictory type — those who work in the academy would have to foresee and work toward its abolition, and the abolition of those conditions on which it depends. That is, with the elimination of class exploitation, the generalized division between intellectual and manual labor is also eliminated, and so is the independence of the academy. In other words, the self-interest of the academic intellectual, as a "middle class" manager in capitalist society, is in contradiction with the ideological premises which legitimate that self-interest.

Of course, the highly hierarchical and authoritarian structure of the university supports this self-interest of the academic (while contradicting it at points as well) — the academic has a "right" to "academic freedom" as long as he/she doesn't ask too many questions about the anti-democratic and autocratic mode of decision making. (Who has elected the board of trustees, for example?) In this way, the struggle which results from this contradiction, between two modes of rationality — one partial and idealist, the other general, materialist, and emancipatory — is concealed and made invisible, not the least through academic claims to "impartiality."



It does not follow from this critique that the university, or the commitment to rational discourse, should be abandoned. This could hardly be the case for those of us committed not merely to rational discourse but to the possibility of a rational society — that is, one in which human means correspond to human ends, and human needs to human capacities, and in which social relations are subject to collective, democratic, and conscious determination. What does follow, though, is that the putative function of the university must be transformed, in actuality, into the general social function. This is what we mean by the abolition of the university — its integration into “society” as a whole, along with the elimination of one of the most pernicious forms of the division of labor: that between intellectual and manual labor.

### What Abolition of the University Would Mean

Such a result can only be the product of a protracted political struggle: both practical struggle, to transform social conditions, and ideological struggle, to transform consciousness. Ideological struggle is necessary in order to contest the effects of reification, both in “advanced” theory and in the consciousness of oppressed and exploited groups. It is this latter function which constitutes the primary responsibility of academic intellectuals: it involves a critique of reified forms of thought through a theoretical grounding of social practices and forms of consciousness in the totality of social relations, social struggle, and historical transformation. To put it in other words, academic intellectuals must ask (and students must learn to insist that they ask) questions about the purposes toward which the knowledges they are producing are being put. Which type of social arrangement is being advanced by a particular

kind of understanding, and what type is being blocked?

Finally, ideological struggle must be united with practical struggles at all sites and levels of the social order. This becomes possible given two conditions: first, that intellectuals take struggles for social transformation as their starting point in theory; second, that intellectuals make use of the academy to produce the most powerful theoretical discourses, those which can usefully and effectively transform practical struggles. As Marx once said, the educator must him/herself be educated; however, as long as we live in a society in which some people have access to education at the expense of others, it remains the responsibility of those who are educated to transform their knowledge into something useful and enabling for those by whose labor and deprivation such education has become possible. That is, the “educated” must become “educators,” and help to make it possible for all people, some day, to participate in the production of knowledge, and the work of constructing social relations.

### Challenge Your Instructors

For students, there is one excellent place to begin. Challenge your instructors to account for, to take responsibility for, the knowledges they are providing you. Challenge them to account for how they are using their position as teachers: are they using this position to critique capitalist social relations, or to “instruct” students in the art of submitting to these relations? If they claim to be “neutral” about “politics,” or to consider these questions irrelevant, you might also challenge them to explain how, in such a sharply divided society, any one can claim to be “neutral” — especially someone in such a position of authority and responsibility. Whose interests are served by this “neutrality”?

If you are told that these questions are “interesting,” but “outside” of the topic of discussion, you should demand a reasonable accounting of how they understand the relations between “inside” and “outside” — that is, some things must always be excluded, but this should be determined according to the general aims of the course, including its social and political aims.

So, if the instructor considers one thing more important than another, it is necessary to ask, more important for what purpose? In whose interests? Try not to allow yourself to be intimidated, either by the instructor or other students, who might “complain” that you are “wasting their time”: your time is important too, but more important than any of this is the way in which social institutions are used, whether they are used to oppress or emancipate. Also, such “complaints” are common tactics used by those in authority to prevent their authority from being questioned, to silence and marginalize opposition.

Question both the general aims of the course and more specific details — for example, in a political science class, ask whether the instructor considers politics to be connected to economics? If so, how — in particular, how can there be political democracy with class domination? What implications follow from this conclusion — how does this course take these conclusions into account? If there is no connection, how is that possible, how did they get separated? And so on. If these kinds of questions are urgent, in your opinion, you must be patient and keep trying — political intervention in the classroom, like any other activity, takes practice; especially for those raised in a society which goes out of its way to encourage conformity and discourage independent and critical thinking. □

## Stop Zedillo's Criminal Move Against Zapatistas

*Continued from page 3*

last June by then-Interior Secretary Jorge Carpizo Magregor that he was being forced to step down (a decision that was later reversed), the September assassination of José Ruiz Massieu, and a press conference in late November by Deputy Attorney General Mario Ruiz Massieu, in which he accused the PRI leadership of a cover-up and complicity in the murder of his brother, the aforementioned José. In other words, the vast bulk of capital flight came in the wake of murderous infighting within the top echelons of the PRI regime.

In contrast, the December 19 show of force by EZLN supporters in areas outside rebel-held territory — which was limited to roadblocks, land occupations, and the brief takeover of one town hall — was followed by a relatively minor fall of \$1.5 billion. Still, officials continue to cite rebel activity as the origin of the country's economic woes.

### A Structural Crisis

Neither the lame efforts to blame the indigenous peoples of Chiapas nor references to flukes of the market or bad judgment in managing currency policy in Mexico can hide the fact that the crisis is structural in character. That is, it derives from the very structure of the existing system.

The neo-liberal economic project, which was hailed as the “Mexican miracle” during the Salinas years, and which was promoted by the IMF and World Bank as the model for developing and newly industrialized countries, proved to be a house of cards.

With a scheme based on the pauperization of the bulk of the Mexican population and a massive shift of wealth to Mexico's ruling 200 families, the economy became entirely dependent on the multibillion-dollar influx of mostly speculative capital, which sought to cash in on the high yields offered by Mexican markets. But as interest rates began to climb in the United States and more lucrative investments began to

emerge in other imperialist countries, the flows of capital shifted direction.

The “Mexican dream” was melting away along with the markets, revealing the true nightmare that it had always been. What IMF head Michael Camdessus called “the first global crisis of financial markets” was under way. The so-called Tequila effect struck emerging markets and “institutional investors” throughout the world.

With foreign investors and leading Mexican capitalists pulling tens of billions out of the Mexican economy, Washington's \$50-billion bailout looked increasingly like mere peanuts. Major Mexican firms began to default on loans. With the IMF insisting on maintaining the government's 7 percent cap on wage increases — at the same time that inflation was raging at an annualized rate of 50 percent — domestic demand plunged. The Mexican economy, which had slowly emerged out of recession only last year, was facing a full-blown depression.



## Prospects for the Mass Movement

Despite the weakening of the regime and the depth of popular discontent, the mass movement has yet to experience a significant revival and is limited in its ability to take advantage of the current crisis. The absence of a large revolutionary Marxist party with organic ties to the working class is making itself felt. With mass layoffs already taking place, efforts to organize rank-and-file resistance are further weakened.

The National Democratic Convention (CND), the umbrella group formed last August out of a wide range of political and social organizations identifying with the Zapatista rebellion, has been constantly plagued by infighting. During the organization's recent convention in Queretaro, little headway was made in ratifying a clear political policy for the CND. A new convention is slated for next month in Morelia, Michoacán.

But the dimensions and radicalized content of the current mobilizations offer significant hope that a revival in sectors of the mass movement could soon be forthcoming. Much will depend on current efforts to force a withdrawal of occupation forces in Chiapas and to stop the selective arrests taking place throughout Mexico. □

February 15, 1995

## Campaigning to Stop Violence Against Women

Continued from page 17

The issue of pornography has been debated vigorously within the feminist movement. To summarize some disagreements very briefly: does pornography encourage or cause violence against women — or are there other factors in society which bear major responsibility for such aggression? Who will define "pornography," and will this endanger freedom of expression? Will anti-pornography laws be utilized to harm the women's rights movement, for example, by banning literature such as *Our Bodies, Our Selves* (published by the Boston Women's Health Course Collective; first printing in 1970 with the title *Women & Their Bodies*).

Research on batterers gives no clear-cut solutions to how to prevent male assaults. While feminists can point to statistics showing that arrests and jail sentences can stop men from committing violence against women, other feminists can point to real-life tragedies involving murdered wives and girlfriends who had pursued legal actions. In 1991, the *Los Angeles Times* reported:

A University of Maryland criminology professor whose startling findings on repeated domestic violence nearly 10 years ago resulted in mandatory arrest laws for offenders in fifteen states and the District of Columbia, now says his further studies show that arresting attackers often does more harm than good for victims of domestic violence.... [His] more recent and extensive findings show that mandatory arrests may exacerbate domestic battery....

By the end of 1993, all states had some form of a stalking law to protect women from men who were terrorizing them — but such laws have not prevented numerous murders. Of what use are special laws, court restraining orders, and police interventions? Facts can be cited to

bolster both sides of the argument over the effectiveness of legal action.

Is psychological treatment for batterers and rapists the answer? Experience has shown little success in using traditional techniques such as counseling, psychotherapy, and psychoanalysis. An August 11, 1994, *Los Angeles Times* article stated: "Experts disagree on the causes of spousal abuse.... Whatever the cause, researchers are learning that there are different kinds of batterers [who] may require different types of intervention...."

Women's advocates have come to different conclusions and are utilizing a different treatment process. Phyllis Frank, an early shelter founder in Rockland County, New York, explains, "This is not an individual issue or some kind of psychological problem. It is sexism that is the root cause." Based on the evidence gathered by battered women's shelters over the years, activists concluded that violence was part of a pattern of tactics aimed at isolating women and controlling their lives — a finding supported by national studies by sociologists who found that battering was not the result of uncontrollable rage. Men tend to use physical force when they feel their authority is threatened. In centers, such as one in Duluth, Minnesota, classes for batterers keep discussions focused on the abusive behavior, not on what provoked the actions. This is in sharp contrast to an example given by the director of Common Purpose, a batterer's program in Boston, who cited a videotaped session showing a traditional therapist's delight when his patient said he'd hit his wife because he was really thinking about his abusive father. "If I were seeing that man," the Common Purpose director explained, "I would say, 'The problem is, you're not beating your father, you're beating your wife.'"

## By Any Means Necessary

There is still much to be learned about the causes and results of battering as well as the best methods for preventing and dealing with domestic violence. Quick-and-easy remedies are not possible, but there are ways to meet the immediate needs of battered women. Shelter programs, for example, have proven to be effective in providing physical safety and psychological support for battered women as well as educating the public about the problem.

This article will not attempt to elaborate an agenda regarding battered women and other forms of violence against women. Your special attention is directed to participating in and helping to build the Spring Actions Against Violence, which will be held April 7-9 in Washington, D.C. National mobilizations:

- Demonstrate the determination and persistence of feminists and women's rights advocates, sending a clear message to those attempting to chip away hard-won achievements.
- Strengthen women's confidence in their ability to organize their struggles.
- Impact public consciousness and create a better social climate for initiating changes.
- Play a unifying role by bringing together diverse groupings in society, and by linking activists in various cities and communities.

For detailed information about the Spring Actions Against Violence, contact your local NOW chapter. □

February 11, 1995

## The Role of Women, and of Radicals, in the First Sit-Down Strikes

Continued from page 21

weather, and without a coat — and when other men and women saw this they entered the battle and the police decided not to shoot the women in the back. As a result of that the fight was won.

### The Women's Emergency Brigade

I put out announcements to all the women, "Meet at the union hall tomorrow. We've got to have an emergency meeting." And I thought,

"What in hell am I going to tell them? How are we going to organize these women?" And I thought about organizing a military group of women that would march in between the police guns and the men, and I didn't know what to call it. I just took charge and said, "We're organizing the Women's Emergency Brigade!" Then I made the speech so bloody that it would scare most people off. I told them that they could not join unless they got up and swore in front of all

the other women that they were willing to take the chance and if they were holding the hands of one of their sisters and she was shot and went down in blood, that they wouldn't get hysterical or pass out. I said, "We can't have that. This is going to be a military organization!"

It sounded very dramatic and the women were, of course, by this time very inspired, and all the ones that were working in the Auxiliary were thrilled about it, too. At first there were



about 50 women — you should have heard the speech — it's a wonder I got 10! But there were about 50 who came up and signed their names publicly in front of everybody else, and the next day there were women coming down who had heard about this military brigade and wanted to be a part of it.

I had 5 lieutenants. You didn't want a whole lot of hierarchy who you had to refer things to if an action came up, if something was needed at AC, for example, or no matter where. When we got the invitation one lieutenant would take a group in one car or two cars and go out there right away with these red berets and arm bands. Oh, the women got busy sewing these white "EB" letters on their red arm bands, and we were passing them out to the members of the Brigade only. Then we found out that some of the Auxiliary members who didn't have the courage to join the Brigade were going down to the stores and buying red berets themselves and wearing them on the picket lines so it looked like we had a lot more than we really had. Because it was an easy thing to get a beret at that time, \$1.00 or something like that.

I think that on the sign-up paper we actually had between 300 and 500, but that's a big gap; we didn't really have any good record. It was very difficult because this was something that was going on all day and all night — all the activity around that hall — and was very tense. Reports were coming in all the time. It was such a big area to cover, with plants spread out all over the city.

Some of us slept there at night. The young girls were always wanting to take care of me. They were always finding a cot for me to sleep on. [Genora needed treatment for tuberculosis, but put it off because of the strike, and later lost the use of a lung. — K.O.] The big kitchen was at the south end of town, where the big Fisher plant was, so at the union hall we would have a bologna sandwich and coffee, just to sustain us. Someone in the union hall couldn't get all the way out to the kitchen. Anyone walking the picket lines was given a card and given big meals and good meals, but we had the bologna sandwiches and cheese sandwiches and coffee at the union hall. That's what I was existing on. Sleeping at night, if you could sleep, and sitting around planning and plotting and talking.

**Q: You were pretty young yourself.**

A: I was 23.

**Q: What inspired you to choose a military type formation?**

A: Well, the conditions that were going on around the whole city. Men were getting beaten up. You'd see them coming up to the union hall with their faces all puffed out. General Motors had recruited a vigilante squad of about 500 men who would beat up unionists. I felt we had to organize to counter that. Some of the men were very afraid of getting too militant on the streets, fighting and so on, because they were being charged with being Communists all the time and that was a big threat. If you got black-

listed at one of the plants, they sent it all over to Chrysler and Ford and so on, so that in Michigan you wouldn't be able to get a job. They were very afraid of getting their names right out in front in the newspapers. They did have those flying squads, a group of wonderful men that would go out and do their duty, but the women were quite dramatic.

The papers made it sound especially dramatic because they had never had this before in the history of labor that women came out and fought. Some of the papers said that we came out with our mops and our brooms and our rolling pins to defend our men. That wasn't true. We had clubs. We had big clubs. We had them trimmed down so that they were easy for us to handle, to fit a woman's hand. We also carried bars of hard milled soap in a sock, usually a man's sock, and when you gave it a good hard whip and hit somebody on the side of the head it could really be very painful. So the women went around with bars of soap in one pocket and socks in the other. I think the police got reports and knew what we were doing, but it wasn't a weapon, so they couldn't arrest us on that.

**Q: What was the effect of the strike that was won, or the series of strikes, in Flint? What was the effect on the city of Flint and the people of the city?**

A: Well, to begin with, the people had been paralyzed with fear, because this was the hand that fed them, you know. They came up to Flint to get good wages from General Motors. Good wages would amount to anywhere from \$.59 to maybe \$1.00 an hour for men, because this was the industrial workers, not the steel workers, not the tool and die workers. At first they were paralyzed with fear, men and women. But later, when they saw great numbers coming in and increasing our strength and heard our sound cars going down the street, which was our only avenue of expression really, then they all began coming up to the union hall and wanting to join. And we accepted them. They didn't have to be auto workers. They could be janitors or they could be anything. We were very happy to have the people of Flint working with us, walking our picket lines, and showing General Motors that we had numbers and strength publicly.

In the Brigade, after we got so that we were functioning well, if someone called for our support, we would go. For instance, a number of girls who worked in a department store, J.C. Penney, sat down; they wanted a union. The Brigade that was going around to groups went down there and talked with them, and by this time the women had a lot of confidence in themselves. Very often they would go right up and talk to the bosses of the stores or other enterprises and all of them in the store would sign up and these stores were organized that way. Not by the employees themselves, but by these other women coming in and mobilizing their forces and demanding that the company sign a union contract, and women did that.

**Q: This kind of broadening of the union movement beyond the auto workers was a very important effort of the kind we don't see much today. How would you compare in general the unions today to the unions of the 1930s and '40s?**

A: Oh, there's very little good comparison that you can make because that happens in every part of history. When you elect people to hired positions, with both salaries and better acceptance in society and so on, these people begin to feel that their interests are more aligned with people with money than they are with the workers they are supposed to represent. This happened in our union. Take the case of Walter Reuther, who finally became the president of the international union. He and his brother Victor went to Russia in the early 1930s and helped organize the Russian workers in the Soviet Union in the auto factories — helped make their production more up to date, more like American production — then they came back and worked on forming a union here. They were socialists, and they came from a staunch socialist and union family.

Walter Reuther finally became the leader of a very powerful organization that had a lot to say about national, state, and local politics, and by the time he was granted the great honor of coming to the back door of the White House and consulting with the president of the United States this changed this man completely. Completely. Then he wanted to control. No wildcat strikes, no this, no that. And he got very good control. In fact he was the one who took away the union dues being paid to stewards in the shop and instead he negotiated the dues check-off system. It came right out of their checks, so that we lost contact between the stewards and the workers on the plant floor. They never had that same contact, talking as they turned over their dues about what's happening and so on. The check-off system gave the union officers a guaranteed wage. Nice salaries and traveling and all kinds of prestigious things that they never had before.

This happens with many, many movements. The bureaucrats develop as a result of the pressure of capitalist society. This we have to guard against no matter when and how we organize a political movement of the workers.

**Q: Before we get to that, what do you think can be done by workers today to change their unions back to the militant fighting instruments they had then?**

A: Education, education, education! And I think we've got to have the understanding, plain and clear, with workers that you've got to have your own voice up there in the United States government. You've got to have your own political party. You've got two parties for the bosses, and you know what we get out of it each time. Nothing. We've got to form our own political party with our own leaders and our own demands, our own program, and if we do, then the strikes themselves will have much more



significance. Because when we organized the industrial union movement what we were lacking was a labor party.

By the way, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) didn't become a "Congress" until this great strike was victorious. Before that it was the Committee for Industrial Organization — John L. Lewis and his Committee. As soon as we showed them that we had the power to bring the world's largest industrial corporation down to the bargaining table and to be recognized as a union, then it spread from the auto workers to the rubber workers to the steel workers and to all the other industrial unions and it changed the face of America. And John L. Lewis's Congress of Industrial Organizations then became a very powerful force.

But what have we got today? We won a great number of economic gains, but politically we never did anything to secure them and so they're easily legislated away. Many have been legislated away or are in the process now of being taken away in this period very rapidly, and there's no other solution but a labor party. You can say, We'll improve the unions, throw out the old ones, and bring in new ones, and so on, but

that's only a fight for economic betterment. It's not a fight for political control of your life, and that's what we've got to do, and there's only one way that's on the field right now and that's Labor Party Advocates.

**Q: Let me ask you a question about that. Along with your massive history of being first this and that, you are also a founding member of Labor Party Advocates. Tell us a little bit about it and why you decided to promote LPA.**

**A:** Well, anybody who believes it is possible to someday have a socialist system of equality without wars and starvation and all of the things man has suffered since the beginning of time knows that we must do it in stages of education. And so I have always been in favor of a labor party for working people. In the Chevrolet local following the strike, we set up a labor party committee, ran candidates in the city, and had a very favorable response, but that was only local. During World War II, Emil Mazey, who was on the executive board of the UAW at the time, and I and several other secondary leaders of the UAW organized the Michigan Commonwealth

Federation patterned after the Canadian Commonwealth Federation, which was a labor party. In Canada it turned into the New Democratic Party, and it's having great problems with the bureaucracy and the same thing that infests all organizations. Even in church organizations and small organizations there's always this business of bureaucracy that sets in and gains control over the members. And they're having a great many problems right now with their New Democratic Party, but even so I think a labor party is the answer.

You can't stand on a soap box in this powerful United States of America, which rules the world, and say, "We want a revolution," and expect it to come about that way. The process of education is going to be in the workers going into their own labor party, electing their own representatives, putting up their own program of action, and that's the only way you're going to change the unions. I don't think there's much opportunity within the union itself. The Teamsters was an exception, but they are not yet successful. □

## Organizing Labor's Power to Fight for Women's Economic Needs

*Continued from page 23*

nesses. So we need a program that addresses the needs of the people who work for these small businesses. The workers should decide. Some strictly owner-operated businesses, such as family farms, should be subsidized. Other small businesses should be turned into worker-run cooperatives. And others should be replaced with larger, more productive units that can pay a decent wage.

I would also say that, since large businesses are also saying this stuff — but with less credibility — we need a program for people who work for large businesses and are threatened with layoffs and wage cuts. Such a program would say, "If you can't run your business right — if you can't provide this person working for you with a decent wage and benefits, then we will take you over and we will provide for them in another way. You'll go out of business, and you'll have to go to work." We cannot have business owners telling people they can't make a decent living!

Issues of production and productivity are very important to us as women workers, because "competition" is the reason we're told we're being paid less money. We're told there is less to go around, so we'd just better put up or shut up. And it's women and Black people, Black women in particular, who are the first people told to "Go away" or "Go work for \$4.45 an hour — it's better than nothing."

But that actually isn't true. Half a loaf is not better than none. You can give a starving man half a loaf of bread and he or she will still die of starvation. And that's what is going on here.

### A Labor Party as a Unifying Force

As far as what I think of a labor party, among other things, I think we have to be looking at carrying out political strikes around issues which the labor party could help organize. In France, for example, workers went on strike because the price of bread went up. In Italy they went on strike because health care benefits were being decimated. Even the doctors went out on strike over this. The whole agenda is transformed when you have an active labor grouping pushing for these things.

By "labor" I don't mean to exclude the people who aren't actively in unions. We all work for a living. We are all labor.

A labor party would be a unifying body that could unite unions like the UAW with other unions and with community action groups in joint efforts around community strikes, community demonstrations, and community occupations, as well as workplace issues.

A labor party would fight for the needs of labor. I live in Detroit and the first thing the business owners there say is, "If you don't give us concessions, we're leaving." And the Democratic Party administration in Detroit goes along with them. The city gave the Detroit city workers a 10 percent across-the-board wage cut last year. They laid off many people. One-third of the city is on welfare. This is ridiculous! You can't live on welfare. I was getting \$176 a month on welfare. No one lives on that!

And, last but not least, I agree with what the previous speakers said about labor becoming involved in these broader issues. One thing that happened in the miners' strike in Britain in 1984–85 and again in 1993–94 is that gay and

lesbian groups took an active interest in the miners' strike. This meant that the miners then took an active interest in gay and lesbian issues, and gay men and lesbians marched in the miners' marches in London and elsewhere. We need to look for opportunities like this to unify, because women and other unorganized people need labor's power and labor needs their power.

### A Woman's Right to Choose

Regarding the list of things previous speakers have said we should be fighting for, I want to say something about pro-choice — a woman's right to choose. In 1987 I raised a motion in the Tool and Die Unit of UAW Local 600 that "the Tool & Die Unit calls on Local 600 and the UAW International to organize demonstrations in support of Medicaid abortions within two weeks in Detroit and Lansing — Free abortion on demand." (This was before the state of Michigan banned the payment of abortions for women on Medicaid.) The motion also called for free health care. The unit — all men — voted for the motion! So I do think there is a place for labor in these actions.

The last thing I would like to say is that we need to fight for the economic wherewithal to provide a decent life for all of us — which means, if necessary, taking over production in order to provide a decent wage for everyone. That is what we need and what we should fight for. Otherwise there will be nothing to back up our demands and the divisions among us will increase. □



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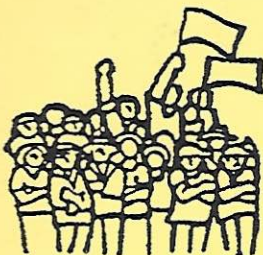
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# The Manifesto of the Fourth International

## 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.

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edited by Paul Le Blanc, 148 pages  
(1990) — \$9.00

This book consists of eight documents. The longest, written in 1983 by Paul Le Blanc and Dianne Feeley, is entitled "In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity" — a response to SWP leader Jack Barnes's attack on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Also included is the founding platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, a lengthy 1988 analysis of the SWP by Frank Lovell and Paul Le Blanc, and two major documents produced by the FIT when the Socialist Workers Party formally broke from the Fourth International in 1990. The volume concludes with three documents dealing with the need for unity among revolutionary socialists in the United States.