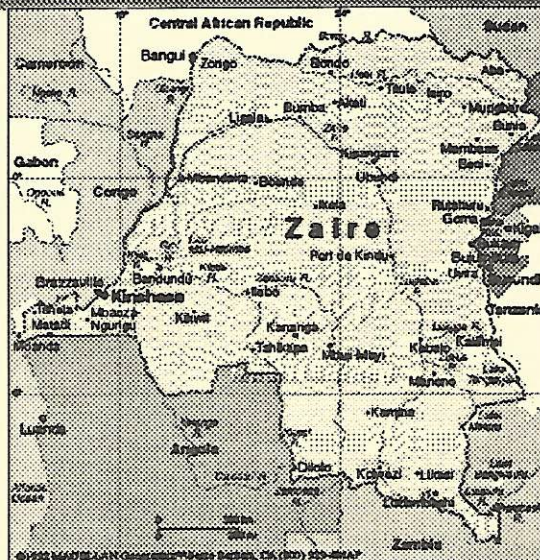


In Defense of Marxism

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Fight Corporate Power: From Detroit to Kinshasa!



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From the Managing Editors: Detroit to Kinshasa, the Fight Against Corporate Power

This issue appears on the eve of the national march on Detroit called by the AFL-CIO. We print several documents put out by Detroit newspaper strikers and their supporters describing the present state of affairs in that struggle, which continues to be the most important battlefield for U.S. workers seeking to fight back against Corporate America's one-sided class war.

(We also refer our readers to the excellent coverage of the Detroit situation in the May-June 1997 *Against the Current* [ATC], a special section, pp. 6-18: "The Detroit Newspaper Strike." Incidentally, a highly informative article on the present status of the Mumia Abu-Jamal case, by Steve Bloom, appears in the same issue of ATC, preceding the section on Detroit.)

A vital center of fight-back efforts in this country is the Teamsters union under Ron Carey in alliance with the rank-and-file caucus Teamsters for a Democratic Union. TDUEr Charles Walker, in these pages, describes the latest maneuvers of the old-guard Teamster bureaucrats against Carey as they continue doing their services for the bosses.

The Labor Party, which is very active in support of the Detroit newspaper workers, continues to be a central focus of our magazine — Kansas City Area Labor Party leader Bill Onasch exposes the attempt to get rid of Social Security and discusses what the labor movement can do about it; Labor Party activist Melana Marchant conveys the fight-back spirit of this year's Meeting the Challenge conference, held in St. Paul, Minnesota, in early February; and Labor Party activist Tom Barrett reviews *Downsize This!* by Michael Moore, also an LP member.

These pages also include a report from the Labor Party's Chapter Convention, with related documents, and continuing discussion (between *BIDOM* contributors Frank Wright and David Jones) on the LP's strategy and tactics and the role of revolutionary socialists within it. (This carries further the discussion in our previous issue, which had contributions by Frank Lovell,

Bill Onasch, Paul Le Blanc, Rita Shaw, Brian King, Ben Stone, and George Saunders.)

In general a vital part is played, not only in organized labor and the labor party movement but in the political life of our society, by conscious revolutionary socialists. Our magazine is proud to feature some essential historical discussion on the role of organized revolutionary socialists in the U.S., centering on speeches by Frank Lovell and Paul Le Blanc (given at this year's Socialist Scholars Conference in New York City) in connection with the recently published book *Trotskyism in the United States*.

Also in this issue, Le Blanc answers some critics of the legacy of James P. Cannon, the early Communist Party leader who became the quintessential spokesperson for Trotskyism in the United States. Two related articles, by Joe Auciello and Mark Weber, look at the record of Cannon's onetime associate, the former Trotskyist Max Shachtman and some of his followers in American politics and the socialist movement.

The Struggle for Black Liberation, Here and in Africa

Another feature we are honored to include in this issue is Muhammad Ahmad's survey of the present stage of the struggle for Black liberation in the U.S. today, and we express thanks to Jean Tussey for helping with the text and to Lee DeNoyer for her labor of transcription.

Likewise we thank W.T. Whitney, Jr., for his inspiring review of the militant internationalist activities of Black leader Lucius Walker; and Frank Lovell, for his tribute to the veteran Trotskyist and Black liberation supporter Sol Grauer.

Highlighting our international coverage in this issue are first-hand reports by members of the Fourth International from battlefronts of the worldwide class struggle such as Albania and Belgium, but particularly from Rwanda and rebel-held territory in Zaïre.

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Message from Detroit Strikers

Open Letter to the Labor Movement and to All Our Supporters

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
It happened! The AFL-CIO Executive Council, meeting in Los Angeles February 17-20, approved a call for a national labor mobilization in Detroit June 20-21. This mobilization will demonstrate labor's power and its determination to fight back and defeat union-busting companies. It will also be an action in solidarity with our struggle to get our jobs back under a fair union contract...

We are writing to express our most appreciative thanks to the hundreds of unions who sent messages supporting our appeal for the national mobilization. All of us have been greatly warmed by the solidarity so many have shown us.

We want everyone to know that despite the action taken by our unions in making an unconditional offer to return to work, only a small number of us have been recalled. Man-

agement refuses to reinstate the 300 workers they fired during the strike. The rest of us have been put on a "waiting list." The publishers say they intend to keep all their scabs.

The media is telling the public our struggle is over. They said the same about Bridgestone/Firestone after the union there made an unconditional offer to return to work. But as you know, after a creative and militant campaign by the Steelworkers Union, all of the Bridgestone/Firestone workers were able to reclaim their jobs under a good union contract.

We can have the same result in Detroit. But it will take a massive, united effort of the entire labor movement. Please do everything you can to mobilize as large a contingent as possible from your union to come to Detroit in June. Details of what will occur on the days of action will follow.

We look forward to welcoming you to Motown. We hope this will truly be a national demonstration — a Solidarity Day III — that will open a new period of labor victories all over the country.

In solidarity,
On behalf of 2,000 locked-out Detroit newspaper workers and our families.
June Mobilization Committee
A Committee of ACOSS, an organization of Locked-Out Detroit Newspaper Workers and Supporters
P.O. Box 242
Sterling Heights, MI 48310-5777
Phone: 313-961-4480
E-Mail: ActMotown@aol.com
For More Information contact Metro-Detroit AFL-CIO (Toll Free): 1-888-97MOTOWN □

Action Coalition of Strikers and Supporters (ACOSS) Statement of Purpose

The Action Coalition of Strikers and Supporters (ACOSS) is a coalition made up of striking Detroit newspaper workers, their families, and their supporters in the labor movement and the community.

ACOSS was first formed to organize the mass rallies at the Detroit News building and the Sterling Heights plant on July 13, 1996, the first anniversary of the strike.

ACOSS's actions are decided democratically following discussion and debate, with all votes weighted in favor of the strikers.

The goal of ACOSS is a victorious end to the strike with all strikers able to return to work with a fair and just contract.

The basic role of ACOSS is to support and build actions called by the strikers and their unions. Through peaceful and disciplined mass demonstrations and a variety of other activities, we seek to win the entire labor movement's participation in this struggle, together with labor's allies in the community.

We believe that the winning strategy in this strike can and must be to stop production and distribution of the scab newspapers.

Our aim is to bring increasing economic, political, and moral pressure on the Detroit Newspaper Agency (DNA) to force it to negotiate an equitable settlement of this strike.

Such pressure must also be placed on those parties actively engaged in the DNA's union-busting campaign, especially the scab advertisers.

We believe the Detroit newspaper workers' strike must be conducted on a national basis. In addition to local and regional solidarity actions, we strongly support the proposal to organize a National Labor March on Detroit in support of striking newspaper workers.

This strike can be won, but it will take massive efforts and huge, determined mobi-

lizations of hundreds and thousands of strikers, other workers, and a broad base of community allies to accomplish it.

Adopted: October 21, 1996

For an update on strike/lockout activities and to reach ACOSS, call our 24-hour-a-day Hot Line at (810) 447-2716. ACOSS meets Monday nights at 7 p.m. at the Central United Methodist Church, corner of Adams and Woodward in Detroit. All newspaper strikers and strike supporters are welcome. Join us! □

Additional Material on Detroit Newspapers Struggle

For information on Action!Motown, the web page of the *Detroit Sunday Journal*, the strikers' newspaper, is "<http://www.rust.net/~workers/union/union.htm>."

The AFL-CIO also has a web page for the June action. It is "<http://www.action97.w1.com/>."

The Web page of Action Coalition of Strikers and Supporters (ACOSS, the group that petitioned for the national March on Detroit and sent a delegation to the AFL-CIO Execu-

tive Council meeting in Los Angeles to get it) is:

<http://members.aol.com/actmotown>

To reach ACOSS by phone, call 1-313-961-4480

For the ACOSS Hot Line, a recorded message with up-to-date information, call 1-810-447-2716.

The toll free information number for the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO is 1-888-97MOTOWN.

Eastern Zaïre: Under New Management

by Anke Hintjens

The author recently returned from a visit to Goma, the main town in rebel-held Eastern Zaïre. Anke Hintjens works with the Brussels-based Committee to Abolish Third World Debt (COCAD) and was interviewed for Rouge, newspaper of the French section of the Fourth International by Alain Mathieu. (See "Un témoignage de Rwanda et du Kivu" [Eyewitness Report from Rwanda and Kivu], Rouge #1726, April 3, 1997, p. 13). This article and the accompanying report from Rwanda by Hintjens are based on that interview.

I last visited Goma, Zaïre, in 1993. This time I felt the difference immediately. Before, we didn't dare move around. There were roadblocks everywhere, with soldiers demanding payment. All that has stopped. The corruption, the arbitrary arrests, the day-to-day rip-offs. The result is a noticeable improvement in the standard of living for ordinary people.

The local population in the Goma region was not active in the rebellion in the early days. The great success of Laurent Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces of the Congo was based on cooperation among three forces: the Banyamulenge resistance against ethnic cleansing (for

more on the Banyamulenge uprising, see the article by B. Skanthakumar, elsewhere in this issue); the Rwandan army's determination to break the genocidal regime-in-exile's control over the Hutu refugee camps in Eastern Zaïre; and Kabila's own coalition of parties and guerrilla groups.

The Zairian army didn't want to fight, and the Mobutu regime was already rotting. Not surprisingly, the rebel regime had a number of successes, and new people began to flock toward it.

Rebel Training Sessions

We participated in several training sessions for new members of the Alliance. They studied the unsuccessful 1964-65 rebellion, the heritage of Patrice Lumumba and his movement, and the Alliance's own program (which, incidentally, has been published in *Rouge*, newspaper of the French section of the Fourth International, December 19, 1996, and February 20, 1997).

Alliance branches are being created in many districts. They try to educate people about the "culture of corruption" which developed during the 30-year Mobutu regime.

Continued on page 23

NSSP Asks for Protest Messages

Three Trotskyist Leaders Arrested in Sri Lanka

by Jean Dupont

Three leaders of Sri Lanka's New Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) have been detained by police in connection with an arms cache police claim to have discovered in a building housing a Health Workers trade union.

NSSP General Secretary Vickramabahu Karunaratne has been released on bail, and will appear in court on June 9, in connection with the alleged discovery of 32 weapons in the building of the Health Workers Co-operative Society. Police have still not released Ajith Forseka, president of the co-operative society, and P.D. Saranapala, general secretary of the Janaraja Health Workers Union, which has offices in the same building. Both men are members of the NSSP central committee, though the workers center is open to health workers of all political persuasions.

In a statement after his release on bail, Karunaratne stressed that the NSSP "categorically denies" all allegations against its members. "Reactionary forces are trying to implicate the NSSP in a conspiracy to use concealed weapons," he said. "By these lies they hope to discredit workers struggle against price increases,

the genocidal war [against the Tamils], repression, and privatization.

"Their other aim is to proscribe the NSSP," he continued.

"Yes, our party defends the right of the masses to rise up against this unjust capitalist system. But we have always disassociated ourselves from individual terrorism and intimidation as methods of revolution. Such tactics actually undermine the active movement, and sap the democratic initiative of the masses."

In 1989 the UNP government issued arms to the NSSP, and other components of the United Socialist Alliance, so that they could defend themselves against the Deshapriya Janatha Viraparaya (Patriotic People's Movement), a chauvinist section of the JVP. At least 24 NSSP members were murdered by DVP chauvinists. Trade union centers were also issued arms, after a leading Communist Party trade union leader was also killed.

According to an earlier NSSP press statement, "The NSSP returned all its arms when the government demanded them. It has not given arms to the Health Workers union center, and is therefore not responsible for this arms discov-

ery. The arrest of Bahu Karunaratne, NSSP general secretary, is definitely a political conspiracy [aiming] to isolate the NSSP because of its resolute opposition to the privatization program of the Chandrika government. The NSSP is also a clear opponent of the war against the Tamil people. Bahu Karunaratne has been identified as a determined opponent of the government's policies. Since his election to the Colombo Municipal Council he has become a very popular mass leader."

The NSSP asks friends and comrades abroad to send messages demanding the release of Ajith Forseka and P.D. Saranapala, and the dropping of charges against Vickramabahu Karunaratne to Her Excellency the President, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge, Presidential Secretariat, Colombo 01, Sri Lanka. (fax +94-1-333703) and The Secretary, Ministry of Defence (fax 94-1-54-1529). Please send a copy of your protests to the NSSP at fax +94-1-334822.

Donations to the legal fund should be sent to United Federation of Labour, A/C 16 500 599 62, Peoples Bank, Union Place, Colombo 02, Sri Lanka. □

Historical Background

Rebel Victory in Zaïre

by George Saunders

Most of this article was written May 7 or before. As we go to press, Mobutu has fled and rebel forces are entering Kinshasa. In future issues we will continue to follow the course of this revolution, and the ways the imperialist powers will try to contain it.

The rebel guerrilla forces of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo, headed by Laurent Kabila, are poised to enter Kinshasa, the capital city of Zaïre (Congo).

If they come to power, that will signify a revolutionary victory comparable in potential significance to the Sandinista occupation of Managua in 1979, the coming to power of the Algerian liberation forces in 1962, and the taking of Havana by the guerrilla fighters of the July 26 Movement in 1959.

Where a revolutionary process could go from such a victory cannot be predicted. The differing fates of the Cuban, Algerian, and Nicaraguan revolutions show that much depends on the quality of rebel leadership, the mobilization of the masses, the policies of the imperialist governments, banks, and corporations, and the general balance of class forces in the world — the unrelenting battle between capital, with its retainers, and labor, with its allies.

As Mobutu's mercenary forces were collapsing inside Zaïre, French imperialist forces were building up, together with at least 1,400 U.S. troops, in Congo-Brazzaville, across the Congo River from Kinshasa, and in nearby Gabon. On May 6 plans were announced for the pro-imperialist dictator Mobutu to fly to Gabon, where a conference of pro-French African leaders would "discuss the crisis that is gripping Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaïre," according to the *May 7 New York Times*.

Meanwhile, the capitalist media, U.S. and UN spokespersons, and various aid agencies continued to suggest the possibility of a "humanitarian" military intervention, charging that the rebels were committing atrocities against — the former Hutu perpetrators of genocide.

Big Stakes for Imperialism

The Congo (Kinshasa) is one of the most populous, one of the largest in land area, and one of the richest in mineral wealth of all the countries of Africa. Little wonder that the Belgian capitalists who seized it in the 19th century, and the other European and North American capitalists who, since its "independence" in 1960, have dominated it through Mobutu, a CIA-connected former noncom in Belgium's colonial army, have been reluctant to let go of this treasure.

We can be sure that the capitalist ruling classes and their "civilized" governments will use every means at their disposal to keep this rich area under their control despite the coming to power of a movement that at last will be more directly representative of the people of the Congo.

[It was reported that on May 9, "some 30 investment bankers, including representatives from Goldman Sachs, Morgan Grenfell and First Bank of Boston, arrived in Lubumbashi to begin negotiations with the rebels." Lubumbashi is Zaïre's second largest city, in the rich mining province of Shaba (formerly Katanga). The rebels made this their temporary capital after taking it in April.]

What Western "Civilization" Brought the Congo

What was life like for the African people enslaved by the colonial rulers from capitalist Europe? This was most drastically illustrated by the treatment of Africans forced to go to work as wage slaves when the Europeans brought capitalism to the Congo.

African men, living in the harmony of their tribal society in a well-watered, tropical land where naturally grown food was readily available, had no reason to spend their lives in drudgery, extracting ore from the earth to make someone far away rich. And so the Belgian authorities put the pressure on, to teach Africans how to become day laborers and wage slaves.

Black men who refused to work in the mines *had their limbs cut off!* — if they were not killed outright. There were harsh and violent penalties for lateness, absenteeism, indiscipline, etc. That was how men of the Congo "learned" to be mine workers. And that was typical of how "civilization" was brought to Africa.

What really happened was that the *capitalist system of production for profit* was imposed on peoples living a relatively peaceful life of agriculture and cattle raising.

This process, "the way colonialists introduced capitalism into the African countries during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries," is described by one of the modern world's most outstanding opponents of the capitalist system, the Belgian workers leader Ernest Mandel, in his *Introduction to Marxist Economics* (pp. 31–33). (See box below, p. 5.)

One of the points Mandel makes is that a large part of the land in Africa was "transformed overnight into domains owned by the colonizing state or into private property belonging to capitalist corporations."

Private Domain of Belgian King Leopold

In the case of the Congo, the land was transformed in the 1880s into — the private domain of King Leopold II of Belgium!

Besides being king, Leopold functioned as chief executive officer of his own private capitalist corporation, which was granted *ownership* of the Congo by a conference of European governments held in Berlin in 1884–85. In 1908, after exposure of the scandalous horrors by which capitalism was introduced under his administration, Leopold bequeathed "ownership" of this million square miles of *stolen land* to the government of Belgium, which then became the "colonizing state."

In the 1880s Europe was experiencing very rapid industrialization. Vast amounts of capital were accumulating in the hands of the owners of factories, mines, banks, and other businesses — as the factory workers, miners, farmers, etc., of Europe were ever more intensively exploited. The "great powers," the capitalist governments of Europe (still headed by monarchies, but monarchs whose "divine right" to rule was secure only if they served the rule of gold, the interests of capital), competed with one another in finding new areas of the world to invest this rapidly accumulating capital.

Thus, the international conference of the "great powers" of Europe in Berlin in 1884 granted King Leopold II of Belgium *personal rule* over this one million square miles of equatorial Africa, which was given the ironic title "Congo Free State." Why did the governments of Europe, particularly the newly united German state headed by Kaiser Wilhelm and Otto von Bismarck, place such confidence in Leopold? They trusted that Leopold's administration would see to it that their investments in this "Free State" would return a handsome profit.

Besides, Belgium was "neutral." The Germans and French didn't want the English to take the Congo. The English and French didn't want the Germans to take it. And so on. Leopold's "Free State" meant that capital from Germany, France, England, Belgium, the U.S., or wherever would be "free" to invest in the area (with Leopold and his administrators all getting their share). But the state of the natives would be anything but free.

The "Congo Free State"

Here's how the historian Maurice N. Hennessy, in his book *Congo* (1961), describes the result:

"The granting of concessions to various companies was a natural sequel to the kind of rule Leopold established and to his lust for wealth." (Leopold's "lust for wealth" of course was just one more individual expression of the general lust for profit driving all ruling class figures in the imperialist stage of capitalist development.)

There ensued the "Christianization," the bringing of "civilization" to the native peoples of a vast river basin, the area drained by the Congo River and its tributaries. As Leopold himself stated, the primary Christian virtue to be brought to the unfortunate Africans trapped in "barbarism" was *work*. "The mission which the agents of the [Belgian] State have to accomplish on the Congo," he said in 1898, "is a noble [!] one. They have to continue the development of civilisation in the centre of Equatorial Africa, receiving their inspiration directly from Berlin and Brussels... They must accustom the population to general laws, of which the most needful and the most salutary is assuredly that of *work*" [emphasis added].

And indeed the people of the Congo were taught how to work!

The historian Hennessy continues:

In all cases [of the granting of concessions in the Congo to various companies], he [Leopold] ensured that a large part of any profits went to himself, but in order to foster this end, *an abundance of labour was a primary requirement*. [Emphasis added.] Consequently, quite early on a system of work as a tax medium was initiated. Each [local] chief was authorized to collect taxes; he did so by demanding that individuals should work for a specific period of time for a minimum payment. This, of course, was another name for slavery.

Thus the "Congo Free State" brought *wage slavery* to the people of the Congo.

The so-called taxpayers were treated like prisoners, their work was carried out under the supervision of armed sentries, and, as can be easily imagined, the system lent itself to all kinds of tyranny, brutality and subsequent reprisals by the natives. In one concession alone one hundred and forty-two Africans were killed.

The spirit of bitterness and hatred generated in the people was quite terrifying...

The novelist Joseph Conrad, who went to the Congo around this time, described conditions there as "the vilest scramble for loot...[in] the history of human conscience."

In the late 19th century, reports trickled out that for failing to work as their bosses demanded African men were being mutilated. The Belgian authorities denied the stories of such mutilations and the general brutality and venality in their "Free State." But then the reports of mutilations were confirmed by photographs. "The kodak has been a sore calamity to us," Mark Twain has Leopold saying, in his satirical *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905). "In the early years," Twain's Leopold goes on, "we had no trouble in getting the press to 'expose' the tales of the mutilations as slanders, lies, inventions of busy-body American missionaries and exasperated foreigners who had found the 'open door' of the Berlin-Congo charter closed against them."

All this was just a hundred years ago or less. And this system has persisted, only slightly cleaned up, to the present day. Instead of King Leopold, the one who has ruled by murder and intimidation in the interests of international capital, has been the Belgian-trained and CIA-linked former colonial military man, Mobutu. This heritage is what the people of the Congo are rebelling against and hoping to be rid of.

Independence and the Murder of Lumumba

In the post-World War II era, in the 1950s and early '60s, throughout Africa the movement for freedom from colonial rule grew stronger as the European colonial powers grew weaker. The independence movement was especially inspired by such events as the military defeat of the French colonial rulers in Indochina at the hands of Vietnamese guerrillas in 1954 and the intense guerrilla war for the independence of Algeria from France, which began around 1954 and by 1960 was approaching victory.

The Belgian authorities in the Congo, in an effort to make their rule look more democratic, allowed elections there in 1960. They expected that moderate forces would win the vote and that colonial rule would continue under a new guise.

To their surprise, the overwhelming popular vote went to a candidate favoring full independence. That was Patrice Lumumba.

Rather than honor the democratic vote of the people they had oppressed, the Western capitalist powers organized various ruses, such as the "secession" of the pro-Belgian puppet Moise Tshombe in the richest mining province, Katanga (now called Shaba). Then they engineered intervention by the "international community" — so-called peacekeeping forces of the United Nations. To "restore order," the UN troops seized the elected prime minister, Lumumba, and handed him over to Mobutu and Tshombe to be killed.

That assassination of the Congo's independence leader by action of "impartial" United Nations troops will never be forgotten.

Independence Fight Continues

The desire for independence demonstrated in the elections did not die with the assassination of Lumumba. A pro-independence guerrilla movement was soon organized and grew strong in the eastern part of the Congo. The imperialist powers sent in troops and mercenaries, including anti-Castro Cuban gusanos, to bomb territory held by Lumumbist guerrillas and to retake cities they captured. In 1965, Che Guevara clandestinely went, along with other veteran Cuban guerrillas, to fight alongside the Lumumbists. And Malcolm X, before he was assassinated (probably by U.S. government agents who had infiltrated the Black nationalist movement), was apparently trying to organize African American veterans to join the Lumumbist guerrilla war in the spirit of Pan-Africanism.

The Lumumbist guerrilla war was unable to make much progress in the 1960s. Malcolm was killed. Che moved on to a new battlefield, Bolivia, where he too was killed. But the spirit of Che's call to organize "two, three, many Vietnams" — that is, armed mass movements for freedom from imperialist rule — did not die out. Vietnam, with worldwide support, won its freedom in 1975. Within a year or two after that, the Portuguese empire in southern Africa, particularly Angola and Mozambique, finally collapsed in the face of guerrilla liberation movements.

Also in the 1970s Zimbabwe gained its independence, despite the intransigence of the racist colonists of "Southern Rhodesia." And by the early 1990s, the apartheid stronghold of racist rule in South Africa had to make a partial surrender, to allow majority Black rule — even though, at present, Black rule is still distorted by collaboration with international capitalism on the part of the government of Nelson Mandela. In fact, Mandela, together with U.S. and UN diplomats, has tried to mediate between the dictator Mobutu and the rebels headed by Laurent Kabila.

The Rwanda-Burundi Background

While the turbulent events around the Congo's struggle for independence were going on in the early 1960s, the Belgian colonialists employed another ruse in two smaller territories they ad-

Baskets of Hands: How Capitalists Taught Congolese to Work

"Between five million and eight million Africans are said to have died in the rush to exploit the Congo's resources, and early in this [the 20th] century labor bosses were notorious for cutting off the right hands of boys [!] who did not meet their mining quotas [emphasis added]. To demonstrate their strictness, bosses showed off baskets of hands."

(New York Times, May 20, 1997.)

ministered just east of the Congo, adjoining a series of "great lakes" in central Africa. Here the imperialists had employed that ancient policy made famous by the Romans — *divide et impera*. Divide and conquer.

Two populations, of somewhat different ethnic or tribal origin, though speaking one common language, inhabited the territories of Rwanda and Burundi. These were the Hutu and the Tutsi. (In Western "popular" lore about Africa, the Tutsi were glamorized as the unusually tall, slender warrior people — the "Watusi.") In reality, these two peoples lived in relative harmony. The Tutsi tended to be cattle herders; the Hutu tended to live by agriculture. But there was intermarriage and overlap between the two groups. The Belgian authorities seized upon the differences and exacerbated them. They assigned arbitrary identity papers, naming the wealthier or better-off 10 percent as "Tutsi" and the rest as "Hutu." The Tutsi were given privileges in return for collaboration with the colonial authorities.

When independence was granted to Rwanda and Burundi, the "Tutsi" because of their relatively privileged position, a *product* of colonial policy, took predominance in the new governments. With support from Belgian and French colonialist agencies, a Hutu-supremacist opposition movement was organized. This Hutu movement led a rebellion, took over, and drove thousands of Tutsi into exile. The new "Hutu" government immediately gained support from Belgian and French imperialism. And for many years, a pro-French military dictatorship ruled Rwanda.

Revolutionary Government in Uganda

Many of the younger generation of exiled Rwandans ("Tutsis") found themselves living in Uganda and Tanzania, which border Rwanda on the east. They were influenced by Pan-African ideas alive in those areas, and participated in a guerrilla movement that overthrew the British-imposed dictator Idi Amin in Uganda in the 1980s. They applied the lessons they had learned in this struggle, including the pursuit of policies opposing supremacism or chauvinism or privilege to any tribal group. Their policy was and is fairness and equality for all Africans, regardless of tribal or ethnic connection.

These young people organized a guerrilla movement against the Hutu-supremacist military dictatorship in Rwanda headed by Juvenal Habyarimana and backed up by French military and economic power — and also by Mobutu. In general, the French imperialists have tried to hold onto former possessions in Africa rather tightly. French troops were repeatedly sent in to prop up dictatorships in one country after another. By comparison, there was less direct military intervention in the African countries where Anglo-American imperialist influence prevailed. There was more indirect control, through the International Monetary Fund, local dictators (including the apartheid dictatorship), covert CIA activities, etc. This reflected the

Ernest Mandel on How Capitalism Was Introduced in Sub-Sahara Africa

"Let us look at the living conditions of the inhabitants of the African countries. They were stock breeders and cultivators of the soil, on a more or less primitive basis, depending on the character of the region, but always under the condition of a relative abundance of land. Not only was there no scarcity of land in Africa, but in terms of the ratio of population to the amount of available land, it may be said that land reserves were virtually unlimited. It is true, of course, that the yield from these lands was mediocre because of the crude agricultural implements and the standard of living was very low, etc., but there was no material force pushing this population to work in the mines, on the farms, or in the factories of the white colonialist.

"Without a transformation in the administration of land in Equatorial Africa, in Black Africa, there was no possibility for introducing the capitalist mode of production. For that, compulsion of a noneconomic character had to be used, a thoroughgoing and brutal separation of the Black masses from their normal means of subsistence had to be carried out. A large part of the lands had to be transformed overnight into domains owned by the colonizing state or into private property belonging to capitalist corporations.

"The Black population had to be resettled in domains, or in reserves, as they have been cynically called, in land areas which were inadequate for sustaining all their inhabitants. In addition, a head-tax, that is to say, a money tax on each inhabitant, was imposed as another lever, since primitive agriculture yielded no money income.

"By various extra-economic pressures like these, the colonialists created a need for

the African to work for wages during perhaps two or three months a year, in order to earn the money to pay his tax and buy the small supplement of food necessary for his subsistence, since the land remaining at his disposal was no longer adequate for a livelihood.

"In such countries as South Africa, the Rhodesias, and... the former Belgian Congo, where the capitalist mode of production was introduced on a grand scale, these methods were applied on the same scale, and a large part of the Black population was uprooted, expelled, and forced out of its traditional existence and mode of work.

"Let us mention, in passing, the ideological hypocrisy which accompanied this movement, the complaints of the capitalist corporations that the Blacks were 'lazy,' since they did not want to work even when they had a chance to make ten times as much in mines and factories as they did from their traditional labor on the land. These same complaints had been made about the Indian, Chinese, and Arab workers some 50 to 70 years earlier. They were also made — a rather good proof of the basic equality of all the races which make up humanity — against the European workers, French, Belgian, English, German, in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries.

"It is simply a function of this constant fact normally, because of his physical and nervous constitution, no man cares to be confined for 8, 9, 10, or 12 hours a day in a factory, mill, or mine; it really requires a most abnormal and unusual force or pressure to make a man engage in this kind of convict labor when he has not been accustomed to it."

greater economic strength and influence of the Anglophone "dollar republic."

In the late 1980s, a new movement was able to gain power in Uganda and its methods were then turned successfully to Rwanda.

Genocide in Rwanda

As the guerrilla fighters of the Rwanda Patriotic Front moved toward victory, the French imperialists helped organize one of the worst crimes of the 20th century — the horrendous massacre of nearly half a million Tutsi and anti-dictatorship Hutu, the terrible genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

But this was a desperate measure to try to stop a guerrilla war that was winning. Nor did the other imperialist powers do anything against this French effort — which paralleled the terror campaign of the Secret Army Organization (OAS) on the eve of the victory by Algeria's liberation forces.

The relatively humane, benign, enlightened, anti-chauvinist policies of the revolutionary government in Rwanda have become clear. In

1994, hundreds of thousands of Hutu fled Rwanda, stampeded by rumors that in revenge for the genocide organized by the pro-French dictatorship, Hutus in turn would be massacred. These Hutu refugees found themselves in camps in eastern Zaïre that were dominated by Hutu-supremacist militia and other holdovers of the Rwandan dictatorship-in-exile. Those forces continued to collaborate with the French imperialists and with the pro-imperialist Mobutu regime in Zaïre.

But with time, most of the Hutu refugees recognized that they would get a fair shake in the new Rwanda. When they had the opportunity, when the power of the dictatorship-in-exile and its goons in the refugee camps was broken, the refugees voted with their feet — to return to Rwanda and trust in the new, more humane government. (See the accompanying article by B. Skanthakumar on events in Rwanda and Zaïre and the collapse of the Hutu refugee camps in late 1996.)

Continued on page 39

Rwanda-Zaire: Region in Turmoil

by B. Skanthakumar

We print this January article belatedly to help provide our readers with background on the conditions that have led to the successful advance of the rebel movement in Congo-Zaire. Another version of this article was published in the January 1997 Socialist Outlook, newspaper of the British section of the Fourth International.

In late 1996 there was a severe danger of foreign military intervention in Zaire (Congo-Kinshasa). But the dismantling of the Rwandan Hutu refugee camps there and the return of most refugees to Rwanda removed the stated "humanitarian" goal of imperialist military intervention.

Nevertheless, from the start, it seemed that the Western powers were far more concerned about the success of anti-Mobutu forces and the threat to the Mobutu regime in Zaire than the lives of the refugees.

The Rwandan military leader General Paul Kagame bitterly commented to the Belgian daily *Le Soir*, "The more people talk about it, the more ridiculous this becomes... For us, it's a matter of using a humanitarian pretext on Mobutu's behalf."

French Imperialists Most Vocal

The most vocal advocate of military intervention was the French government, which is notoriously compromised in the region for its backing of dictators and involvement in the suppression of popular movements.

But the many "humanitarian" aid agencies active in the region also favored military intervention. In this regard these "nongovernmental organizations" (NGOs) are indeed Africa's new missionaries.

The old missionaries brought religion and demanded colonial government to "civilize the natives." The new missionaries bring food parcels and demand "humanitarian intervention" because they have claimed the right to speak on behalf of the silenced and suffering. They know what is best, and what is best is for a permanent dependency of people upon them and the legitimization of their work in the grand project to recolonize sub-Saharan Africa.

These NGOs, with a few honorable exceptions like Oxfam, invented mortality figures in the camps. Plucking a figure out of thin air, they asserted the "fact" that one million people would die in the absence of Western troops in the region to secure the distribution of food and medical supplies.

They were completely irresponsible in demanding further Western military interference, whose real goal would have been to defeat the rebellion against the Zairian dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. Instead of disarming the militias which had run the refugee camps, Western mili-

tary forces would have helped them consolidate a Hutu-supremacist outpost in eastern Zaire.

Alex de Waal of African Rights, in an excellent critique of NGO policy in the region, summed it up: "Who could imagine a political solution in a situation in which one side, the Hutu extremists, does not believe the other has a right to exist? If we are not prepared to go and destroy the Hutu militias, we should not stand in the way of the people who are prepared to do so."¹

The camps near the Zairian towns of Goma and Bukavu had become havens for the leaders of the Interahamwe (Hutu-supremacist militia), the former Rwandan armed forces, and politicians and intellectuals promoting Hutu-supremacist ideology. These were the forces that instigated and carried out the 1994 genocide of the Tutsi minority and of anti-dictatorship Hutu in Rwanda.² Some of the civilians in these camps participated in that genocide and fear returning to Rwanda because they will be identified by their former neighbors and other survivors in the genocide trials.

However, many refugees have remained in those camps over the last two years against their will. They were used as human shields not only to physically protect the real scoundrels but also to justify the existence of these camps as the base for a Hutu-supremacist dictatorship-in-exile. The remnants of the dictatorship exaggerated the real population of these camps to obtain increased supplies which they could sell on the open market to townspeople in Zaire in return for cash to finance their activities.

Even at the height of the fighting around the camps, people were forcibly prevented from returning to Rwanda by militia leaders who assured them that "they would soon be attacking Rwanda and we would all go back together," as one woman refugee told *The Guardian* (November 11, 1996).

While thousands have been driven deeper into Zaire, at least 600,000 refugees have returned to Rwanda, abandoning the camps, which had been a destabilizing factor in the region.³

Using the camps, Hutu-supremacist militias had mounted cross-border raids into Rwanda, selectively killing witnesses to the 1994 genocide who might testify against them. They were also stock-piling arms and ammunition purchased in the West, including from at least one British company. It was an open secret that Goma airport was the destination for regular

airlifts of military equipment, but Western governments did nothing to turn off the supply.

Preparations Long Under Way

Ever since the Rwandan Patriotic Front took control, ending the genocide in mid-1994, ever since hundreds of thousands of Hutu were stampeded into making the exodus from Rwanda, the Hutu supremacists have been making preparations for a military campaign against the new Rwandan government. This would have plunged the entire Great Lakes region of central Africa into years of low-intensity war and would have undone the healing that is going on in Rwanda.

The Rwandan government had been trying for months to reach agreement with the Zairian central government on the repatriation of the refugees. They wanted to prevent the camps being used as they were and to prove that their administration would not victimize Hutu as the previous Hutu-supremacist government had victimized Tutsi. The new government in Rwanda genuinely wished to build an inclusive society and not the "Tutsi empire" spanning the Great Lakes that their detractors insisted was in the cards.

In August 1996, Zairian Prime Minister Leon Kengo Wa Dondo, a presidential aspirant, was in the Rwandan capital Kigali to initial an agreement on repatriation of Hutu refugees. He has his own interests in this matter. It was rumored that in the projected 1997 presidential elections in Zaire, Mobutu's party would give the Hutu voting rights, converting them into voting fodder for Mobutu or in the event of his death or abdication, a designated successor. Thus Kengo Wa Dondo wanted them out as soon as possible.

The Banyamulenge Community

The Hutu-supremacist militias, in collaboration with the Zairian army, had also been engaged in attacks over 1996 on the Banyamulenge community in eastern Zaire. This community has many connections with the present Rwandan government, and some of them had been involved in the resistance war against the Hutu-supremacist government of Juvenal Habyarimana in Rwanda before 1994. Many have lived in Uganda, where Yoweri Museveni's government has been sympathetic to the resistance.

So it wasn't surprising — in fact, it was quite laudable — that the Rwandan and Ugandan governments have given support to the Banyamulenge, ranging from uniforms and arms to joint military maneuvers against the Zairian army and its Hutu-supremacist allies. But the immediate trigger to the fighting in the region from October 1996 on was an order of expulsion served on the Banyamulenge by the Zairian regional deputy governor, Lwasi Ngabo Lwabanji. He gave the Banyamulenge one week to leave Zaire. He threatened those who tried to remain, saying: "They will be treated as rebels and like rebels... will be exterminated and expelled" (*Guardian*, October 21, 1996).

1. *The Guardian* (London), November 15, 1996.

2. See François Vercautmen, "Rwanda: Anatomy of a Genocide," *International Viewpoint* (Paris), No. 260, October 1994.

3. While the media noted the involvement of the Rwandan and Ugandan army in military encounters within Zaire or across the border, they place this out of context when they ignore the documented links between the Mobutu government, the Hutu militias, and armed groups in Uganda, Burundi, and Sudan.

On this occasion, with their very existence at stake, the Banyamulenge took a stand and fought back. They had little choice. One of the rebels insisted, "The [Mobutu] government tried to take our land and they told us we had to leave the country and go back to Rwanda. But we don't come from Rwanda and they cannot force us to go because we know how to fight and the army does not" (*Guardian*, October 21, 1996).

Ethnic Identities: Constructs of Imperialism

The Banyamulenge people are often referred to as "Tutsi" by the big business media and commentators who insist on viewing African politics through the "tribal" prism.

However, these ethnic identities are constructs of 19th- and 20th-century imperialism, and while they may perhaps be useful for an understanding of some of the political dynamics in central Africa, they do not help explain them.⁴

The Banyamulenge community currently numbers around 400,000 people. They have been settled for at least two centuries in eastern Zaïre, where because of the sparse population they have used the land historically to graze cattle and engage in agricultural production. They originally settled near the Mulenge Hills, from which they took their name. This community has been swelled and differentiated in the 20th century by various migrations from Rwanda and by a specialization in their occupations. Thus they were often pastoralists in Masisi and cultivators in Runduru.⁵

Many Banyamulenge came to Zaïre — or the Belgian Congo, as it then was — to escape the harsher German and Belgian colonial oppression in Rwanda-Burundi. Zaïre is such a vast country that they knew they could live relatively free of the colonial administration in Leopoldville (present-day Kinshasa). However, there have always been tensions between the Banyamulenge and other communities in the region. Resentment grew particularly as the Banyamulenge became more prosperous as a result of their trading connections in Rwanda.

The Mobutu regime has survived for the last thirty years by fostering ethnic divisions and using ethnic tensions among the 45 different communities across the country. In 1981 it stripped the Banyamulenge of Zaïrian citizenship, and one of the main demands of the current rebellion is for the restoration of that right and an end to discrimination against them.

Former Allies of Mobutu

The Banyamulenge had been allies of Mobutu in the early days. They participated in the crushing of the radical nationalist (Lumumbist) movement led by Pierre Mulele between 1964 and 1968. That movement for the "second in-

dependence" of Congo-Kinshasa was a continuation of the struggle against Western imperialism's puppet governments. It was destroyed with the direct involvement of Western troops and mercenaries and the callous murder of the radical nationalist Mulele by the Mobutu regime, when they invited him to Kinshasa for discussions.

Now times have changed, and the Banyamulenge have united in a broad coalition with Mulele's comrades, notably Laurent Kabila, in the struggle against Mobutu.

Kabila is political coordinator of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaïre (AFDL), which he has said was formed with the following aim: "to overthrow the irresponsible clique of people in power and to put in place a transitional government which would eventually organize democratic elections" (*Guardian*, November 2, 1996).

Kabila's Background

Laurent Kabila is leader of the People's Revolutionary Party, which has a Marxist-Nationalist past and has been active since the military defeats of the late 1960s in propaganda work and consolidation of its influence in liberated zones it controls.

There are three other parties in the coalition: the Democratic People's Alliance, which is composed mainly of Banyamulenge; the Revolutionary Movement for the Liberation of Zaïre, which is based in southern Kivu province; and the National Resistance Council for Democracy, whose stronghold is in Kasai province and whose leader Andre Kissasse Ngandu is also military leader of the Alliance. The strategy of the Alliance appears to be to gain control over the mineral-rich provinces, where they can rely on the disaffection of the local communities, angry that none of this wealth finds its way back to them, disappearing instead into the pockets of the Mobutu regime.

There are secessionist movements in Shaba (formerly Katanga) and Kasai Occidental provinces, which have in response to the raping and killing of the army, the crude and successful attempts by Mobutu to spark ethnic riots, and the impoverishment of these areas at the expense of venality in Kinshasa, modified their previous goal of autonomy to one of outright independence. The Alliance itself does not support the secession of these provinces, favoring instead a federal model. The Alliance's hope is to starve the central government of revenue from these regions and attempt to levy and extract "taxes" to fund its military campaigns.

Alliance forces have so far captured the Sominki gold concession in southern Kivu and were making progress toward the gold mines in upper Zaïre. Mobutu's personal gold mining concession area has recently fallen to them. The Western companies which exploit these mines

have withdrawn, and Zaïrian troops in retreat have looted and destroyed much of the property. Kabila issued an invitation to the companies to return and threatened to revoke their licenses and sell licenses to their competitors if they did not.

Attitude of Western Corporations

On the whole Western businesses are fairly sanguine about the recent developments. They have got used to the weak control the central government has over the provinces and are accustomed to bribing the regional governments and paying army battalion salaries in return for protection.

In Zaïre we are already experiencing the fruition of a proposal made by a right-wing British "think tank," the Institute of Economic Affairs. It proposed that transnational corporations "should be invited to bid for the right to run African countries under 21-year leases, extracting taxes in return for bringing efficiency and discipline to an otherwise spendthrift and wayward continent."⁶

A further fragmentation of Zaïre and even instability in the central government won't affect their profits from Zaïre. They are far too important to all sides for that. They are under no threat of nationalization and there are still huge fortunes to be made (for them and not the Zaïrian people, of course) from gold, diamonds, cobalt, copper, and cadmium deposits. In return for their generous contributions to the military budget and the personal bank accounts of the army hierarchy and political elite, these companies are on the fast track to make even more money from the privatization of state firms projected for the near future.

Mobutu's Maneuvers

Mobutu's political response upon his return to Zaïre in December from convalescence in one of his French Riviera villas (after a prostate cancer operation in Switzerland) was to consolidate his authority within the government. He hasn't in a long while exerted real political authority over this "virtual country, where no legitimate power exercises control over daily existence,"⁷ but he has had a powerful hold over the affection and loyalty of the "political class" and his own retinue.

Since 1990 there has been a Parliamentary Conference of "opposition" parties, which have denounced and fawned over Mobutu in equal measure. Their leaders are craven politicians eager to be represented in a post-Mobutu Zaïre. "The Guide," as Mobutu likes to be called, has treated them with the air of "an indulgent father" toward "spoiled children."

When a prime minister, Etienne Tshisekedi, was nominated by the opposition, Mobutu first ignored and later dismissed him. Tshisekedi, who heads the Union for Democracy and Social

4. For further discussion, see my article in *Socialist Outlook* (London), No. 85, June 10, 1995. This issue is taken up in greater depth by Mahmood Mamdani, "From Conquest to Consent as the Basis of State Formation: Reflections on Rwanda," *New Left Review* (London), No. 216, March-April 1996. I do not agree with all of Mamdani's arguments.

5. Because of this differentiation, some would label the pastoralists Tutsi and the cultivators Hutu, unjustifiably reading recent "ethnic identities" back into history.

6. See *The Guardian*, October 2, 1996. Though as Nicholas Hildyard points out in the same article, structural adjustment policies have already established this trend in relation to Rio Tinto Zinc in Papua New Guinea, Shell in Ogoniland in Nigeria, etc.

7. Claude Gabriel, "From Rwanda to Zaïre — Africa Martyred," *Socialist Outlook*, No. 111, November 23, 1996. Translated from *Rouge* (Paris), November 7, 1996.

Progress (UDPS), has not obtained a seat in Mobutu's new cabinet, nor has his party. This in spite of Tshisekedi's "deathbed visit" to Mobutu (who was thought to be mortally ill) in France and his plea for Mobutu's quick recovery, as "the President couldn't leave them before the transition was completed."

There are any number of likely consequences to the turmoil in the Great Lakes. There are many divisions within the military. Soldiers are not regularly paid, and their lack of discipline is notorious. They survive by extorting from rich and poor alike, and they pillage and rape at will. "The soldiers are our enemy. They stop you,

strip you naked and steal everything. Last week they even took my shirt," complained a Kinshasa resident (*Guardian*, December 21, 1996).

Mobutu himself only relies on the absolute loyalty of his Presidential Guard. There is always the possibility of a coup, and politicians in Kinshasa are ingratiating themselves with military figures in preparation for such an outcome. The military defeats in the east could backfire on Mobutu as demands for a stronger, healthier leader more in charge become pronounced.

At present it would seem that the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-

Zaire (AFDL) cannot with its small forces and narrow base — in the context of the size of Zaire — expect to be more than one factor in this equation. What may make the difference is urban protest channelled against the central government. Protests and strikes by workers, public sector employees, the urban poor, and students would rock the government and could make a difference in toppling Mobutu. In and of itself that wouldn't change the nature of the Zairian state, but it is a beginning. □

January 5, 1997

Firsthand Report from Rwanda

Pan-African Women's Conference on Peace and Development

by Anke Hintjens

Outside Africa, the media ignored the recent Rwandan-organized Pan-African Women's Conference on Peace and Development. Anke Hintjens was there for *International Viewpoint*, monthly publication of the Fourth International, and also represented the Brussels-based Committee to Abolish Third World Debt (COCAD) at the conference. Hintjens was interviewed by Alain Mathieu.

This was a large conference (250 participants), in the spirit of the Beijing UN Conference on Women. It was supported by bodies like the UNDP.

We discussed the link between peace and development, on the basis of the Rwandan experience. Also, the essential role of women in peace and development projects.

Many groups were present. Among the Rwandan participants, many were from the "All Together" collective. (See *Rouge*, December 5, 1996.) But the geographical distribution of participants was very uneven. There were lots of delegates from Eastern and Southern Africa, but not many from the French-speaking countries of Western Africa. And there were only a handful of participants from outside Africa: I noticed groups from Belgium, Holland, Britain, Italy, and Japan.

Some governments sent representatives. Uganda, which plays an important role in the Pan-African movement, sent a vice minister. The South African minister of development read a message of support from President Nelson Mandela, stressing that, until the truth is established, there can be neither justice nor pardon. The meeting itself was opened by Irish President Mary Robinson.

The conference evoked a strong echo throughout Africa, but not in Europe, where the media completely ignored the initiative.

Pan-African Sentiment

There were signs of a strong pan-African sentiment. The Rwandan government clearly has a lot of respect and support, across the continent, for having stopped a genocide which was felt as a wound to Africa as a whole. Many participants from other African countries commented on the scandalous passivity of the "international community," which did nothing to stop the genocide.

Government representatives, and participants from civic associations had different points of view on a number of issues. For instance, many African civic groups argued that the embargo against Burundi should be lifted, because it was making the population suffer. But representatives of the Ugandan, Rwandan, and Tanzanian governments insisted that the embargo was the only way to force Burundi's government to come to a negotiated political solution.

As you travel in Rwanda, you see villages being rebuilt everywhere. Another 300,000 houses need to be built. The government wants to create "villages of peace." The state provides the materials, and the people build their own houses. Women's groups are playing a key role in this reconstruction.

Question: What did people say about Rwanda's foreign debt, and the role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)?

Answer: Everyone in Rwanda is very conscious of this problem. People are outraged that they must now repay debts contracted by the previous regime to buy the weapons used in the genocide, and that Rwanda must comply with the detailed "recommendations" of the IMF.

The country faces a thousand problems: justice, security, reconstruction.

Half the posts in the public sector are vacant. The IMF refuses to allow the recruitment of new civil servants or teachers or any increase in their pitiful salaries. Few of the country's civil servants have had adequate training.

The government does not want a confrontation with the IMF. It is paying back the debt. Does it have any choice? The responsibility is on us, here in Europe, to put pressure on the banks, the institutions, and our governments — those who are blocking the reconstruction of Rwanda. They should create a compensation fund for Rwanda, rather than continuing to suck interest payments out of the country!

Q.: How do people view the rebellion in Zaire?

A.: Many militants, and many young people, are optimistic about the revolt. They see it as part of a general struggle across the region. The struggle, which started in Tanzania, helped overthrow Idi Amin in Uganda, then overthrew the genocidal Habyarimana regime in Rwanda. Next in line is the Mobutu dictatorship in Zaire.

From Uganda to Kinshasa: New Africa

Many participants consider the current dynamic as a liberation struggle aimed against all the old oligarchies and dictatorships. Collaborators with the former colonial powers are being replaced, people said, with a new African elite, more ready to defend the interests of the people.

There was no reluctance to discuss mutual support, political and military, between the various liberation movements. And everyone could see that, if Zaire joins this "new Africa," the balance of forces would shift dramatically, with consequences for Sudan and Angola. □

No Let-Up in Teamsters Strife

by Charles Walker

I believe that if you're spending your time and energy getting even, you're not moving forward. And moving forward is what our members want and deserve.

— Ron Carey, *Second Inauguration*,
March 22, 1997

Close on the heels of Teamsters President Ron Carey's December victory over James Hoffa, Jr. (the candidate of the reactionary old guard), Hoffa Jr. fired off election protests. In response, the court-appointed election officer conducted a recount of the nearly 500,000 votes. The result was unchanged: Carey won with 52 percent of the vote.

Finally, on March 22, Carey's slate and a minority of five members of Hoffa Jr.'s slate were permitted to take their oaths of office. Carey spoke to several thousand Teamsters gathered to witness and celebrate Carey's second inauguration in a park between the Washington, D.C., Teamsters headquarters and the Capitol building.

Carey's speech had three themes. One, the Teamsters' vision of the future includes good full-time jobs, affordable education and health care, and a secure retirement. Two, that corporate greed was responsible for the ceaseless downsizing and the increasing exploitation of workers — and that “never in the history of the labor movement has a tougher war been waged on working people.” Three, that the internecine battles that have daily crippled the union must cease or there can be no progress for the members. “We cannot fight this greed individually or divided,” Carey said. “It's up to all of us — together — as citizens, as neighbors, as Teamster sisters and brothers, to do everything we can to stand up and fight these wrongs for all working people and their families.”

Hoffa Jr. Continues Protests

Carey's speech didn't cause Hoffa Jr. to change his course, however. While Hoffa Jr. could not block the inauguration, his continuing protests led the court-appointed election officer to hold off certifying the election results. Hoffa Jr. says that Carey received \$220,000 in campaign donations from employers. His “evidence” is the records the Carey campaign supplied the election officer, before Hoffa Jr. made his charges. Carey has said that he will cooperate fully with the investigation. Carey returned all of the contested donations, perhaps to rid the union of the distraction.

Hoffa Jr. hopes the controversy will result in the federal election officer ordering a new election. Of course, the possibility of a re-election threatens to weaken Carey's ability to mobilize rank-and-file participation for contract campaigns and organizing drives. In part, that's because officers who might give some measure

of support to Carey's initiatives will seek to keep their backsides covered until they know for sure who's in charge. That's what happened at last summer's convention, where some declared Carey supporters deserted to Hoffa Jr.

A new election puts at risk Carey's plans to get 150 locals of the union's nearly 600 locals to put on full-time organizers and commit 15 percent of their budgets to organizing. “We will train an army of at least 10,000 volunteer organizers,” Carey announced in February. “We will also develop a corps of at least 1,000 full-time trained local union organizers.”

Certainly the all-important national contract campaigns wouldn't be the same without Carey's insistence that members be informed and mobilized. Before Carey, Freight, United Parcel Service (UPS), and carhaul Teamsters largely relied on Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) for the most basic information during contract negotiations. In time, TDU led growing majorities against sell-out settlements. Before Carey, there had not been a nationwide freight strike in 18 years.

UPS Strike Likely in July

Contract negotiations with UPS, covering nearly 200,000 workers, began in early March. If UPS is serious about the take-away proposals it placed on the table, no settlement without a strike is likely. UPS boasts of last year's \$1.15 billion in super-profits, squeezed from a work force with 60 percent part-timers, burdened with two-tier pay scales. Carey intends to close the gap between full-time and part-time workers, who are limited to 3-4 hours a day, many making less than \$10,000 a year.

Carey is a former UPS driver, and as a local union official often bested UPS, until the international union forced his local into national negotiations. Carey has an unusually high standing among UPS Teamsters. He received 67 percent of the UPS Teamsters vote in last year's election. No one other than Carey seems so well prepared to lead either an offensive or defensive battle against UPS.

According to the *New York Times*,

Mr. Carey's supporters fear that if the Hoffa forces are not on board, it will make it harder for him to achieve his goals, like stepping up pressure for a good contract from United Parcel Service. For example, when Mr. Carey called a one-day strike against United Parcel in 1994 over its demand that teamsters carry packages of more than 70 pounds, some Hoffa allies who headed locals undercut Mr. Carey by urging members not to strike.

One Hoffa ally, Chuck Mack, who refused to strike and who heads a Northern California joint council with 55,000 members told a reporter, “I don't know if Carey has really reached out to

anybody as of yet, but it might be difficult given the unsettled conditions.”

Ken Paff, principal leader of the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, the militant rank-and-file caucus that backs Carey, says that the Hoffa Jr. forces are attempting to slow down Carey's reform efforts and, “If the Carey train runs out of steam, then they'll say, ‘He's had his turn. It's our turn again.’”

Without Carey pushing reforms from the top, the effectiveness of TDU's efforts from below will be adversely affected. Members seeking redress of wrongs and abuses will be more likely than not to seek more intervention and day-to-day surveillance of the union by the government overseers.

Hoffa's allegations have been reported widely in the corporate press. But until all the facts are known, an accurate evaluation of the allegations is not possible. However, not even Hoffa Jr. claims that Carey's campaign received any money from any Teamsters employer. TDU leader Ken Paff says, “It's not a big shock that liberals supported Carey. I try to raise money from the same people myself.” If the donors are employers in the sense that they have a personal secretary or a small office staff, the alleged violations, if true, appear to be technical, not substantial.

Given the track record of the Hoffa Jr. forces it seems virtually impossible that they didn't take money under the table from bosses. In 1994, they scabbed on UPS workers, and publicly sided with the freight corporations who precipitated a strike by demanding that full-time workers be replaced with part-time workers. In fact, last year the Hoffa Jr. side was caught taking \$125,000 from local unions to finance their anti-Carey campaign.

Apparently the Hoffa Jr. forces have some clout with federal agencies, as did the late corrupt Teamsters President Jackie Presser, who simultaneously represented both the FBI and the Mob in the Teamsters highest echelon. For at the same time that Hoffa Jr. seeks to overturn Carey's election, a U.S. Attorney is conducting a grand jury hearing into old guard charges that the Carey campaign took a kickback from a company that had a telemarketing contract with the union. The Carey camp denied the charge.

Hoffa Jr.'s Record of False Charges
Labor Notes, a national progressive magazine, writes:

These sources have previously made accusations against Carey that proved to have no substance, including charges that Carey had swindled two elderly widows out of a large sum of money, and that he owned stock in a major employer of Teamsters, United Parcel Service.

The election officer has the authority to order a re-balloting of the membership. However, first she would have to determine that there was a violation of the election rules. Then she must decide that Carey won unfairly, since it is customary to allow disputed election results to stand, if violations did not involve enough votes to affect the outcome. In this case, the contro-

versial donations total less than 4 percent of the declared expenses of both camps. Hoffa Jr. outspent Carey 2 to 1. Some observers speculate that the election officer may certify Carey's election but order a re-run in those vice-presidential races where Carey's slate won by a margin of less than 3 percent.

Given Hoffa Jr.'s refusal to accept the members' vote, the failure of the old guard to accept Carey's olive branch policies, and the government's intervention, it's anybody's guess as to

when and how the present unsettled state of the Teamsters union will end. At risk is Carey's organizing drives with volunteer rank-and-file organizers. The union recently won a first contract for 4,000 newly organized Pony Express workers. At risk is the Teamsters remarkable alliance with the United Farmworkers Union. The unions are jointly organizing California's strawberry workers and Washington's apple workers. At risk is the outcome of the union's negotiations with UPS. The UPS contract is not

only the Teamsters' largest; its outcome impacts on the national freight contract and scores of local contracts.

Above all what's at risk is the still tenuous state of rank-and-file democracy as it battles a tenacious business unionism and its old guard defenders. □

May 9, 1997

Global Action for Liverpool Dockers

U.S. Media Kill Labor Solidarity Story

by Janine Jackson

This article was produced by the Labor Resource Center, Queens College, City University of New York, in cooperation with FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting).

On January 20, freight stopped moving in shipyards around the world. Dockworkers in 27 countries — including this one — conducted the first coordinated global work stoppage, in solidarity with fired union longshore workers in Liverpool, England. But news of this unprecedented act of international solidarity was forbidden to most of the U.S. public: it's a measure of just how intent U.S. mainstream media are on depicting labor as useless and outdated that they overwhelmingly ignored this dramatic feat.

The labor action affected some 105 ports, from Japan to Sweden to Spain to Zimbabwe. It was organized by the International Transport Workers Federation to show support for 329 members of Liverpool's Merseyside Port Shop Stewards who were fired in September 1995. The union dockworkers had refused to cross a picket line set up by other workers at the port. The Liverpool strike is emblematic of labor's fight to safeguard hard-won worker protection in the face of global downsizing and privatization.

While often taking a dim view of labor's chances, the European and Canadian press at least covered the stoppage. The U.S. media coverage consisted of a pitiful scattering of very short stories — most of them AP wire service reports that most readers never get to see. Total television coverage consisted of about a minute and a half on CNN.

Why such paltry coverage? It wasn't just an international story after all, but also a domestic one: workers from the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union staged walk-outs at the biggest ports on the West Coast — Seattle, Portland, Oakland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Long Beach. "The disruption

closed down the entire West Coast, delaying thousands of international shipments," reported the Journal of Commerce, in one of the very few U.S. print media stories on the shutdown.

What exactly did mainstream reports not want U.S. workers to hear? Maybe it's that a small group of rank-and-file workers can bring the much-vaunted global trade system to a grinding halt. "Those giant container ships aren't just carrying sports shoes and coffee beans," says the newsletter *Labor Notes*. "They're carrying the materials, components, the semi-finished products that are the stuff of today's international just-in-time production systems."

These events show that workers around the world can recognize — and act on — the links between their struggles. "It's a global matter," said Jack Mulculhay, of ILWU Local 8 in Portland, Oregon, where solidarity strikers stayed out 24 hours. (Associated Press, January 21). "With deregulation and privatization of industries, there are attacks on working people in every country in the world."

U.S. corporate-owned media don't simply deny their readers information about international resistance to anti-worker economic trends. They portray Europeans as hankering after the "unfettered free trade" system championed by transnational corporate interests.

Take the March 3 issue of *USA Today*. Gannett Corp.'s flagship daily has never been shy about its national chauvinism or its cheerleading for elite interests. But that day's example was especially vivid: "USA back on top" crowded the headline. "World Rivals Envy Economic Turnaround."

The article described the jealousy that Europe and Japan purportedly feel for the U.S.

economic scene. "At dinner parties in Rome and boardrooms in Paris, people are marveling at America's performance," the paper says, giving a hint of where their reporters do their research. We never learn what people *not* in the boardroom-and-dinner party think about the U.S. "model," which any fair reckoning would admit includes huge wage disparities, increasing poverty and homelessness, and widely inaccessible health care.

"The unmatched ability to create jobs — and plenty of them — is what's drawing the USA global raves," *USA Today* has the temerity to proclaim. The reporter even cites, as an example of how Europe lags behind, the fact that "French tiremaker Michelin plans to introduce an advanced labor-saving technology in North America rather than Europe because the USA has few laws to prevent the resulting layoffs." This is something to celebrate? For whom?

The paper goes on to say that Germany's "problem" is that, unlike U.S. corporations, "German companies are unable to shed employees quickly as demand falls." It's no surprise that the corporation that publishes this paper is at the same time busting unions in Detroit. The 2,000 newspaper workers currently locked out from the *News* and *Free Press* have been on the line for 21 months because they refuse to be easily "shed."

Which brings us back to January 20 and workers in 27 countries acting together, bringing trade to a standstill because an injury to one is an injury to all. From reading papers like *USA Today*, you'd never dream such a thing was possible. Don't believe everything you read. □

Hands Off Social Security! Labor Should Avoid Being Suckered Into Bipartisan Scams to Wreck Our Social Contract

by Bill Onasch

This article, the second of a two-part series, is reprinted from the Kansas City Area Labor Party Advocate, publication of the KCA Labor Party chapter. The first part appeared in our previous issue. The author is vice president of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1287, and president of the KCA LP chapter.

The mass media, politicians, and Wall Street are going all out to convince the American people that there is a crisis in Social Security, that it is a failed system of inefficient and intrusive Big Government that must be urgently reformed or replaced. Many older Americans are concerned about losing their benefits. The younger generation is beginning to doubt that there will be anything left for them. What are the facts?

A Phony "Crisis"

The fact is that the Social Security Trust Fund is currently running an annual surplus of sixty billion dollars. Assuming current retirement age and benefit levels, the most pessimistic economic and demographic projections forecast that the Trust Fund will continue to generate surpluses until at least 2012, when the "Baby Boomers" start retiring in massive numbers. At that point *interest accumulation* on the Fund would have to be tapped. In 2019 the Fund itself would have to be drawn on. Only in 2029 — 32 years from now — would the point be reached where either taxes would have to be raised or benefit levels cut. So we have a little time to deal with this problem.

More Tax and Spend?

Of course just because a problem is deferred doesn't mean it should be ignored. The critics of Social Security are right when they maintain that *eventually* either higher taxes have to be levied or benefits will have to be slashed. What would it take to maintain the present system for future generations?

We could begin to add a significant amount to the Fund by removing the cap on SS taxing. Currently there is no FICA tax taken out on income above \$65,400 per year. The wealthy are eligible to draw benefits — and usually do. They should pay their fair share, like most workers, on *all* their income. That wouldn't take up all the slack but it would help.

An annual FICA tax increase of just 0.05 — that is five-hundredths of one percent — between the years 2010 and 2046 (a total cumulative figure of 3.6 percent) would maintain current benefits and retirement age for the foreseeable future. Hardly a crushing burden.

Why all the gloom and doom about a "failed system" now?

Some of the arguments are philosophical. Libertarians, such as the Cato Institute, and *Kansas City Star* editorial writer E. Thomas McClanahan, are feeling their oats these days. Emboldened by the successes of Clinton and Gingrich in undermining other parts of our Social Contract they are beating the drums to push for even more. They paint Social Security as a liberal do-gooder scheme that substitutes robbing people of taxes for character-building traits of personal thrift and retirement planning.

They ignore the reasons why Social Security was established to begin with. *Many people had their life savings wiped out during the Great Depression of the 1930s.* And not just those who had investments in the failed stock market. Thousands of banks went under as well. Social Security was developed to insure everyone against the roller-coaster rides of our Free Enterprise economy, a guarantee that we would not spend the years when we can no longer work in destitution. The Libertarians would like to take us back to the carefree days of the Roaring Twenties — the Fool's Paradise that preceded the great collapse.

But most proponents of change in Social Security appeal more to greed than to philosophy. They argue that workers would do better investing the money now going into Social Security into stocks. Of course stocks appear risky even for professional players and few workers have the training or resources to confidently manage such investments on their own.

"Not to worry," say the representatives of Wall Street — "give us your money and we'll manage it for you. Instead of getting peanuts from having the Trust Fund invested in government bonds, we'll play the markets and get you some big bucks." Some say, Let everyone set up individual accounts, like IRAs, or 401(k) plans. Others want to turn the Trust Fund itself over to Wall Street to manage.

The privateers argue that privatization of Social Security is a global wave of the future. Indeed, several Latin American and East European countries have turned, or are in the process of turning, their systems over to the private sector to manage. Chile is the model most raved about.

From the Folks Who Brought You the "Night of the Generals"

Social security privatization was one of the "reforms" instituted by the bloody Pinochet

dictatorship, which came to power in a military revolt in 1973. Their coup not only murdered the country's elected president; they also rounded up every trade union and workers' political party leader they could find. Some were officially executed. Many served long prison terms. Thousands fled the country and hundreds simply "disappeared." Collective bargaining and political rights also disappeared. The generals supposedly restored some political democracy in a deal in 1988. But part of the deal was that the coup leader, Gen. Pinochet, remains head of the armed forces for life.

To reorganize their economy, the Chilean brass hats turned for help to the economics department at the University of Chicago, headed by that great champion of individual freedom and deregulation, Milton Friedman. Without having to worry about political opposition by unions, political parties, or pesky groups like the AARP, the "Chicago Boys" had a free hand to restructure Chile's economy, including social security. What they came up with was establishing compulsory individual retirement accounts, funded by a 13 percent tax on earnings. These accounts are managed by twenty competing market manager groups.

These fund managers do not have complete discretion in their investment. The generals made sure they continued to receive sufficient income — 40 percent of the retirement investments are in Chilean government bonds and notes, while 35 percent goes into the Chilean stock market, which, like the U.S., has set new records in recent years.

The Efficiency Thing

The Chilean example is still too new to judge how reliable it will be in meeting that country's retirement needs over the long run. But there are some trends that are already clearly established that do not compare favorably to our current Social Security system. In the U.S. the "wasteful, inefficient Big Government" consumes only 0.7 (seven-tenths of one) percent of revenues in administrative expenses. In Chile the "efficient, competitive" private sector devours 15 percent of income to administer their system. (By the way, the U.S. life insurance industry, who hope to be major players in any privatization scheme here, eat up 40 percent of premiums through administration costs.)

Continued on page 33

Successful Organizing: The Theme at "Meeting the Challenge"

by Melana Marchant

The 1997 Meeting the Challenge conference "Fighting for Our Future" opened Friday evening, February 7 in the Weyerhaeuser Chapel of Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. This fifth annual conference was favored with a packed house of several hundred people and relatively balmy weather — 15 degrees, in comparison to the previous year's minus 25 degrees below zero Fahrenheit.

The most exciting aspect of the conference was summarized in the title "Strategies That Work — Reports from Participants." Speakers from many different parts of the United States told about union organizing drives, or struggles to advance labor's agenda, which they had helped lead.

Fighting the Evil of Child Labor

On Friday evening, presenters examined the fight against child labor in Pakistan, with a viewing of the recently completed video of the Solidarity Kids Theater production of "The Spirit of Iqbal," a presentation by middle-school students from Quincy, Massachusetts, and remarks by the Reverend Dan McCurry on the "Foul Ball Campaign."

Since "The Spirit of Iqbal" play debuted last year, the Solidarity Kids Theater has performed it several times, including at the national convention of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU). The popularity of the play led to the creation of a videotape, which includes interviews with the young activists involved in the play on how they have both developed their talents and deepened their understanding of the labor movement. Conference participants viewed the new video and watched an inspiring musical performance by youngsters from 4 to 14, both girls and boys, both Black and white, in the Solidarity Kids Theater.

The story of Iqbal Massih (1983-95), has resonated with young people around the United States, awakening the desire for justice. Students from Meadowbrook Middle School in Quincy, Massachusetts, spoke from personal experience about how they had been visited by the 11-year-old Iqbal Massih on an international speaking tour against child labor in 1994.

One student described how gnarled and leathery his small hands were from working on looms from the age of four (!), and how, when he sat on a chair, his feet didn't touch the floor.

Despite malnutrition, beatings, no education, and only 12 years of life, Iqbal became a powerful force against corporate evil. "Now the boss is afraid of me," Iqbal had said.

At age four Iqbal had been bonded by his parents to a carpet manufacturer in Pakistan for \$12 dollars and remained chained to a carpet loom until he escaped at the age of 10. For the last two years of his life, Iqbal was active in fighting to abolish the misery of child labor. Defying the brutality of business owners, he and others of the Child Bondage Liberation Front worked hard for an end to child labor and the right of children to education. Then he was shot to death, apparently by order of business owners, while he was riding a bicycle near his grandmother's home.

The Meadowbrook Middle school students gathered at their school during the spring break of 1995 upon learning of Iqbal's murder. They mourned, and then they began to organize.

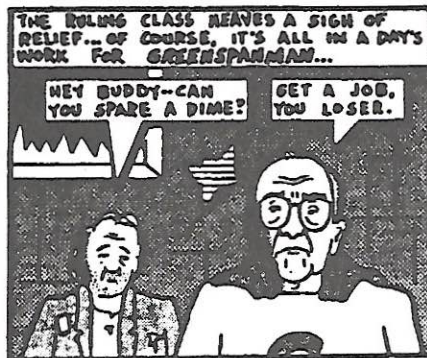
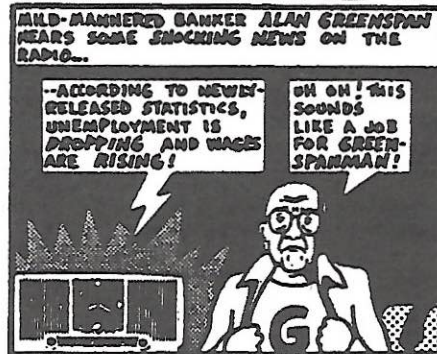
They created a website and used it to raise funds for a project in Pakistan. They reached an international audience and the contributions came in. The Meadowbrook students received a few large checks, but the most impressive support came from children — lots of small contributions from hundreds of kids, classes of kids around the United States and the world. This past year, the money built and staffed a school for 275 children in Pakistan. The money has allowed the purchase of bonds for 50 other children who otherwise would have continued under the same kind of horrible conditions Iqbal endured.

The Reverend Dan McCurry presented information on the "Foul Ball Campaign," an international effort to stop the exploiters of child labor in the soccer ball industry. In an industrial area in Pakistan the size of the Twin Cities, 3,000 children are sewing together soccer balls. Up to now, this industrial area has supplied the majority of the soccer balls to the United States market. Twenty percent of the children are under 14 years of age, and the vast majority are under 18. A worker earns 50 to 60 cents a ball, and completes one or two a day. A soccer ball retails for between \$46 and \$56 in the United States.

The United States Olympic Committee used soccer balls produced by child labor during the 1996 Atlanta Olympic games despite being informed of the balls' origin. However, European trade unions pressured the Federated International Football Association (FIFA) to halt their use in European soccer leagues. In preparation for the Olympic games scheduled to be held in

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



Australia in the year 2000, the "Foul Ball Campaign" is working with Australian unions to ensure "foul balls" will not be used in those Olympics.

Saturday Session

Peter Rachleff, professor of labor history at Macalester College, opened and facilitated the conference on Saturday morning. Dave Riehle, chairman of United Transportation Union Local 650, introduced the afternoon session, and the conference ended with a series of workshops during the late afternoon.

The first speaker was Ted Papageorge, an organizer with Hotel Employees Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 226 in Las Vegas.

Phenomenal Growth in Las Vegas

HERE Local 226 has had a phenomenal last five years of organizing. So successful has their organizing been that even the big business press (*Business Week* and *Newsweek*) have commented on it. The local has added 20,000 members for a total membership of 40,000. In 1996 alone, 8,000 people joined Local 226.

The organizing success of the local has roots in some demoralizing losses. In 1984, Local 226 lost members in five hotels as they went out on strike. In 1988, the local lost members in two more hotel strikes. The hotel and gambling industry in Las Vegas was undergoing a transformation during the 1980s into a family entertainment industry, opening several new non-union hotels without any response from the union. Though it began to engage itself in honest self-examination, the local suffered from dissension and a lack of direction. They were down to 15,000 members.

In 1989, Local 226 was at a crossroads, and on the eve of contract negotiations. If the local didn't act, it realized it could be facing the end as the hotel and gaming corporations closed in. After intense debate and discussion, Local 226 committed itself and its resources to organizing, vowing not to lose another hotel. The local negotiated for contract language guaranteeing management neutrality and card check elections in subsequent campaigns in its five year agreement. The membership accepted the need for this kind of language over other, material, negotiating goals.

Papageorge said an important part of the union's organizing strategy was to bypass the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) elections. The contract language committing employers to accept card checks has been critical.

During the past year, the family-owned Horseshoe casino and hotel was taken over by a son with an agenda to break the union. Local 226 struck, and nine months later won at the Horseshoe. This victory strengthened the resolve of members. The union struck the Frontier in 1991 with a vote of 700 to 2, a strike which continues today. Papageorge identified this continuing strike as the cornerstone of every subsequent victory in that it reminds management of the membership's resolve.

The local has organized 2,800 workers at the Mirage. They organized the Santa Fe in 1992 and the MGM. Fifty percent of New York, New York is organized and the members are fighting to organize the rest.

While Papageorge didn't provide a specific silver bullet for organizing, he stated that the most difficult part was making the decision to organize: to accept the sacrifice, to make organizing part of everything the local did, and to go beyond wishing. The membership is actively involved in organizing.

Health Care Initiative in California

Kit Costello of the California Nurses Association spoke next. The CNA is an independent union which has taken a leading role in the formation of the Labor Party and the development of the party's universal health care plank. Costello discussed the union's work in recently putting a proposition guaranteeing health care before the voters of California.

Rather than try to chart a course through the California House and Senate, the CNA took its proposal directly to the people of California by use of the direct balloting provided for in the California constitution. Although the measure failed in the referendum vote — partly because other, similar propositions siphoned off votes — getting it to the ballot box was possible because of the activism of CNA members. Forty percent of the membership took part in the campaign to gather signatures to place the initiative on the ballot, a campaign generating 850,000 signatures when only 450,000 were needed.

Costello explained how the corporate version of health care is failing society. In California, 20 percent of the population is without health care, and in Los Angeles County the figure is 30 percent. In a state with 32 million inhabitants, 6.5 million have no health insurance, and a risk to the uninsured translates into risk for the insured. Sickness doesn't recognize health insurance policies.

Corporate-run health care systems are striving to reduce the service they provide in the name of cost containment. However, a large health care player in California, Aetna/US Health Care, recently paid CEO Abramson \$250 million in salary, plus \$750 million in stock options.

The CNA's experience shows that corporations are afraid of public opinion, and that this corporate campaign angle should be developed and implemented. While a "utopian" vision of universal health care didn't resonate with people in CNA polls, the need to curb corporations making money from people's pain did have an impact. Costello stated her belief that a universal health care system is inevitable, and that great strides will be made within the next five years.

Catfish Workers in Mississippi

Sara White, an organizer in the Mississippi catfish industry, spoke about how the struggles of her coworkers led to the unionization of 5,000 workers within the last 15 years in a region where organized labor never previously had a significant presence. The result of their work is

United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1529, which represents nearly all workers in the area's catfish industry and is striving to organize all of its workers.

In 1981, 178 farmers (white and male) formed a catfish processing company called Delta Pride Catfish in a venture to develop a product other than cotton. The company was a success, owing to the hard work of its employees. The work force grew from 40 to 1,100, almost all Black women. In return for making the company successful, management repaid its workers with sexual harassment, 12- and 13-hour shifts, poor pay, work methods which foster metacarpal tunnel syndrome, and frequent firing for no valid reason.

White detailed how management required workers to stay at production stations for 4 and 5 hours at a time, waiting for the fish catch to come in, yet the time was unpaid. In one particular week, she earned \$3.00 an hour for 53 hours.

In December of 1987, Sara and two other women working in the plant, met with a UFCW organizer in Greenville. The organizer explained how conditions could be improved and that organizing was "easy"; all it required was for people to fill out cards. Though far from easy, they set in motion a campaign that concluded with a victory and a contract. Their second contract was achieved in 1990 after a 3-month strike, but the action set in motion further organizing drives around the industry.

White encouraged the participants at "Meeting the Challenge" not to ever give up in the struggle to organize. She stated that at one time she knew nothing about unions until an activist took the initiative to expose her to the possibilities of the labor movement.

Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers

Dineen Williams, president of the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, spoke about the successful organizing drive that her union went through, mentioning an upcoming book on the subject, due in June, to which she suggested the title "Too Dumb to Quit," or "We Can't Eat Prestige." The Harvard union is relatively young, having won its first representation election in the late 1980s.

It was an independent union before affiliating with AFSCME. It now has 3,600 members. Williams said that they were fortunate in that their members had a high level of activism, frequently lost in older unions. Due to the recency of their struggles, the idea of activism is fresh in the minds of the members. The character of the union came out of the nature of the struggles it faced: not having enough financial resources to print a newsletter, the union utilized strong person-to-person communication. The local is based on the principle that everyone must be connected to someone else inside the organization.

During their campaign, the organizers developed about 30 organizing committees. In these committees, workers hashed out their strategies, differences, and problems in a direct manner. Williams explained that their union is an organi-

zation in which the members can develop skills applicable to other areas of their lives.

The union used creative strategies and humor to achieve recognition and a contract. The union sponsored Hokie-pokie Day, "Build a Snow-vost (provost) Day, Seniors Day, and Kids Day. They sent a post card from union activists to the vacationing Harvard provost in France with the message "Wish you were here." Activists banded together to go holiday caroling at various deans' homes, but with altered lyrics. They organized a bus tour to various deans and administrators' homes to play in their driveways, with games such as "Guess the value of this home."

They met the provost at airports around the country and engaged in informational picketing, and just when he was getting used to seeing picketers everywhere he landed, they surprised him: when he returned home, they didn't have anyone to greet him. During negotiations, they organized a singing marathon featuring the Barney song, threatening to go on singing until agreement was reached.

Detroit Newspapers Strike

The last speaker of the morning session, Rick Torres of the striking Teamster Drivers local in Detroit, reported on the current situation facing strikers there, a conflict in progress since July of 1995. While many of the injustices and the general causes of the strike have been documented in the labor press and were known to people at Meeting the Challenge, Torres provided a current report. He emphasized the importance for the working people of the United States of winning this strike against the media giants Gannett and Knight-Ridder.

Electric Power Deregulation

Tom Koehler, a business representative of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 160, opened the afternoon session with a presentation on deregulation and privatization of public utilities, with special consideration of the proposed merger between Northern States Power Company and Wisconsin Power and Light. IBEW Local 160 represents workers at Northern States Power Company.

Koehler provided a description of the process for merger, which must be approved by the state's Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and the Federal Energy Regulation Commission (FERC). The state decides on mergers by considering what is in the "public's best interest."

Koehler said that the initial results of the 1992 law allowing deregulation of utilities seem to be increased energy costs ranging from 7 to 450 percent, depending on region, and on top of that, poorer service. He cited a recent incident in a Minnesota town, Long Lake, in which a driver was trapped in his car by a downed power line across the hood of the car. A more "efficient" NSP could not get to the car for several hours because of the cutbacks in personnel. The parties that gain in a deregulated energy market will be large consumers, at the expense of individuals in low usage or poorer areas, an economic pattern which repeats itself in the

deregulation of other services. Kohler urged people to stay current on deregulation and communicate with the PUC.

Reform in the Teamsters

Hamant Damle, Midwest organizer for Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), discussed the recent victory of Ron Carey over James Hoffa, Jr. in the presidential election of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT). Carey won by a margin of 16,000 votes in an election in which 60,000 more Teamsters cast ballots than in the last election in 1991. The win has further consolidated Carey's leadership and reflected 20 years of continuing struggle to reform the union.

The raucousness of the Teamsters convention of 1996 was well publicized in the corporate media, belying the sophistication of Hoffa's improved campaigning. Damle detailed how the campaign was a complex series of moves and countermoves, in which Hoffa demonstrated better use of rank-and-file involvement, taking a leaf out of TDU's book. Hoffa's improved performance helped his showing considerably.

Damle said that the Carey leadership would work on implementing four goals. First, it would seek to create a culture in which the members are active and take control of their union, in terms of negotiations, contract surveys, or the coordination of multiple locals. Second, the Teamsters would aim to organize on a one-to-one basis. Third, the IBT will build solidarity. Fourth, the rank and file will implement the changes, breaking away from a "savior" model of the Teamsters, in which members entrust a charismatic individual to take care of their issues.

Damle said that TDU wants to make the Teamsters a model of rank-and-file membership participation and mobilization, to set the example for all other unions in the labor movement. He acknowledged that some members are uncomfortable with further reform, and hold the view that "reform has gone far enough." However, he argued, unless the reforms are continued, labor will be stuck debating such issues as whether the minimum wage should be \$4.35 or \$5.00 an hour.

Graduate Students' Victory in Iowa

Tracy Chang and Jonathan Casa from United Electrical Workers (UE) Local 896 brought firsthand news of one of the United States' ten largest organizing victories of 1996, the organizing vote of teaching assistants at the University of Iowa. The first campaign started in the spring of 1993 and ended in defeat for the teaching assistants one year later. The union that the teaching assistants worked with left town. However, the campaign flared up again in the fall of 1995. This time the organizers had the backing of the UE, and a strategy of one-on-one communication. Taking part in the drive as an organizer, Chang said the campaign was definitely "more exciting than working on a dissertation."

In the time between the elections, conditions had not improved for the teaching assistants.

They constitute the basic work force for instruction, as half the undergraduates at the University of Iowa are taught by teaching assistants. They had poor health care insurance, and no child care. Teaching assistant salary levels lagged behind those of the other Big Ten schools, and one-third of their salary went back to the university for tuition.

On paper, no assistant worked over 20 hours a week, or was paid for more than 20 hours a week, though in practice, many worked 40 or 50 hours a week to get the work done. Since there were no formal hiring procedures for the next year's positions, many teaching assistants felt compelled to work the extra hours without compensation to maintain their positions. They had no grievance procedure. The university even refused to subscribe to a non-discrimination policy.

The organizing committee talked to 2,300 of 2,600 eligible voters spread over hundreds of locations in just six months. The results were telling. The union received 949 yes votes, a margin of 286 over the no votes. Since the people won union representation and a contract, teaching assistants have gained pay increases of between 9 and 14 percent. As Casa described a union button used in the campaign, "There's power in a union."

Postal Workers vs. Privatization

Sarah Ryan concluded the presentations. A vice president with the Greater Seattle Local of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), she discussed the local's efforts to struggle against privatization, a hardened post office management, and predatory corporations. The U.S. Postal Service has given private companies publicly developed mail handling technology, such as keying virtual mail or remote video encoding. Privatization has resulted in the work being done for much lower wages and sometimes outsourcing to maquiladoras. In response to the shifting of its members' work, the APWU local participated in a combined organizing drive at an Oakland mail processing company, which involved the cooperation of Teamsters, SEIU, and APWU.

She noted that the APWU must be active in organizing both among non-union workers and in the recently privatized sector, a change in strategy for the public sector union. She made interesting points about how management seems to engage in a humiliation ritual of workers, intensely inspecting what workers do, and undercutting the ideal of people as independent and dignified. In her discussion of privatization, Ryan echoed a point made earlier by Dineen Williams, that sometimes laughing at people in power is better than anger.

Ryan noted that organized labor must challenge the idea that private business is fit to run government. Social justice must come before concern about "cutting costs." Workers need a decent life, not just more pay in return for more hours. The employers want to rob you of the time that is your life. They want to feed you with money, as though you were a human meter machine. □

Europe Marches Against Unemployment and Job Insecurity

by François Vercammen

This article from the May issue of International Viewpoint, the monthly publication of the Fourth International (FI), first appeared in the French-language publication Inprecor for April 1997, under the title "Le soulèvement de l'espoir" (The Rise of Hope), with additional material provided by Jean Dupont.

In June, European leaders will meet in Amsterdam to amend the Maastricht Treaty [on European union], reform the institutions of the European Union, fix the details of East European membership in the Union, and approve steps toward common domestic and foreign policy. In theory, at least. This will be the last in a series of Inter-Governmental Conferences designed to fix the strategy for the next wave of European integration, including the creation of a common currency between a number of core states before the end of the century.

The December 1996 Euro-summit meeting in Madrid coincided with the first major social movement *against* the neo-liberal logic of the Maastricht Treaty for economic union: a massive public sector strike in France.

Unions Fail to Challenge Rationale for Cuts

While the events in France opened the first cracks in the triumphalist neo-liberal consensus, the West European labor movement has remained perplexed, and largely silent about "Europe." The European Trade Union Confederation is dominated by conformism and apathy concerning the capitalist integration project. Many union leaders are part of the "one truth" consensus about Europe. The ETUC has striven to mobilize concerned workers, but without challenging the Maastricht criteria which underpin and "justify" cuts and attacks across Europe.

With the top of the labor movement still trying to square the circle, a modest collection of trade union representatives, unemployed groups, social movements, and radical left currents, including the Fourth International, met in Turin, Italy, in February 1996, to try and spur some kind of response from within the labor movement. We met again in Florence in June 1996, where we launched a brief appeal and a proposal: coordinated marches across Europe, converging in Amsterdam at the same time as the Inter-Governmental Conference.

At the time, this was a risky proposition. Not everyone on the left was convinced that the project could work, or merited the considerable effort involved. Fortunately, the project went ahead.

March organizers knew that behind the official discourse, European unification was beset

by monetary and political contradictions. The process of capitalist integration would not, could not be painless and straightforward.

18 Million Unemployed: An Explosive Issue

We also realized that Europe's persistent, mass unemployment had created a "new" social question in the "rich" countries. A more and more explosive question. Official figures report 18 million unemployed EU residents. A further 18 million work part time, but would rather work full time.

The challenge, of course, was to find the lever that would shift this enormous question to center stage for European society. Something the official structures of the labor and social movements were not doing. Participants in the Florence meeting wanted action, not more words. To provoke a reaction that corresponded to the size of the problem.

Plan for Marches Against Unemployment

The collective which formed around the "Marches Against Unemployment, Exclusion, and Insecurity" project was exceptional, for three reasons.

1. A strong moral commitment, on an issue around which we could legitimately demand a radical change in the priorities of the labor and social movements as far as the European Union is concerned. To concentrate on the social aspects of economic integration, rather than the single currency.
2. The marginalized and excluded were at the center of this coalition. Together with all those who were ready to act: young and old, immigrant and Europe-born, in work and out of work. Supported by activists from a wide

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Belgium

Ernest Mandel Foundation Holds First Public Event

About 85 people participated in a March 16 study day organized by the Ernest Mandel Foundation in Brussels. This was the first public event of the new Belgian foundation. "The aim is not to put up statues of Ernest Mandel," explained François Vercammen, the Foundation's director. "But to bring together people from the different milieu Ernest influenced: academic, economic, militant, to discuss a series of theoretical and political questions."

Although several of Mandel's comrades from the Fourth International, like Vercammen himself, will play a role in the foundation, its identity and field of interests are much more diverse. Gabriel Maissin, president of the Foundation in the French-speaking parts of Belgium, put it this way: "This is a critical-spirited, scientific undertaking. It will be pluralist and independent." (The president of the Flemish, or Dutch-speaking, wing of the Foundation is Paul Verbraeken.)

Among other things, the foundation will gather as much documentation as possible

concerning Mandel's life and work. The aim is not to establish "a Mandelist school," Maissin stressed, but "to make possible a critical, contradictory, and collective appropriation of the results [of Mandel's work] and to stress the links between Mandel's work and so many of the themes and questions which have occupied social scientists."

This first study day, for example, was opened by Else Witte, rector of the Vrije Universiteit Brussels (VUB), the Dutch-speaking university where Ernest taught for many years. Witte noted that several of Mandel's students are now themselves professors at the VUB, and members of the new Foundation's support committee. She outlined the close collaboration between the VUB and the Foundation, which will include a research project to produce an annotated bibliography of Mandel's extensive writings.

For more information, contact: Ernest Mandel Foundation, PO Box 139, 1000 Brussels-1, Belgium.

The Fight Back is in Crisis

Fight for a Socialist Alternative!

by Barry Weisleder

The following speech was made to the Eleventh Annual Socialist Action May Day Celebration, April 26, 1997, in Toronto, by Barry Weisleder, editor of the Canadian newspaper Socialist Action. Over 120 union and social protest movement activists attended the event.

Sisters and brothers, comrades and friends:

Once again, with pride, we join millions of working people around the world preparing to celebrate International Workers' Day. Once again we draw inspiration from the struggles of our class in many lands.

From the truck drivers of France, who paralyzed transport and won their demands earlier this year, from the workers of Argentina, who rose up against neo-liberalism with two general strikes in the past year, from the labor movement in South Korea, whose massive and repeated strikes have asserted workers' right to organize and to unite in powerful confederations; from the incredible workers' revolt in Albania, which overthrew a gang of would-be capitalists, with their rip-off pyramid schemes and mafia connections, and replaced that scummy crew with local, self-governing councils — that's what the world capitalist media insist on calling "a state of anarchy"; and finally, we draw inspiration from the rebel workers and farmers of Zaïre, who, as we speak, are marching on Kinshasa to put an end to the corrupt dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko.

May Day reminds us that the working class and the employer class have nothing in common, and furthermore, that workers will never be free, that humanity will never be liberated from oppression and exploitation, until we go beyond the purely defensive struggles of our day, until we set forth a Workers' Agenda that aims at nothing less than genuine economic democracy and the abolition of capitalism.

Sober Assessment of Past Year

International Workers' Day also imposes an obligation: to soberly assess the year gone by, and to speak frankly about results and prospects. And the truth, my friends, is that the fight back movement in Ontario, which recently showed so much promise and potential, today is in a state of crisis. How did this happen?

One year ago, on this platform, we hailed the victory of the Ontario Public Service strike. The slogan "No Justice, No Peace," which rang out across 2,000 picket lines, echoed loudly in this hall. The strike slowed down the Tory assault. Days of Protest chalked up victories in London, Hamilton, and Kitchener-Waterloo as tens of thousands took to the streets.

Mass actions even rekindled the flame of left opposition within the NDP, though the ranks were still reeling from the electoral defeat of a

treacherous leadership. Peter Kormos campaigned for a radical alternative to the Bob Rae regime and took 22 percent of the votes at the Ontario NDP leadership convention in June last year.

Then it was on to Peterborough, where another protest rocked cottage country, closed offices and industry, and rallied 7,000. OFL President Gord Wilson predicted a province-wide strike within a year, "and not just for one day" he insisted.

Shutting Down Toronto

Everyone looked to Toronto, in October, as the big test. Could Canada's biggest city, its financial hub, its middle class Mecca, actually be shut down? Yes, indeed. That's exactly what we did. Industry, commerce, services, government, education and transport all ground to a halt. We had a glimpse of the real power of the working class. The next day a quarter million people marched against the Tory agenda. Labor bureaucrats had run out of excuses. Bay Street quivered. Chainsaw Mike [Mike Harris, the Conservative premier of Ontario] sputtered a few disparaging remarks about Iraqis and communists — and then apologized.

The ruling class knew they had entered a danger zone. Who would come to their rescue? In five days they got their answer.

Leaders of the pink paper unions [the unions with more conservative and traditional business-union leadership, such as the UFCW] held a news conference. The pink heads hadn't done much for the Days of Action to that point, but that didn't deter them from declaring war on the mass movement. No more sharing the spotlight with ungrateful social justice groups, and no more Days of Action, they decreed. Salvation would come only through the ballot box.

But what about mass action to force the Tories to an early ballot? No way. Such a movement could get out of hand; besides one couldn't be sure they'd all vote NDP.

That same night the Labour Council of Metro Toronto met and voted unanimously to condemn the pink statement. But what would the so-called "progressive union" leaders do next? Many workers hoped they would stand up to the pink heads, call their bluff, appeal to the base and forge ahead with escalating action. After all, wasn't it worth risking a split in the labor bureaucracy in order to stop the Mike Harris death squad, the destroyers of workers' and equality rights, health and safety, environmental protec-

tion, education, health care, the whole public sector, for decades to come?

Yes, it was worth it, but no they didn't do it. With one or two honorable exceptions, the "progressive" heads stalled; they consulted, they went into collective retreat, they took cover behind a year-long plan of dispersed and smaller actions. And we saw the results in Sudbury on March 22. No strike; only 4,000 marched, organized by a broadly-based social justice coalition, without labor council support.

The next hammer blow came down in a rather unlikely location, in Windsor, a CAW town. The shutdown and mass action days — proposed as *international days of labor solidarity together with the Detroit newspaper strikers* — planned for June 20–21 were postponed...to October!

An important opportunity to revive the movement was sacrificed on the altar of electoralism. Various reasons were given: ethnic festivals, graduating students, vacation weather. But in fact, the prospect of a June 2 federal election spooked union leaders and NDP apparatchiks. Doesn't their unwillingness to link mass work place and community action to an NDP federal election campaign speak volumes? And if you find the word "betrayal" too distasteful, let's just call it a monumental failure of imagination.

One thing is certain: postponement of the Windsor action deeply hurt the fight back; and it deepens the divide between rank and file workers, on the one hand, and those who claim to speak for workers in Parliament, or even at the Union Hall. Now it's more likely that the federal election will be a replay of 1993, and that the Harris Tories will be re-elected in 1999. Unless a powerful movement toward a general strike can be rebuilt, this will be the outcome, ironically, crafted by those who place all their eggs in the electoral basket.

We need to recall the words of Rosa Luxemburg, one of the greatest leaders of the socialist movement in this century, who in 1918 had this to say about the connection between the goal of socialist freedom and the means to achieve it:

Socialism will not and cannot be created by decrees; nor can it be established by any government, however socialistic. Socialism must be created by the masses, by every worker. Where the chains of capitalism are forged, there they must be broken. Only that is socialism, and only thus can socialism be created.

To this, most NDP and union leaders would respond with a shrug, calling such words "outdated dogma." But their own subservience to the "free market," their own adaptation to anti-union pressure, their own worship of parliamentary institutions, and their deep-seated cynicism about the capacity of workers to fight back, none of these, to them, would qualify as dogma. That's what they call "realism."

Well, let's measure their realism against workers' reality. If workers aren't willing to fight back, then why did tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands mobilize in six Days of Action, so far? How do you explain the record turnout for a municipal referendum in which 76

percent voted NO to the Mega City plan (more than the number who voted for the Tories in Metro Toronto in 1995).

And what about the staggering scope of the attack on the working class, so far? OPSEU lost 11,000 members in one year. CUPE may lose over 30,000 through privatization of local services. Thirty hospitals are closing. Billions of dollars have been slashed from expenditures of every kind. Municipal and school board resistance has been marginalized, and local democracy curtailed by Bills 103 and 104, to say nothing of the Omnibus Act. And the Tories haven't really got started on privatization yet. That's the reality of this attack, in large part driven by \$14 billion in cuts by the federal government, headed by the Liberals, over the previous three federal budgets.

Does such a totally devastating scenario really justify business as usual? An NDP election campaign, replete with a lawyer's polemic about taxes, are no defense against a corporate neutron bomb; but that's what the "realistic" leaders of the workers' movement seem to offer us.

The TINA Syndrome

Working people deserve better than that. Workers create all the goods and services in society. But the capitalist rulers want us to feel guilty when we draw a wage, enjoy a benefit, or exercise a right. How do the official leaders of the working class respond to such class arrogance? They are silenced by the TINA syndrome. TINA stands for "There Is No Alternative." And that means loyalty to debt and deficit fighting, loyalty to "re-structuring" and management "efficiency" schemes, loyalty to buy-outs and joint investment funds, in short, loyalty to capitalism.

No alternative? That's a lie. There is an alternative. We call it a Workers' Agenda, and it's well worth fighting for.

There Is an Alternative!

What do we demand?

We demand: Jobs for all! Shorter work hours, without loss of pay or benefits. Nationalize the banks. Control investment to create jobs and to meet human needs. For an industrial strategy based on public ownership and workers' control. Reverse the cutbacks. Expand public services. For a massive program of public works, at trade union rates of pay, to upgrade the transportation and communication infrastructure, and to improve access to quality healthcare and education for all.

Jobs or Wages Now!

We demand the expropriation of companies that downsize while scooping up super-profits, firms that engage in union-busting, cheap-labor strategies, and environmental degradation. We say: Tear up the Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA. Establish a cross-country, publicly-funded universal child care program. Abolish the GST. Tax the corporations, the banks, bond traders, and the super-rich. Make them pay for the debt they created through tax avoidance, high interest rates, and high unemployment.

May Day Greetings to Socialist Action (Canada) from "Bulletin in Defense of Marxism" (USA)

We send warmest greetings to you and to all our Trotskyist comrades in all lands on this occasion. Everywhere the enemies of the working class are beset with the insuperable problems of government resulting from the inherent contradictions of the capitalist system. As global capitalism envelops the economies of peoples in every corner of the planet, its systemic crisis grows more acute.

Big strike actions in France, Germany, Belgium, and other countries of Western Europe show that the organized working class will not stand still while the capitalists try to use European unification as a means of taking back social gains workers won in the past. Elections today in England, where a victory for so-called Labour is expected, leave the capitalists and their Social Democratic servants confronting the problem of how to handle the relations of the British economy with the capitalist economies on the Continent.

We see the same difficulties for capitalist governments in the Far East, where South Korean workers have mobilized in an exemplary way to try to stop government take-backs for the benefit of the capitalist conglomerates.

In China an attempt is being made to reintroduce capitalism by superimposing it on a bureaucratically controlled economy, creating contradictions that cannot be resolved. In Russia, Albania, Poland and elsewhere in the former Soviet bloc countries workers are fighting back against the results of capitalist "market reforms" and privatization.

In Rwanda and Zaïre a new generation of African fighters, based on mass support

among their peoples, are seeking ways to free themselves from dictatorial governments imposed by European and North American imperialists.

In Canada and Mexico — whose fates have become more intricately involved, through NAFTA, with the fate of U.S. imperialism — workers are also fighting back, and there is increased linkage among labor organizations in all three countries.

All the imperialist powers are forced to grapple with the nearly insuperable problems of government, because the system is not able to satisfy the needs of vast sectors of the population worldwide. We are returning to the situation that existed before World War II, when it became obvious to millions that the capitalist system simply could not provide.

The working class, in country after country, is being forced into rebellion.

As Trotsky said, on the eve of World War II, the crisis of humanity is reduced to the crisis of working class leadership.

The working class still lacks the necessary leadership. But we are optimistic about the future prospects for working class power in the United States, because now for the first time there is the initial formation of a Labor Party. That is where the future lies. It has the potential to mobilize the working class to challenge the employing class over how society shall be organized. That is a reason for optimism.

All Power to the Workers!

Long Live the Fourth International!

Recognize Québec's right to self-determination. Stop all threats of partition and economic sabotage. Full justice for First Nations. Settle land claims. Recognize local self-government for aboriginal peoples, with full financial restitution.

Enforce real employment equity. Outlaw all discrimination against, and stereotyping of women, gays and lesbians, youth and seniors, racial and linguistic minorities, and the physically challenged. Support the autonomous social movements for liberation.

This, at least in part, is what we mean by a Workers' Agenda — an agenda that corresponds to the interests of the vast majority in society — an agenda that capitalism cannot begin to satisfy. One tragedy of the coming federal election campaign is that no major party will advocate, publicize, or fight for such a program.

No Alternative on the Ballot Bring the Non-Electoral Workers Fight to the Fore

So much for free choice and democracy. The big business parties have clustered together at the far right of the political spectrum. And NDP

leaders parade in old liberal rags. Social justice, social equality, economic democracy, in short, socialism, won't be on the ballot.

But it will be in the hearts and minds of thousands of workers and people allied to the working class. Our task is to bring that alternative to the forefront. Our task is to bring the extra-parliamentary struggle of the working class to the forefront.

And that means taking the fight for a workers' agenda into every union and social movement. It means building a class struggle left wing in every union, based on a program of action. It means taking the fight into the NDP, and building a Socialist Caucus there. To ignore the NDP, to refrain from urging a vote for the NDP in the coming election, would be to turn one's back on a huge section of the working class, while giving the right-wing NDP leadership a free hand. Keep this in mind: the combined membership of all socialist groups in Canada wouldn't equal the NDP's membership in Newfoundland. Before a genuine workers' party can be created in this country a majority

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May Day March in Mexico City: Foro and May First Coalition Fill Central Plaza

by Dan La Botz

The following is taken from Mexican Labor News and Analysis (MLNA), which is produced in collaboration with the Authentic Labor Front (Frente Autentico del Trabajo — FAT) of Mexico and with the United Electrical Workers (UE) of the United States and is published the 2nd and 16th of every month.

MLNA can be viewed at the UE's international web site: <http://www.igc.apc.org/unitedelect/>. For information about direct subscription, submission of articles, and all queries contact editor Dan La Botz at the following e-mail address: 103144.2651@compuserve.com or call (525) 661-33-97 in Mexico City.

Two dissident labor groups, the Forum of Unionism before the Nation (or Foro group) and the May First Inter-Union Coalition, marched separately but arrived together to fill the national plaza, or Zocalo, in Mexico City. The dissident union leaders claimed 250,000 workers in the demonstrations, but various reporters estimated 60,000.

For the third year in a row, the opposition unionists led tens of thousands of workers to protest the government's economic policies, to reject the "official" unions' corporative control, and to demand wage increases. In a completely peaceful but very militant demonstration workers expressed their opposition to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), to the Congress of Labor (CT), and to the leaders of the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM).

Workers Jeer, Boo Official Leaders

Meanwhile, in the National Auditorium Leonardo Rodriguez Alcaine, acting head of the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), and Victor Flores, president of the Congress of Labor (CT), were jeered, booed, and ridiculed by their captive audience of some 12,000 supposedly loyal workers. For the first time in memory, 97-year old Fidel Velazquez, head of the CTM, did not preside over the May Day commemoration. Velazquez has been in and out of the hospital repeatedly over the last several weeks, though he recently returned to work at CTM headquarters.

President Ernesto Zedillo spoke to the CT-CTM official gathering, uttering all the cliches of past presidential addresses to the state-controlled labor organizations, but one worker's chant broke the spell: "Zedillo, Zedillo, ayuda mi bolsillo." (Zedillo, Zedillo, put some money in my pocket.)

Throughout the "official" May Day meeting in the gigantic auditorium the workers who were not sleeping shouted out jokes at the expense of their leaders. When Alcaine reiterated the CTM's support for the PRI, the "boo" from the bleachers filled the gigantic auditorium. Al-

caine, jockeying for leadership of the CTM with the coming retirement or death of Velazquez, could hardly finish his speech.

"The thousands of workers chosen for the annual occasion neither respected nor feared the old ruling class of the workers," wrote reporter Juan Arvizu Arrijoa in the newspaper *El Universal*. The "official" ceremony was an utter fiasco, another sign of the deterioration of the old order.

Unity and Diversity on the Zocalo

The Foro group of unions and the May First Inter-Union Coalition failed to reach agreement on holding a common May Day demonstration. The Foro group demanded that only unions be permitted to march, while the May First Coalition called for a demonstration of the working class, which would permit political organizations and community groups to participate.

Alejandra Barrales, leader of the Union of Workers of Goods and Services (FESEBES), which makes up part of the Foro group of unions said, "What was perceived as a disagreement was an agreement. The great step forward is that the Foro group and the May First group dared to march together and to talk about creating a national assembly which can create a new confederation of workers."

But the Foro group's most prominent public figure, Francisco Hernandez Juarez of the Telephone Workers Union, did not agree. "The goal of the struggle in which we are involved has basically a labor union character. But in the May First Coalition there are community movements and political party organizations. We don't want to enter into a terrain where the struggle is politicized."

Nonetheless, while they marched separately and even held their own rallies back to back in the Zocalo, the Foro group on a platform in front of the Cathedral and the May First Coalition in front of the Mexico City Hall (Regente), this was clearly one enormous opposition demonstration that reached politically from some of the more conservative dissidents in the Con-

gress of Labor to radical unionists with ties to the guerrilla groups.

The Foro group was led by the Telephone Workers (STRM) and the Social Security Workers Union, while the May First Inter-Union Coalition march was led by the National Coordinating Committee of the Teachers Union (la CNTE) and the bus drivers (or former bus drivers) of Route 100 (SUTAU). Marching with the May First Coalition were perhaps 10,000 members of the Francisco Villa community organization, mainly women.

Some of the May Day marchers spray painted slogans on the walls and windows of buildings as they marched along: Long Live the Zapatista Army of National Liberation; End the Repression; We Demand a Solution to the Problems of the Oaxaca Teachers.

In the Zocalo, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the candidate for mayor of Mexico City for the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), expressed support for what he called the "democratic and independent unionists." Benito Mirón Lince spoke on behalf of the Broad Front for the Construction of a National Liberation Movement (FAC-MLN). Several speakers alluded to the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and its political front (FZLN), and a statement was read by one speaker on behalf of the People's Revolutionary Army (EPR).

For decades the May First march was an official affair where labor bureaucrats led their dependent workers to parade before the president and promise loyalty to the state-party, the PRI. The Mexican president then gave his benediction to the captive working class, and renewed the "historic compromise" of the state with the unions. Now, that tradition is dead and a new one seems to have been born, the tradition of an independent, diverse, democratic, and highly politicized march to the national plaza, not to praise the president, but to challenge the union bureaucrats, the employers, and the state. Happy May Day. □

South Korean Unions Consider Forming Own Political Party

We reprint for the information of our readers two reports posted on computer news conferences of the network Institute for Global Communications (IGC). The first, with no author listed, was written on March 20; the second is dated March 31. Both come from the publication "Korean Herald," whose identity is unknown to us.

"Labor Unions Set to Politicize"

Labor unions, which are allowed to engage in political activities under revised labor laws, are poised to increase their political clout. In particular, they are saying they will actively participate in the presidential election slated for later this year.

The unions' involvement in politics had long been considered taboo or outlawed in the country before the new labor laws lifted the ban last week. With the elimination of the stumbling block, the moves by the nation's two major umbrella unions to expand their political influence are gaining momentum.

The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), the nation's second largest umbrella union, said that it will launch a "presidential election planning corps" in May. KCTU leaders said the planning corps will develop into a 10,000-strong group to promote the unions' active participation in the presidential election in December.

When asked how they will engage in the elections, KCTU leaders said there are two possible options: either to have their own candidate run for the presidency or to support a union-friendly candidate. They said the final option between the two will be determined by a vote conducted by KCTU member unions across the nation by the end of August.

In a more substantial move to participate in the presidential election, a meeting of union representatives in Seoul decided to raise political funds last Wednesday. The Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU), the nation's largest umbrella union with 1.2 million members nationwide, also expressed its willingness to engage in the elections.

FKTU leaders said they will begin their political activities in July to "connect the presidential election with the struggle to improve labor-related institutions." During the October-November period, the FKTU said it will launch nationwide circuit tours, a politically-motivated program, "to liquidate the regional-based politics."

Though they did not explain in detail, some FKTU leaders said the umbrella union will

likely launch a public campaign for a presidential candidate who has the unions' support.

"Labor Groups Likely to Form Political Force"

by Choe Seung-chul, *Korean Herald* staff reporter

What critics call old-fashioned Korean politics is likely to undergo a major change later this year in the wake of the change in the labor laws. Labor groups are expected to form their own political force in the near future as new labor laws, passed by the National Assembly early this month, allow workers to become involved in politics.

[In particular] the militant Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), the nation's second largest umbrella union, is seeking to play a role in December's presidential poll.

In a conference of representatives from member unions Thursday, the KCTU decided to actively participate in the coming presidential election either by fielding its own candidate or by forming an alliance with opposition parties. In the meeting, KCTU leaders also agreed to launch an ad hoc panel, which they said will be composed of more than a thousand union leaders, during the first half of this year to carry out joint activities with dissident and civic groups.

After this, around September at the earliest, they plan to stage a full-fledged election campaign backing an independent pro-labor candidate who they believe would work in the interest of workers, KCTU officials said. They also plan campaigns against those who voted for the old labor bills passed through the Assembly in a secret predawn parliamentary session last December with only ruling party members present.

The labor group, which remained outlawed until it acquired legal status via the new labor legislation, spearheaded a month-long protest strike against the old labor laws. An official said that the organization will "seek to form a joint front with dissident and opposition groups against the ruling party or launch an intermediate political group before the December vote."

The KCTU also plans to stage a full-scale election campaign against the established political parties right after its member unions approve the plan in a vote slated for August. "We will actively play a role in the upcoming presidential election as it's about time we pursued the interests of workers and citizens and reinforce our strength on our own," an official said. The ultimate goal of the organization goes beyond the December poll, says Chang Yong-hwa, another official.

"Our objective is to launch a reformative party in which workers would have the initiative as stipulated in the KCTU's platform, and secure a negotiating group in the National Assembly by the year 2000," he said. Chang said his group has had a political committee in operation since the inauguration of the KCTU in late 1995 and the panel has studied ways of building a party of their own.

The Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU), which claims the largest membership, doesn't seem to be interested in forming a political party. Federation officials said they, instead, focus their efforts on backing a candidate who they believe would work for union interests. As soon as they agree on whom they support, they will begin campaigns, they said.

Established politicians seem to accept the possible inauguration of a pro-labor party as "inevitable" but feel "uncomfortable." "The advent of a labor-backed political force is expected to greatly affect boss-dominated and regionalism-based Korean politics, said Rep. Chun Jung-bae, a lawyer-turned legislator of the opposition National Congress for New Politics.

But he said that many politicians will feel uneasy about the new political force, which is likely to challenge their old-fashioned political practices. Chun, however, predicted that labor groups are likely to fail if they seriously aim to win the December vote by fielding an independent candidate. Chances of victory look very slim, he said. Han Sang-jin, a sociology professor at Seoul National University, agreed with him.

"With their reformist features, their potential is enormous as they would be able to successfully set themselves apart from existing parties," Han said. By competing with the established political parties in an election, they may contribute to modernizing old-fashioned politics, he said.

"But they should be able to come up with various programs that could attract the lower classes estranged by the established political parties and create improved political competition," Han said, adding that any hasty move by workers to launch a political party without extensive studies would only lead to an early collapse. □

Arise, You Prisoners of Starvation

by Georges Mitralias

The following is an edited version of an article written for the April 1997 issue of International Viewpoint, monthly publication of the Fourth International.

Shades of the 1905 Russian revolution. The 20th century ends as it began: with the humiliated and exploited masses taking to the streets.

Yet how exotic Albania seems to most Western readers! The mass of analysis and comment produced by the Western media all lead us to one conclusion: Albania is totally unique, and the Albanians do not belong to the "civilized world."

From this point of view, everything seems understandable.

- The popular upsurge happened because Albanians are so naive that "pyramid" schemes separated most of them from their savings. These schemes run by financial institutions, supposedly, could never exist elsewhere.
- The insurrection extended from south to north because of the traditional "tribal" confrontation between southerners and northerners.
- The civil war can only lead to a "chaos" which, for Albania, has never been far below the surface.

We are comforted by the suggestion that the Albanian case is unique in Europe, that the popular revolt there has no similarity with the revolutions of the past, and order can only be reestablished from outside. Noble savages, or poor bastards, however you see them, the Albanians are supremely unable to enter the modern world without the aid of the "civilized world" — that is, military and police intervention by the Western powers.

Reality Check

All this is false. Albanians are no more naive than the five million Romanians, three million Russians, and half-million Bulgarians who in the last few years have "invested" (and lost) their savings in pyramid schemes. Many Macedonians continue to risk their savings in this way.

The schemes in question: Vefa in Albania, MMM in Russia (run by parliamentarian Sergei Mavrodi), and so on, are not a local invention of the post-Communist era. Pyramids were invented in the USA in the 1930s, and were — for a while — fantastically popular in Western Europe.

The real difference between Luxembourg in the 1930s and Albania in 1996 is the pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF specifically demanded the suppression of Article 28 of Law 7560/1992 and helped draft Law 8075/1996. The result was that Tirana abolished guarantees on bank deposits and liberalized the banking and financial sector to the point that pyramid schemes offering monthly

interest rates of up to 100 percent became legally possible.

This wasn't a "mistake" by the authorities and the IMF, but a deliberate attempt to encourage the primitive accumulation of capital, which Albania's fledgling bourgeoisie so badly needs. One new banking company, Vefa, quickly became a holding company controlling at least 240 enterprises, from a supermarket chain to gas stations, seaside hotels, and food-processing plants.

The total fraud exceeds US\$2 billion, or 80 percent of the country's GDP (gross domestic product — the total value of goods and services produced in a year). The capitalists would have rightly considered this exploit to be a major success if only the mass popular uprising had not occurred.

The IMF, World Bank, and other international institutions are not just guilty of "selective blindness" toward the pyramid schemes. For several years, they had been boosting the myth of an Albanian economy growing at an unparalleled rate of over 10 percent per year. Albania was a model, they argued. And President Sali Berisha was a true soldier of neo-liberalism.

This is another falsification. "They made fools out of us," (now) admits an expert at Vienna's prestigious Institute of Comparative Studies. In fact, Albania's five years of economic reform have been "catastrophic." Since the industrial base was almost totally destroyed in the early period, "it was not difficult to produce high growth rates, stretching forward indefinitely."

Albania's industry has been almost totally dismantled, and a majority of peasants, particularly in the south, have abandoned the agricultural sector. Unemployment affects up to 80 percent of the population. The only fast-growing sectors of the economy are those linked to the black market and organized crime (smuggling of all types, and marijuana cultivation).

Berisha's capitalist Albania would have gone bankrupt years ago, were it not for the pitiful sums sent home by the 500,000 Albanians working illegally, in slavish conditions, in Greece, Italy, and other countries.

A Nationwide Uprising

The south of Albania is traditionally more prosperous, more politicized, and more restless, and the north poorer, quieter, and more conservative. But the recent insurrection was a nationwide phenomenon. It started in the towns of the south (Vlore, Saranda, Gjirokastra, Tepelene, and Delvino). But ten days later citizens in the north began to take to the streets. Western media reports of a Northern "counter-revolt" in sup-

port of Berisha are completely false. Even in Berisha's home town, Bajram Curri, the people burned all symbols of the detested regime, and chanted "Down with Berisha."

The Western capitalist press speaks of civil war. Where is the evidence? The army and police literally dissolved at the beginning of the insurrection, and the regime sought, in vain, to identify and fortify a social base. The civil war is an invention of Western "Albania specialists." In reality, the immense majority of the Albanian population rose up. The small bourgeois layers, and the various servants of the regime, preferred to keep their heads down and wait for better days.

No "tribal" division, no pro-Berisha resistance, no civil war, and no massacres. Yes, there was an element of chaos, an element of "anarchy." But let's be clear.

The bourgeois media presented this anarchy as the result of the collapse of the Albanian state, the institutions, and, above all, the repressive state forces — the army and police. After all, our rulers argue, since order and law require a (bourgeois) state, an army and a police force, the collapse of these pillars of peace can only lead to anarchy. Right?

Wrong! In only 4–5 days, people in the areas of revolt began to organize themselves; they created self-management and self-defense organs for each town or village. Then completely new municipal and district councils were elected. And the self-defense groups were transformed into fairly well disciplined partisan units, with clearly defined responsibilities, using former officers and deserters from the Albanian army.

For two weeks there was no regional coordination of these local self-management bodies. Then eight southern towns agreed to form a "National Committee of Public Salvation," composed of representatives of each "autonomous communal council." A further five towns quickly joined them. This was the beginning of a dual power situation. The rebels had appropriated almost all the attributes of state power — police, army, and civil administration.

There is still a shortage of information about the way these new organs of popular power actually operate. But it is clear that important decisions are taken at daily public meetings, usually in the town square. A large majority of the population participate. In Vlore and Gjirokastra public meetings overturned the conciliatory positions of their leaders, and restated that Berisha's resignation was an essential precondition to any settlement. On a number of occasions since then, local leaders have bent under pressure from Western ambassadors and agreed to all kinds of concessions, only to fail to win support for these policies in the general assemblies.

The masses refused to give up their arms until the regime was overturned, and Berisha kicked out.

When northern towns joined the revolt, they created similar self-management structures. By March 12–13, there were two Albanias. Tirana, the capital, was under Berisha's control, with agents of the "Shik" secret police patrolling all areas. Outside Tirana, the whole of the country was in revolt!

The People, the Parties, and the President

It is no surprise that the mass uprising was not led by the country's opposition parties, but declared itself independent of those parties. There is a huge gulf between the radicalism of the demands of the armed populace (resignation and trial of Sali Berisha, dismantling of the regime and the secret police, reorganization of the state on a new basis, full reimbursement of the money stolen from the people through the pyramid schemes, punishment of those responsible, as an example to others) and the conciliatory attitude which most opposition parties have adapted toward President Berisha.

Apart from the Democratic Alliance, Albania's political parties have been extremely moderate — a moderation which fails to hide their own fear of a self-managed popular movement which, in the final analysis, no longer has need of their services! Since the mass uprising began in Vlore on February 28, opposition leaders have been overtaken by the events and have recognized that they are threatened with becoming irrelevant. Their own social base was melting away: the more the rank and file of the opposition parties radicalized, the deeper it became involved in the transformation of the revolt into an authentic revolution.

The "Opposition" Collaborates with Berisha

Before the uprising, no one would have imagined that the leaders of all opposition parties would accept Berisha's authority, that they would sit down to discuss with him and even express support for his proposals. Yet this is how the "opposition" has reacted to the uprising.

While Sali Berisha denounced the "red terrorists" who he said were behind the revolt, the Socialist Party (ex-Communist) agreed to join Berisha's "National Unity" government. As if they didn't realize whose members the president was labeling as "red terrorists." The acting Socialist Party leader Bashkim Fino even became prime minister, while the undisputed leader of his party, Fatos Nano, remained in the prison cell where Berisha sent him in 1994!

The former Stalinists of the Socialist Party leadership have played a treacherous role. Bashkim Fino met with leaders of the mass uprising in Gjirokastra (where he used to be mayor) and "recognized" the "essential role" of the "people in arms." Meanwhile, a Socialist Party spokesperson denounced the costs of "anarchy" and called for a return to "the normal situation which existed before."

It surely seemed to the insurgent population that the opposition parties were, if not allies of Berisha, then certainly objectively acting in his interest.

There was only one response possible: the National Committee of Public Salvation immediately declared itself to be independent of all the political parties and demanded that it participate directly in the negotiations, as a "third pole."

Unfortunately, without a clear-thinking political leadership, the popular movement was torn between its spontaneous dynamic, which pointed toward the overthrow of the old order, and the remnants of the population's sympathy for the opposition parties. Leading insurgents continued to demand that Berisha resign, but did not attack, verbally, those who had now associated themselves with the president. The insurgents "tolerated" Bashkim Fino's new Government of National Reconciliation, a government which protected Sali Berisha's role as president of Albania. At the same time the people refused to surrender their weapons or submit to the authority of this new government.

As a result, three weeks after the beginning of the insurrection, Albania had three centers of power.

- First, the remnants of the old Berisha regime, disintegrating, but still operative.
- Second, the new government (former opposition), which refuses to cut its links with "the constitutional order."
- Third, the armed people and their National Committee of Public Salvation. This "independent third pole" declared itself to be completely opposed to the old regime, but showed itself willing to make a deal with the new government of Bashkim Fino.

Hybrid Solution

The situation was now evolving toward a hybrid, intermediary solution, which would delay the final solution of the conflict one way or the other. The ball was in the hands of the new government. The old Berisha regime was seriously weakened, the Western embassies had stressed their support and understanding, and above all, the popular movement had no revolutionary leadership. And so, the Fino government was able to seize the initiative. A minimal state (police and army) was reconstituted, and the government proclaimed itself to be the savior of the endangered motherland.

This government is too varied to represent a long-term solution. The first public demonstration in support of the new government began with cries of "we want peace" and finished with the singing of the Internationale!

Those crazy Albanians again, right? Wrong again! Most of the several thousand demonstrators were members of the Socialist Party. Their feelings might be contradictory, but they are certainly comprehensible. These people, residents of Tirana for the most part, support the government which, in effect, has ended the Berisha dictatorship, but they remain frightened by the great unknown: the Albanian people in arms. This was not the first time in the 20th century that Stalinist bureaucrats, or ex-Stalinist social democrats, sang the Internationale to try to exorcise the ghost of a revolution which they see as a competitor, even a danger.

Which Way Forward?

As we go to press, the situation in Albania is more confused than ever. Casualties have been

very limited: less than 100 deaths during three weeks of insurrection in a Balkan country where everyone is armed to the teeth. But now, for the first time, there is a real danger of anarchy and chaos. Hundreds of thousands of people are now motivated by hunger and desperation. To paraphrase the Internationale, "the prisoners of starvation" have arisen from their slumber. Italian television has convinced people that, in Western Europe, "even the cats eat from silver plates."

People will be ready to do almost anything to satisfy their basic needs, and their (also modest) dreams.

People of good will in Western Europe have been troubled by the spectacle of armed insurrection, and the collapse of Berisha's regime. But Western military intervention must be opposed. It will only serve the interests of the super-rich — in Albania and in the West.

To recapitulate. The combination of economic crisis, fraud during the May 1996 elections, and collapse of the financial organizations running the pyramid schemes stripped the Berisha regime of all legitimacy and exposed it as the number one enemy of the overwhelming majority of Albanians.

The subsequent social explosion quickly threw up a fairly well structured popular administration, a polar opposite of the Tirana regime, but it lacked a leadership with determination and a clear perspective. The balance of forces had quickly shifted against the Berisha regime, but a third force, the leadership of the Socialist Party and the other parties of the old opposition, were able to step into the middle, temporarily filling a vacuum of power and taking up a dominant position.

After three weeks of general revolt, a precarious equilibrium has emerged. It could break down at any moment. On the one hand, the popular movement cruelly lacks clear perspectives. On the other hand, the remaining financial companies will almost certainly collapse.

Meanwhile, Sali Berisha refuses to resign. There is little prospect of stability under the National Reconciliation Government.

Dynamic of Permanent Revolution

Those who wish to defeat the Albanian insurrection will need time, and all the Machiavellian skill of the Western powers. In the meantime, the armed population may be able to exploit the hesitation of the West and of the Socialist Party bureaucrats. It may adopt a more radical, more explicitly plebeian perspective. It may throw up new leaders, men and women who are able to meet the responsibilities and face the challenges which the dynamic of permanent revolution imposes in Albania today.

The Albanian insurrection is not the result of exceptional circumstances. We may see similar social earthquakes elsewhere in the Balkans, particularly in Macedonia or Bulgaria. Russian nationalist leader Alexander Lebed recently warned that Russia itself could "easily become the Albania of 1998." □

March 20, 1997

Albanian Insurrection on the Defensive

by Nicos Yannopoulos

Nicos Yannopoulos is organizer of the Greek "Network for the Defense of Political and Social Rights." Two weeks after the Albanian insurrection started he spent ten days in the southern part of that country, where he held long discussions with the leaders of the National Committee of Public Salvation, and the leaders of the Popular Committees in a number of towns, including Saranda, Vlore, Tepelene, and Gjirocastre. This report, to appear in the May issue of International Viewpoint, has been edited for an international audience by Georges Mitralias and Mark Johnson.

The Albanian insurrection is on the defensive. The possibility exists of a new cycle of confrontation between the population and the multinational "peace-keeping" force. There is also a constant risk of aggressive maneuvers by the discredited President Sali Berisha.

Since March 10, the insurrection has been stalled. Unfortunately, this is probably not a "war of position," following the "war of movement" of early March, but a significant decline in the movement. This is partly due to fatigue, and the inability of the movement to propose a credible plan for continuing the confrontation with Berisha. Another factor is the absence of structures and organizations which can unite the insurgents, and boost their morale again.

Thousands of people refuse to surrender their weapons until Berisha goes. But while a few lose their temper, or revolt against some decision or other of the interim government under Bashko Fino, the general climate is not one of deepening social polarization or sharpening political confrontation. On the contrary, most people are saying that "we need to overcome our differences."

"Restore Order"

There are people, including among the insurgents, who say that the restoration of order is the top priority, or at least a major concern. Meanwhile, the demand that President Berisha depart is slowly fading from the forefront of the insurgents' minds, increasingly being seen as a "parliamentary" question.

Significantly, no one has dared denounce the repressive nature of the "Multinational Force." On April 7, the Popular Committees demanded that the Force's commanders not meet with Berisha. But they were careful not to criticize the deployment of foreign troops in Albania. In fact, many rebel leaders had indicated their support for "international protection of humanitarian aid" as early as mid-March. Which is curious when everyone knows that humanitarian aid is threatened by corrupt officials much more than by the insurgents, or even armed bandits.

In the Albanian context, the Popular Committees are extremely democratic bodies, which organize and administer the insurgent zones. They are not really a form of direct democracy, since delegates are neither directly elected nor replaceable. They do not really reflect the politicization of the population, and the resulting decline in the hierarchical structure of society. Nevertheless, they clearly represent the "average view," and the feelings of the majority of the insurgent population. They are certainly not

part of a project to reconstitute the state apparatus in the insurgent towns.

But they are contradictory collectives. On the one hand, they express the demands of the insurgents and maintain, by their very existence, the present political instability. On the other hand, they legitimize, through collaboration, the political parties of the "Government of National Reconciliation" and the Tirana-recognized prefects and regional authorities, who have the aim of restoring order. Most Committees are attempting to rebuild the police force, rather than develop popular militias or local social self-defense committees.

Composition of the Popular Committees

Committee members are mainly people with military or administrative experience, who had some kind of social prestige and who played an important role when the insurrection began. Most were not previously "activists," nor are they the natural leaders which all insurrections generate. Most are older men, from more conservative sectors of the population. They are less "enlightened" and less "disinterested" than most of the insurgents they represent.

The military men in the committees play a very contradictory role. Everybody recognizes their essential role in helping the insurgents confront and defeat the repressive forces of the Berisha regime. But these men are hardly likely to encourage the development of self-defense structures within the insurrection. Their tradition and their mentality tend to block this.

The nature and work of the committees is also influenced by the lack of "activist" experience of an oppositional or even counter-culture type. And, of course, there is the absence of networks of conscious revolutionaries.

The other big problem is fatigue. Thousands of people who participated in the insurrection have left, or are trying to leave the country.

As a group, the insurgents are confused, ideologically speaking. And this confusion fixes the limits and the contradictions of the Albanian insurrection. This is a mass armed insurrection. But once the Tirana elite formed its "Government of National Reconciliation," the insurgents found themselves without a political project for extending their confrontation with Berisha, or for extending their own power base. As a result, the insurrection seems to be unable to impose its own solutions, or to make a dramatic change in the social and political balance of forces. And yet, the rebels represent an important dynamic in society. If Berisha tries any

rapid move to regain control, the insurrection could reignite. And once Berisha goes, parts of the rebel movement may mutate into a new social opposition.

Problems

The European media stress the violence of Albania today. Most of the time these media fail to separate the violence of the insurrection (execution of secret police agents), the political violence of the regime (its retaliations, and its "anonymous" terrorism designed to divide and weaken the insurrection), and, of course, the common violence which accompanies every insurrection, revolution, or riot. From the capitalist mass media, and from Berisha's public relations team, the message is the same. Albania is suffering from a "vicious cycle of chaos and anarchy, which began with the insurrection."

Let's be clear. Every insurrection is accompanied by an increase of political and social violence. There is always, inevitably, an increase in transgressions of the previous legal code. Wherever a power structure is collapsing, a number of individuals attempt to appropriate the roles and the property which they consider to be theirs by right.

These individuals may be partially motivated by a spirit of solidarity, but their behavior is also the result of years of material privation and political manipulation. Inevitably, part of what they appropriate would be more useful if it was made available to other individuals or groups. But not necessarily the legal owners of said property under the previous regime.

Until an insurrection of the oppressed can transform its natural "just cause" into a new legal framework, based on liberty, equality, and solidarity, there are bound to be low-level transgressions of the previously existing legal code. In all previous revolutions and insurrections, this has eventually been used as a pretext for the reimposition of authoritarian, hierarchical regulatory systems.

Generalized transgression is certainly a major problem for the Albanian insurrection. Among other things, it disorients large sectors of the movement, and makes many people more conservative. It provides arguments for those nostalgic about "order" and a strong state.

This generalized transgression is not provoked by the insurrection. Rather, insurrection allows it to appear. The true cause of the transgression is the same set of social conditions that led to the insurrection: the material privation and feeling of being abandoned by those in power which affect most Albanians.

"Criminal Behavior"

"Criminal" behavior in the rebel areas obviously incorporates the traditions of transgression within Albanian society. A large part of the population, particularly in the rebel-held south, already had a very marginal relationship to legality. The Berisha regime tolerated, even encouraged this behavior, since there were few other viable strategies for survival for many people. People were also strongly influenced by the incredible corruption of the Berisha regime, down to the lowest officials. This itself rendered the "rule of law" and respect for the law inoperable in the areas now under rebel control. In such a context, we can hardly be surprised that the south of the country suffered so much "criminal" behavior since the insurrection began.

The Popular Committees have not been able to control even the most anti-social and reprehensible elements of this generalized transgression. Where they have tried to do so, they have usually failed. And, in trying to prevent such behavior, they have used "old-style" methods. Because they do not fully trust the Berisha regime's police force, they appoint former policemen from the previous, Stalinist regime to "keep an eye on them." As in the old days, public meetings have been organized, to exhort the population to trust and support the police. What has not been done is to develop the self-managed structures of the insurrection, creating and generalizing a system of local self-defense units, and popular tribunals. We still do not know to what extent such structures functioned in the early part of the rebellion. But since March 15 most insurgents have been virtually passive in the face of growing transgression. The rebels don't know what to do about it, any more than they know what to do about the initiatives of the imperialist powers and the risk of a counterattack by the surviving nucleus of the Berisha regime.

To reestablish his role at the center of the country's political life, Berisha seems to be operating a "strategy of tension." For this, and other obvious reasons, it is important to make a distinction between socially-motivated and small-scale transgression, and the criminal behavior

of Mafia groups and the criminal-terrorist action of Berisha's agents. It is obviously impossible to draw a precise distinction between social transgression and organized crime. But, unless the insurgents can do something about it, the omnipresent, small-scale transgression will become structured and organized and, one way or another, exploited by the regime to weaken the insurrection.

Berisha's "White Terror"

It is also important to expose the "white terror" which Berisha's general staff is coordinating in the rebel areas, and even in Tirana. This terror is a key tool in Berisha's diplomatic negotiations. He is presenting himself to the foreign powers as the only man who can reestablish order in the "chaos" which, he claims, dominates Albania.

Inside Albania, Berisha uses violence in two directions: to discredit and weaken the insurrection, and to maintain his confrontation with the Socialist (ex-Communist) Party of Bashko Fino. The Socialists, who represent the only real parliamentary alternative to Berisha, dominate the "Government of National Reconciliation." Berisha hopes that his "strategy of tension" will push the Socialist Party toward more conservative positions, and boost the morale of his own, dissipated supporters.

There is a growing trend of assassination of Berisha's political opponents. There are clear acts of sabotage, like the burning of Socialist Party offices. And there are "blind" terrorist attacks, the aim of which is to weaken the insurrection, and increase demands for, or at least tolerance of, a return to a "strong state."

The next step in this strategy will probably be the delaying of the elections planned for June, and resistance from Berisha to the creation of the promised Constituent Assembly.

Albania's Enemies

Despite their differences, the foreign powers all agree on a short-term strategy in Albania. The insurrection must be bypassed, and "stability" reimposed. The "Western democracies" want to liquidate the insurrection, which threatens to

provoke the total dissolution of a state bordering on the European Union.

None of these powers is really interested in Albanian human suffering. After all, the number of deaths during this insurrection is insignificant compared to the mountains of bodies in Rwanda, in Bosnia, and in Chechnya.

The Albanian insurrection is a threat to the stability of the Balkans, but not in the way Western media usually imply. No serious analysts expect this rebellion to provoke ethnic wars between the Albanian minority and the Slav majority in Yugoslavia and Macedonia. But the phenomenon of popular insurrection following financial collapse certainly could be repeated in those countries, in Bulgaria, or in some parts of the former USSR.

In other words, this isn't about the Albanians, about peace, or about democracy. This is about the challenge, by some Albanians, to the cohesion and credibility of the "new world order." This is why 79,000 tons of military hardware have been sent to Albania, to protect a few dozen tons of rice and milk powder.

Albania's Friends

The Albanian insurrection is not an echo of the past. It was not provoked by a few "nostalgics." On the contrary, the revolt of the Albanian people comes from the future. It is a first sign of the resistance of the "fourth world" to the new capitalist barbarism which is spreading across the planet.

This is not the dawn of global socialist revolution. But it is a nightmare for the forces of reaction and counterrevolution. It is subversion of the existing order in the "new Europe." It suggests that bourgeois hegemony is not the only possibility.

The radical left should not just express its sympathy with the Albanian insurrection, or regret the fact that more detailed information about life in the rebel zones is not available. It should protest vigorously against the indifference of Western rulers to this human suffering, and expose the selfish and cynical maneuvers of the European powers in Albania. There is a need for international resistance to the international plans to repress this insurrection. □

Eastern Zaïre: Under New Management

Continued from page 2

The political ideas within the Alliance are varied, including elements of Maoist and "Third-Worldist" ideas from the 1960s. They identify seven social classes in Zaïre, with two fundamental groups: exploiters and exploited.

When we asked how the Alliance would finance its programs for health, education, and public services, we were confidently told that "Zaïre is rich enough. Even paying the foreign debt will not be a problem." And the debt must be paid, since "we have to co-operate with all countries in the world."

I don't know about Laurent Kabila, but certainly many of the Alliance representatives at a lower level are unaware of the political and

economic problems they will face when they take power.

We also noticed the influx of opportunists: former Mobutu supporters who converted "just in time." Only a handful of cadre from the 1964-65 rebellion are left. After 30 years of isolation, they are trying to transmit the principles of their long struggle against Mobutism to a new generation.

Better Life

Life in the liberated zones is better than in the old days. The massive corruption has gone. There has also been a shift in public thinking about day-to-day "petty corruption." And the "little people" no longer live in fear. Mobutu is

no longer invincible, because the people have mobilized themselves.

The process is only starting. It is too early to judge all aspects of the rebel regime. But we need to recognize the positive aspects of this movement, which has opened the path toward the end of Mobutism. The left abroad should have a constructive, critical engagement with them.

"Third-world" oriented people in Europe often think that Africa is a marginal part of the world, without great strategic significance. But when you see what the imperialists have been capable of in Rwanda and Zaïre, collaborating in genocide, then you say to yourself, Africa matters a great deal to them. □

For the Democratic Return of Hong Kong to China

by October Review

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After 150 years of British colonial rule, Hong Kong will return to China on July 1. But what should be a day of celebration is overshadowed by the fact that sovereignty will not be exercised by the people, but by the Beijing bureaucracy.

Since China's economic reforms started, Hong Kong has become the stepping stone across which international capital has moved into China and Chinese capital has moved out of the mainland. Beneath the superficial glamor of prosperity, ordinary people in Hong Kong have suffered from high land prices, high rent, a high cost of living, and a decrease in real wages. Unemployment and under-employment is a growing problem, partly due to the move of the manufacturing sector out of Hong Kong and onto the mainland.

Beijing bureaucrats have announced their policies for the new Hong Kong. Their attempts to impose dictatorial control and repress political rights violate the basic principle that Hong Kong should be democratically ruled by the people of Hong Kong.

Deng Xiaoping's guideline was for Hong Kong and China to be "one country — two systems." The possibility for the people of Hong Kong to choose their own social-political system was never considered. The setting up of the various committees to draw up the Basic Law and to form a 400-member "electorate," and the process of selecting the chief executive of the Special Administrative Region and the members of the provisional legislature, have been conducted in an extremely autocratic man-

ner. Power is being shared between pro-Beijing sectors and influential capitalists. Independents and democratic parties are excluded.

Political Rights and Freedoms

The legislators-to-be have proposed reverting to more repressive laws and ordinances on civil liberties (such as the right of assembly and the right of political association) which existed until the 1980s. Under strong resistance and opposition from the people of Hong Kong, there have been concessions on certain issues, and some proposed changes have been deferred, to be taken up later by the provisional legislature.

Social and Economic Rights

Despite the deterioration in the living standards of the majority of residents, the Hong Kong government's revenues have increased in each of the last few years. By the end of June 1997, the total reserve funds will be HK\$330 billion (US\$42.5 billion). This is more than 10 times the amount the British government had promised to hand over to China. The projected surplus for the year ending March 1998 is HK\$31.7 billion (US\$4 billion).

Meanwhile, social welfare expenditure has been raised by only half as much as in 1996. Spending on public assistance this year will be even lower than in 1996. This budget was drawn up after 19 rounds of negotiations between the Hong Kong and Chinese governments. Opposition to spending on social welfare has come publicly and strongly from the Chinese government.

While being mean on spending on social welfare, no expenses will be spared as far as

festivities to celebrate the transfer are concerned. The Hong Kong government has allocated HK\$200 million (US\$25.8 million). Many events will also be sponsored by other bodies. The "walkathon" held in the name of "celebrating the Return and giving to charity" raised HK\$17 million. The scandalous fact was later revealed that only HK\$3 million goes to charity, and HK\$14 million to celebration festivities.

The people of Hong Kong have been resisting Beijing's control. The return of Hong Kong to China, though under "two systems," will be an impetus to the linking of the struggles for democracy and better livelihood between the people of Hong Kong and those of the mainland. Both now confront the same oppressing forces of bureaucracy and capitalism. They will now be able to share their experiences in struggles.

The tasks of revolutionary Marxists in Hong Kong are to fight, together with the people, for political freedoms and better livelihood, guarding against bureaucratic repression of the rights of speech, publication, demonstration, assembly, and association; to serve as an intermediary link, sharing the experiences of struggle between the outside world and the mainland, and fighting attempts at repression or isolation; and to develop theories and concepts of revolutionary socialism: for democratic socialism with the people as true masters. The revival of the democratic movement in China will be the strongest defense of the struggles of the people of Hong Kong. □

Fight for a Socialist Alternative!

Continued from page 17

of the NDP's labor base must see the need for radical change. If we want to free working people from capitalist bondage, then raising class consciousness and pushing for mass action in the unions and the NDP must be our task.

We Can't Do It Alone

But none of this can be done by any one of us, alone. None of us, alone, can build a class struggle left wing in the unions. None of us, alone, can wage a coordinated fight at the next OFL convention in November for a general strike to bring down the Tories, or forge a united front of social movements (including the unem-

ployed, students, women and gays), or build a socialist caucus in the NDP. None of us, alone, can publish and distribute a national class struggle newspaper, or educate a new layer of activists in the ideas of feminism, socialist humanism, and Marxism. None of us, alone, can adequately expose capitalism as a wasteful and irrational system with nothing to offer workers except social and ecological disaster.

Taking on these tasks, and presenting a vision and a political alternative, is the task of a socialist organization. Such an organization is Socialist Action. And if you believe that there really is an alternative to the tyranny of big business rule, an alternative to reformism and bureau-

cratic business unionism, then now is the time for you to join us. If you understand the seriousness of the crisis facing the workers' movement, and the urgency of a new direction, then you will step forward tonight and join Socialist Action.

Together we can defeat the TINA syndrome. Together we can really shake things up, and re-ignite the movement. Together we can forge a new workers' leadership. Together we can win.

Long live international workers' day!

Long live the struggle for workers' power and socialism! □

Military Dictators and the Fight for Workers Rights in Indonesia

by Michael Livingston

Beginning on Saturday, July 27, 1996, massive antigovernment protests rocked the Indonesian capital of Jakarta for the first time in 20 years. The protests began when police raided the headquarters of the Indonesian Democratic Party (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia, or PDI) and arrested supporters of PDI leader Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Following the police raid, street fighting led to the destruction of at least 22 government office buildings and banks. Bomb threats continued to force the evacuation of shopping centers and office buildings for days after the protests, while the military commander of Jakarta ordered his troops to "shoot on the spot" anyone taking part in street disturbances. On Tuesday, July 30, the government blamed the "rioting" on the People's Democratic Party (Partai Demokrasi Rakyat, or PDR), a group which the government alleges (without proof) to be the successor of the banned Indonesian Communist Party.

On October 13, 1996, after investigating the events, the Indonesian government's own human rights commission blamed the "riots" on the government, stating that the military had engaged in "unnecessary intervention" and also had "taken sides, which is far beyond its function as a security apparatus."

The antigovernment protests came at a critical juncture in Indonesian history. The "New Order" of Indonesian President Suharto, which came to power in an anti-Communist bloodbath in 1965, is experiencing pressure from within segments of the Indonesian ruling class, political opposition from the Indonesian masses, and criticism from transnational capital. Suharto, who turned 75 in June 1996, is considering "running" for his seventh 5-year term in 1998.

Observers have suggested that Indonesia may be the next Philippines, where a combination of mass pressure and ruling class opposition forced a long-established dictator from office.

The crisis now facing Indonesia is threefold in nature. First, it is a crisis of political succession, as elements within the ruling class position themselves for the transition in power that will take place should Suharto decide to step down or, as appears more likely, should he die in office. Second, it is a crisis of capitalist transformation, as elements within the Indonesian ruling class, military, and transnational capital seek to modify the political structure to better serve capitalist interests. Third, it is a crisis of mass unrest as segments of the working class,

excluded from political participation and power, seek to intervene in the political process. It is only by understanding these three aspects of the crisis, and how they overlap and interact, that we can hope to understand developments in Indonesia and the prospect for revolution in the fourth most populous country on the planet.

Ruling Class Opposition

Suharto's "New Order" permits only three political parties: Golkar, the party of the government and military; the United Development Party (PPP), a Muslim-based political party; and the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). The PDI is the smaller of the two "opposition" groups. All three parties operate only at the beck and call of the government. Golkar typically wins by overwhelming margins. When Golkar's vote fell from 73 to 69 percent in the last election, it was considered a cause for comment by the media.

The 1996 political drama began on June 20-22 at a PDI Congress held by dissident members of the PDI who were acting on behalf of the government. The government engineered the congress to oust the duly elected party leader, Megawati Sukarnoputri. Megawati, as she is generally referred to in Indonesia, is a daughter of former Indonesian president and independence leader Sukarno. President Suharto and Golkar fear that Megawati, who as head of the PDI is one of only three people eligible to run for president (the other two being Suharto, as head of Golkar, and the head of PPP) would pose a serious challenge to Golkar.

It is unlikely that Megawati would win the election, and she certainly would not be elected president, because the president is elected by the assembly, and half of its members are appointed by Suharto, not elected. Still, a strong showing by Megawati would seriously undermine the New Order and would position her as a likely successor to Suharto. Such a possibility is anathema to Suharto's inner circle.

Rump Congress Ousts Megawati

On the first day of the rump congress held by pro-Sukarno members of PDI, thousands of pro-Megawati PDI members and supporters marched from PDI headquarters through the streets of Jakarta. Seventy-five people were injured when police and troops in full riot gear attacked the marchers. The demonstration was the largest in Indonesia since student protests in the mid-1970s.

After Megawati's ouster by the rump congress, PDI members who supported her occupied PDI headquarters in Jakarta. The day after the rump congress, Megawati told 5,000 supporters that she would fight on and that she was "the legitimate PDI chief for the 1993-1998 period," referring to her 5-year elected position as head of the party. Megawati has threatened to involve the Indonesian masses in the struggle (a prospect that disturbs the Indonesian ruling class) and wants the PDI to stake out a position more independent of the government. She said, "We want to consolidate ourselves as an independent party and not be a stooge of the political framework."

Megawati's stand has increased her popular appeal. She already enjoys considerable name recognition and support from former followers of her father. She also has some support from within the Indonesian military among officers who have not benefited from government graft and among members of the Indonesian ruling class who are tired of the endemic corruption of the government, especially the enormous fortunes acquired by the Suharto family.

In response to pressure from multinational corporations, Suharto has promised to privatize and deregulate the economy and curb the costly (to transnational capital) pattern of bribes. While substantial privatization has taken place, Suharto seems reluctant to privatize and deregulate in areas that would hurt his family's wealth or the wealth of his supporters. In fact, thoroughgoing privatization and deregulation accompanied by an end to corruption and bribes would undermine the Suharto regime, which is based on a form of crony capitalism. The cronies include segments of the Indonesian military, the largest and most successful business groups in Indonesia (most of them controlled and headed by ethnic Chinese), and Suharto's own family. If Suharto cannot appease the unhappy segments of the Indonesian ruling class and transnational capital, he may face substantial political opposition from a candidate these groups could support: Megawati.

The Discontented Masses

The threat by Megawati and the PDI to bring "tens of millions of people into the streets" to demand support for democracy may not be real. What is real, however, is that numerous political forces outside the official political framework have rallied behind Megawati. Within Indonesia these forces are referred to as NGO's (non-governmental organizations), and they have formed an uneasy alliance with the PDI.

A new pro-Megawati coalition of 30 NGO's, the Majelis Rakyat Indonesia (Indonesia People's Council), was recently formed. Included in this coalition are NGO's representing workers, women, students, religious groups, journalists, and victims of human rights abuses. For example, the coalition includes Masyumi Baru, a Muslim organization; Toba Batak Protestant Church; Student Solidarity for Democracy in Indonesia (Indonesia's leading progressive student group, which counts 12 branches on the

islands of Java, Sulawesi, and Sumatra); and the Indonesian Workers' Welfare Union, led by Muchtar Pakpahan.

Independent Unions and Muchtar Pakpahan

The union headed by Pakpahan is not recognized by the government, which only recognizes pro-government company unions. Independent unions are not recognized. Pakpahan was jailed in connection with a 1994 workers uprising in Medan, North Sumatra. After being released he was soon rearrested, on August 1, 1996. He was to be tried in April, facing the threat of execution by firing squad if he is found guilty, as is likely the case, since under the "New Order" no Indonesian accused of a political crime has been found innocent so far.

Megawati Soft on the Military

Fundamental tensions exist between the coalition and the PDI over the question of dwifungsi, the dual function of the military. This dual function gives the military responsibility for national security and a pre-eminent role in politics. The PDI, courting supporters within the military and ruling elite, supports dwifungsi. The NGO's oppose dwifungsi as an authoritarian structure that prevents democracy.

One important NGO not a member of the coalition is the prominent Muslim organization Nahdlatul Ulama, headed by Abdurrahman Wahid (also known as Gus Dur). With 30-50 million followers, Nahdlatul Ulama is probably the world's largest Islamic organization. It is a conservative, mainly rural organization. Wahid is conservative in the sense that he believes in the relaxed and generally tolerant Islam that has existed in Indonesia for centuries and is staunchly opposed to the "radical" ideas of Muslim fundamentalists. In a significant development, Wahid has publicly declared his sympathies for Megawati.

The support received by Megawati is not the only sign of mass unrest. In early July 1996, 10,000 striking workers in East Java fought soldiers. Independent observers and government officials claim that the PDR led the strike. The day before the uprising in Jakarta, 7,000 striking pulp and paper workers in Beran, East Kalimantan (formerly called Borneo), stormed through the streets demanding higher wages and benefits. The military crushed the demonstrations.

Government Repression

The government has responded to discontent with fierce repression of popular protest on the one hand and efforts to placate and divide ruling class and transnational interests on the other.

Since the dawn of the "New Order" in 1965, when an estimated 500,000 to 1,000,000 Indonesians were killed by the military, the government of Suharto has used murder as an instrument of politics. As Amnesty International has observed:

Arbitrary execution is an important element of the government's system of maintaining "political stability" and "order." Although espe-

cially common during counter-insurgency operations, extrajudicial executions are also a central component of the government's response to other perceived threats to "national security."

Amnesty International notes that in Indonesia there are three types of extrajudicial killings: (1) deliberate secret killings of political prisoners in custody (sometimes after they have "disappeared"); (2) killing that results from deliberate use of excessive force in dealing with crowds or religious communities; and (3) targeted "mysterious killings" by unidentified government death squads.

The current wave of repression follows this general pattern. On July 8, 1996, at a rally of 20,000 striking workers, Dita Indah Sari, president of the Indonesian Center for Labor Struggles, Coen Hussein Pontoh, from the National Peasants Union, and Mohammed Shaleh from Students in Solidarity with Democracy in Indonesia were all arrested and are still in prison. All three are also members of the PDR.

As of July 30, 1996, 158 activists were still missing, over 200 were known to have been arrested, and up to 100 have been reported killed by the military or police.

On August 2-5, members of the Yogyakarta branch and Tangerang-Jakarta Branch of the PDR were arrested. On August 11, Budiman Sudjatniko, the 27-year old president of the PDR, was arrested along with five other leaders of the party. They had been in hiding since the mass protests took place.

The PDR

Like Pakpahan, the activists of the PDR face execution. The PDR is an essentially social democratic group that has grown out of the student and grassroots movement. The party's activists are leaders or activists within a number of important Indonesian NGO's, including labor, peasant, and student organizations. The organization has only approximately 800 members, according to Indonesian government estimates and the PDR itself. But they have proved very effective in leading, organizing, or supporting mass action struggles, including a number of the demonstrations and strikes that have involved as many as 20,000 individuals at one time. The success of these demonstrations and strikes, combined with the deep discontent of the Indonesian masses, has sent fear through the Indonesian elite.

In a move to intimidate the opposition, the government summoned Megawati and two PDI members of parliament "for questioning." It also interrogated Pramoedya Ananta Toer, a prominent Indonesian novelist and former political prisoner who is now in his 70s. He had served a 14-year term after being accused of "Communist activities."

Indonesia-Gate

The unfolding political crisis in Indonesia has been overshadowed in the U.S. media by revelations concerning a minor political scandal. John Huang, a former Commerce Department official, worked as a fund raiser for the Demo-

cratic National Committee. During the 1996 campaign he raised \$250,000 from South Korea's Cheong Am Company. The DNC returned the money when the media discovered the arrangement. Under U.S. law, it is illegal for foreign nationals, foreign corporations, or foreign governments to contribute to candidates or political parties. The DNC claimed that they thought the contribution came from an American subsidiary of the Cheong Am Company; legal residents and U.S. subsidiaries of foreign corporations can make legal contributions.

Huang had also raised \$425,000 from Arief and Soraya Wiriadinatas, an Indonesian couple who lived what was described as a modest upper-middle class life in suburban Virginia, outside of Washington, D.C. Shortly after the election, the Wiriadinatas returned to their native country, where Soraya's father had been a top executive with the Lippo group, a multibillion dollar corporation controlled by the Riady family. Mocktar Riady, the family patriarch, is an ethnic Chinese with extensive business holdings in China and the U.S., as well as Indonesia. Mocktar Riady is also a fundamentalist Christian.

Now the plot thickens. Huang had been an executive with the Lippo group before joining the Commerce Department. James Riady, the eldest son of Mocktar Riady, is a long-time friend of the Clintons. At the age of 20, James was sent to the Little Rock to learn about U.S. finance. As part of this process, he befriended the Clinton's. Both Riady and Clinton shared a powerful patron, Jackson Stephens, head of the largest investment firm west of Wall Street. Stephens and Riady had met when they both helped bail Bert Lance out of financial trouble. Lance, as everyone remembers, was the Georgia banker who served as President Carter's budget director. Stephens took Riady's son on as a trainee at the investment firm. Riady saw the Clintons at political functions, at golf, and at dinner parties. Since 1991, the Riady family has given Clinton and the Democrats over \$1,000,000. (They have also given substantial amounts to the Republicans, including Bob Dole. The Dole campaign had to pay \$6 million in fines for violations of campaign finance laws. Dole was a frequent recipient of donations from foreign supporters.)

Two former Rose Law Firm partners, Joseph Giroir and Webster Hubbell, were also connected to the Riady family. After Hubbell left the Justice Department and before he went to jail for fraud, he received a \$150,000 retainer from Riady.

Clinton and the Lippo Group

In addition to having a number of the Lippo group's former employees and "friends" in the administration (including President Clinton himself), James Riady has had frequent contact with the Clintons. In the first term, he was a guest at the White House at least 15 to 20 times, according to White House Press Secretary Mike McCurry.

The White House has made the lame claim that this frequent contact with the Riady family

has not influenced U.S. policy. Surprisingly, there is some evidence for this. Ever since 1965 bipartisan U.S. foreign policy has been highly supportive of Indonesia's New Order and has funneled billions in investments into that country.

Clinton's policy seems to be exactly that of his predecessors, with the possible variation that he seems to favor the Lippo group a bit over the other Indonesian capitalists, whom feed at the same trough as the Lippo group.

Chickens Come Home to Roost

The irony is that the U.S. government and U.S. corporations have a long history of funding elections in other countries. In 1972 the CIA pumped \$10 million into the Italian parliamentary elections and another \$6 million into the 1976 elections. In 1964 the U.S. paid more than half of Eduardo Frei's total campaign costs (over \$20 million) in his campaign against Salvador Allende in Chile. Frei defeated Allende but lost to him six years later, in 1970. In 1973 Allende was overthrown in a U.S.-sponsored coup.

The CIA also pumped millions into Australia, starting in 1973, in an effort to remove the labor government of Prime Minister Edward

Gough Whitlam. The CIA achieved its objective when the labor government fell in 1975. In 1984, the CIA gave El Salvador's José Napoleón Duarte \$2 million for his campaign, enough money to boost Duarte to victory. Between 1984 and 1989, the U.S. government subsidized opposition political parties in Nicaragua to the tune of \$3.5 million, the equivalent of several billion donated to a U.S. political party.

The list could go on and on. If corporate donors were included it would be as big as a telephone directory in a major city. Current government financing of foreign campaigns is carried out through the U.S.-based National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which receives \$30 million annually from the federal treasury. Forty-one of the current members of the Russian Duma, for instance, received funds from NED.

Still, the inflow of funds to the U.S., from countries as diverse as Indonesia, China, and Nigeria (which gave \$120,000 to members of the Congressional Black Caucus in recent years through a private foundation) seems to indicate increased connections among the capitalist classes of various nations, a slow growing to-

gether of the worldwide capitalist class, which manipulates elections to ensure the continued rule of capital throughout the world.

Needed: International Labor Solidarity

In the face of the ongoing repression by the Indonesian government and the continuing struggles of the Indonesian masses, international solidarity is desperately needed. Among the most important demands should be the release of Pakpahan and the leaders of the PDR, full freedom of speech and assembly for all Indonesians, and the right to strike and form trade unions independent of the government.

Additional information is available from Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor (ASIET), PO Box 458, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia. (The e-mail address is asiet@peg.apc.org). Mark Lane, the national coordinator of ASIET has requested that copies of all protest letters and resolutions should be sent to ASIET. □

April 13, 1997

Lucius Walker: A Leader in the Struggle for Justice

by W.T. Whitney, Jr.

The author, a pediatrician who lives and works in Maine, is active in opposition to the blockade of Cuba.

In April, Rev. Lucius Walker, Jr., came to Maine. In schools and churches, on radio and television, and at a rally, he talked about Cuba. For decades Walker has been a leader in the struggle for justice in Africa, Central America, and the United States. He now devotes a passion and energy to ending the U.S. embargo against Cuba that must be unmatched. Last year, he and others fasted for 94 days to force our government to allow computers destined for Cuban hospitals to pass into Mexico.

In 1988 he was wounded by Contra terrorists while he was leading a study group in Nicaragua. In response, he founded Pastors for Peace, so that help might be brought to those hurt by U.S. policies in Latin America and so that people might be able to participate in an "alternative foreign policy" based on justice and mutual respect. Since then six national campaigns, the Friendshipments, have brought humanitarian aid to Cuba. In Maine, Lucius Walker sought support for the seventh Friendshipment, leaving for Cuba in May 1997.

Under Walker's leadership the Friendshipments highlight the most objectionable aspects of the embargo. The U.S. government turns away from neighbors in need; the Friendshipments are built upon personal contact with our Cuban neighbors. Because the embargo specifically blocks humanitarian supplies, the Friendshipments bring exactly these materials to Cuba. This embargo is unique in restricting food

and medical supplies; Lucius Walker, therefore, uses civil disobedience to point out the illegality of U.S. embargo laws, appealing to a higher law. (Pastors for Peace refuses to apply for the license required by Washington to authorize humanitarian donations to Cuba.)

"Lend a Hand"

Rev. Walker bases his work on what he preaches at the Salvation Baptist Church in Brooklyn, NY. The messages of lending a hand and of raising up the least of us resonated throughout his discussions in Maine. "I was thirsty and you gave me drink...in prison and you came unto me." On April 16 Lucius Walker spent an hour with Philip Berrigan and fellow Ploughshare protesters at the Cumberland County Jail, where they are imprisoned for defacing a destroyer at Bath Iron Works.

Thirty years ago Walker founded the Inter-religious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) to bring the disenfranchised together to work for human rights and justice. IFCO developed an anti-Klan network, an African relief organization, and the National Black United Fund. It has supported Haitian refugees, Native American and Farm Worker organizations, African liberation movements, plus urban initiatives for housing and health care.

Raises Issue of Class Rule

Lucius Walker would agree that much of his work and that of his colleagues remains unfinished. Yet he now focuses on Cuba. In discussion he returns often to the themes of economic bullying and of racism. In relating the destitution of workers in maquiladoras, of campesinos in rural areas, of Haitian refugees to the power of money and the global market economy, Walker raises the issue of class. And he connects the struggles of people of African descent with those of indigenous people of color worldwide. He points out that Cuba devotes scarce resources to equitable health care and universal education: it stands apart from the social disaster wrought by big-power economic domination. And with 60 percent of its people being Afro-Cuban, Cuba long ago outlawed racism and has successfully worked since then toward a multisocial society without racial discrimination.

Lucius Walker seems to carry on where Martin Luther King left off. At the end of his life King reached out to the economically disenfranchised, specifically to the striking Memphis sanitation workers. And he suggested that war against non-white people in Vietnam was akin to oppression of Black people at home. The many tributaries of Lucius Walker's work would seem to be coming together in one powerful stream that serves the Cuban project of social and racial justice. □

Causes of the Million Man March, and Where We Go from Here

by Muhammad Ahmad

The following article is based on the transcript of a talk given by the author at a public forum February 15, 1997, in the Cleveland, Ohio, area. Muhammad Ahmad, a longtime activist also known as Max Stanford, was a close associate of Malcolm X. He lectures at Cleveland State University, Cuyahoga County Community College, and Kent State University. Ahmad's talk was transcribed for BIDOM by Lee DeNoyer.

First I want to give a descriptive analysis of what stage of development we are in that brought forth the Million Man March. Then I want to talk about a two-pronged, flexible strategy for dealing with the situation.

Manning Marable states that capitalism as an economic system is based on unequal exchange between the owners of capital and those who work for a wage. Capitalism as a system fosters class stratification, extreme concentrations of wealth and poverty, and promotes racial hatred as a means to divide workers. This statement can sum up the condition that we find ourselves in today.

I'll try to illustrate in a simple way what this means for Black people. The capitalist tries to get maximum profit by any means necessary. So when we study the capitalist system — or study the conditions that African Americans are under — each day, each second, the capitalist system or the capitalist class is trying to obtain more and more profit. Capitalism does not just try to get profit, it tries to get *maximum* profit from everyone.

One way capitalism does this is to maintain a "reserve army of the unemployed" — as a pressure to keep wages down. (If you don't like the low wages I'm paying, says the employer, the owner of capital, there are other people waiting for your job.) A great many of the unemployed are African Americans. This is the result of deliberate racist policies by the capitalist employers, the ruling class.



Malcolm X — urged education for liberation of Black youth.

The Present Period and Social Context

Revolutionary strategy requires that a correct estimate be made of the historical period and the social context of the struggle, both nationally and worldwide. On October 16, 1995, close to 2.1 million African American men demonstrated, responding to Minister Louis Farrakhan's call for a day of atonement and a day of absence.

Why did they atone? Many people feel that a day of atonement is placing the blame on the victim rather than the perpetrator. But even the victim must realize that he or she has some responsibility in his or her op-

pression. The day of atonement was for African American men who had fallen victim to the lack of employment and the illegal economy, that of crack cocaine for the most part, and had become criminalized. This is why the day of atonement was called — for those of us who had fallen victim to this planned genocide, to atone, or to try to rectify our behavior, our part in the situation.

There has been a mass criminalization of African American males in the last ten years — with 500,000 African American males presently incarcerated in prisons. Some 300,000 more are caught up in the legal system. One in every seven Black males is entangled in the prison system in one way or another. One in four Black males, age 24 or younger, is entangled in the legal system.

So with this situation, no matter what else African American men may have felt, they felt the need to unite and to make a statement. Whether or not that statement has been followed up on, I'll leave to your judgment, and we can enter into a discussion about that.

Three Tendencies in the Black Community

Miss Ella Baker, a key activist in the 1960s, says that there are three major political tendencies in the African American community. (1) Those who want to be included in the system as it is. Many have defined that as "integration" — having some political empowerment within the existing political system. (2) Those who are discouraged with the system as it is and who want to separate and form their own nation or go back to Africa, or whatever. (3) Those who want to change the system.

Manning Marable calls those in the third group transformationists. Those who want to make a fundamental change of the economic and political system. I'll come back to these three tendencies, but the crisis that the African American community faces is so great that possibly we will be able to get over the contradictions between these three tendencies. These three major tendencies have kept African Americans from uniting — and they



Marcus Garvey: early proponent of Black self-help, pioneer Black nationalist

go back to pre-Civil War Colored Peoples' Conventions, where they argued over what direction or what path African Americans should take.

Technological Apartheid

Essentially, African Americans are facing a new situation. In less than ten years we may be faced with technological apartheid, an institutionalized, overt and covert form of genocide. It all depends on how you want to describe it. This is something new. African Americans have faced apartheid before, but not in the form of a technological apartheid.

Now what do I mean by technological apartheid? I'm going to try to explain in the simplest way that I can what has taken place. There are certain sociological changes that have taken place in America that are not being talked about — technological changes. Industry did not just relocate to suburbia for no reason. Industry did not just go to the Sun Belt or overseas for no reason. So we need to analyze this.

There's a structural crisis in the system. Things are getting worse. Each generation has less of a chance of achieving what the generation previously has achieved, even though the new generation usually has more education. There's a structural crisis in capitalism with the development of automation and cybernation and robotics. Robots are replacing much unskilled labor. Automation is at the level where the capitalists can produce more with less people. So this affects those people who are on the bottom rung. Essentially, this structural crisis eliminates the need for excess manual or mechanical labor.

African Americans in the Work Force

Twelve million African Americans presently are in the labor force; 3.5 million of them are trade unionists. Most of those trade unionists came into the labor movement from the 1930s to the 1970s and joined unions and became some of the most militant of the trade union organizers and fought for better wages for labor. Of those 3.5 million, many are 50 or older. Now with unskilled labor leaving what is called the inner city, the quality jobs or the unionized jobs in many inner cities will be gone in another generation.

There are presently 7 million African Americans in unorganized labor, many in the service industry. There are approximately 2 million unemployed African American workers. Since 1944 when the mechanical cotton picker was introduced on farms and plantations in the South, which permanently displaced many African American workers, African Americans had to search for ways to be reincorporated into the productive labor force. From 1944 to 1964 American business and industry was experiencing a boom, which was able to incorporate many of these displaced African American workers. The United States was economically the number one country in the world.

Changes in Industry Affect Black Workers

Now what we want to look at is, Why did industry move overseas and why did it move to the suburbs?

You have three major revolutions occurring in the world at the same time. One is the revolution in nature — the unusual increase in rain storms, hail storms, blizzards, and so on signals a revolution in nature. Two, you have revolutions in society, which happen seldom, but sometimes they do happen. Three, you have a scientific and technological revolution. And that's the revolution in science. Like we have lights now. Two centuries ago, your forefather George Washington, not my forefather, but your forefather, studied under candle light. Now you have steam ships and maps.

But your discoverer, Christopher Columbus, not my discoverer, had to learn how to sail, right? Nobody wants to talk about the Moorish navigation school he went to. So these are the myths that we deal with.

But what I'm trying to get at is that things take place, often major things, but we get hardly any idea of when they take place or how they take place or how they are affecting us.

Some major changes have come about mainly through the space program — technological innovations resulting from the space program. People say, "The man on the moon, what does that have to do with anything?" One, you have new clothing now, made of new synthetic materials. You have new alloys. And other such things.

One invention that came through testing in the space program is hard plastic. Could anybody tell me something that you may use on a daily basis that's made out of hard plastic? Your automobile. What was once made of steel is now made of hard plastic.

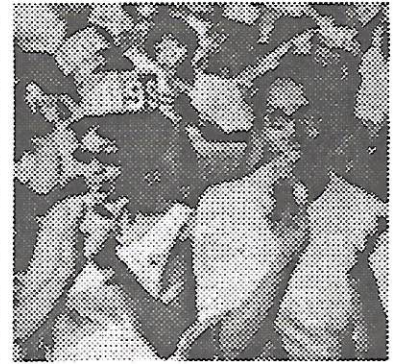
Now, what took place was a major innovation or revolution in transportation. You now have large tractor trailers that can move products where rail lines don't go. To make a long story short, the introduction of plastics and other light alloys in the automobile industry made the inner city almost obsolete. Before, steel and other heavy alloys had to be transported by railroad lines — this is why you had industry develop in the inner cities in the first place. Many African American communities and other working class communities grew up right near those railroad lines.

It became cheaper from 1970 to 1980 for the capitalists to transport these alloys by interstate highway and to relocate factories at interstate highway locations. What this did was allow for the growth of suburban villages for people who could afford to move out of the city. It also helped with the de-politicization of the working class. Which simply meant or means that African American workers were raising hell in the work place in the 1960s and unions were demanding higher wages and benefits, and the capitalists were in a constant war with the working class, so they relocated and went through a complete restructuring.

Now, this restructuring affected us, because where we could take a bus or a trolley to get to work, we couldn't get to work anymore. That same factory had moved out. Look where Ford is located now.

So this created a crisis for Black males in particular. African Americans are becoming lumpenized — in the Black Panther movement in the '60s we called it lumpenization — permanently unemployed Black youth becoming criminalized. And this is because legal employment is not physically available for most Black youth. But illegal employment is easily within their physical means. So they are engaged in the illegal economy, and that's why those 500,000 are in prison, close to 500,000 felons.

And by the way, this will effect the voting power of the African American community. We're not going to see this immediately, but we will in the next few years. In most states if you are a convicted felon, you cannot vote. And this is going to affect the voting power of Black males.



Members of Local 1199 Hospital Workers Union, a predominantly non-white trade union.

To Educate the Working Class

by Frank Lovell

A version of this article was read by the author at a March 29 reception at the Tamiment Labor Library at New York University on the book *Trotskyism in the United States*, held in connection with the Socialist Scholars Conference. (For more on the March 29 presentations, see the accompanying articles by Paul Le Blanc. Also in this issue are related articles by Joe Auciello and Mark Weber.)

The publication of a serious book dealing with what is commonly called "Trotskyism" and with some relevant aspects of Leon Trotsky's legacy is certainly a most welcome and timely event. This latest book, *Trotskyism in the United States*, should be welcomed and carefully read by all who are involved with or interested in current developments in the AFL-CIO unions and the shifting moods of the working class in the United States. It is especially timely because one section of it, "The Liberating Influence of the Transitional Program" by George Breitman, relates to the historic task of building a labor party based on the unions in this country, a long delayed undertaking that is just now getting under way through the efforts of a segment of organized labor.

When I learned that I was expected to speak about this book it occurred to me that the authors — George Breitman, Paul Le Blanc, and Alan Wald — were all three influenced and their lives changed in more ways than any of them could fully understand by their association with and studies in the rich mines of Trotsky's voluminous writings on history, philosophy, the art of revolution, scien-

tific socialism, military science, literary criticism, and other subjects that relate to the social transformation from capitalism to socialism.

So I thought it would be of some interest to this audience to talk about Trotsky, his place in the history of our century, and the meaning of his revolutionary legacy for the 21st century. All this is implicit in the remarks, observations, and succinct reviews of the history of American Trotskyism that make up this volume. But I quickly concluded that to attempt that would be too much for this occasion.

Those who have not yet had a chance to dig around in the 14 volumes of the *Writings of Leon Trotsky* from his last exile (1929–1940), the series edited by George Breitman, can find them here at Tamiment as part of the Breitman collection. These volumes do not include Trotsky's writings on Germany and the rise of fascism, the Spanish civil war, or the Chinese revolutionary struggle of 1925–27. Nor do they include other material collected in book form, such as *The Third International After Lenin* and *The Stalin School of Falsification*. Nor does that 14-volume set include Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* (published 1930–31),

Excerpt from "Trotskyism in the United States"

On Cannon's Proposal to Drop the Label "Trotskyist"

The following passage is from Paul Le Blanc's essay "The First Fifty Years" (in *Trotskyism in the United States*, p. 51). The quotation from SWP leader James P. Cannon is from minutes of an SWP Political Committee meeting of April 10, 1951. It was appended to an article George Breitman wrote for an SWP internal discussion bulletin in 1965 ("Two Proposals"), in which he once again raised Cannon's idea of 1951.

[In] 1951 the leadership of the SWP proposed that the label of "Trotskyism" be set aside, that instead the party designate itself "in broad public political agitation as 'Socialist' or 'Socialist Workers' or 'Revolutionary Socialist,' alternatively, as the occasion may demand." Cannon explained that a "Trotskyist" self-designation could cause thoughtful workers to view the Socialist Workers Party

as a sectarian movement, as followers of some individual, and a Russian at that. It is not a suitable characterization for a broad American movement. Our enemies will refer to us as Trotskyists, and we will, of course, not deny it; but we should say: "We are Trotskyists because Trotsky was a true socialist."

What we are presenting against American capitalism and the labor bureauc-

racy is the principle of class struggle of modern socialism... [Emphasis added.]

Let our enemies within the movement, that is, in the narrow framework of the more political movement, call us Trotskyists. We will not protest. But then we will say we are Trotskyists because [Trotsky] represented genuine socialism and we, like him, are the real Socialists...

We have to think of ourselves more and more as representing the Socialist opposition to the American bourgeoisie. I don't think we should do it under the handicap of what appears to the workers as a sectarian or cultist name. That is what the term "Trotskyist" signifies to them.

George Breitman has commented that "there was a relapse from the wise decision of 1951, starting in 1952 with the fight against the Cochranites and their slogan of 'Junk the Old Trotskyism'..."

[The supporters of SWP leader Bert Cochran favored a lower public profile for the party in the face of the Cold War-era's McCarthyite anti-Communist and anti-Socialist witch hunt, which began in 1947 and kept intensifying until around 1955.]

... [As a result] throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the Trotskyist label was definitely attached to the SWP. But it is clear that what counted was the political content to which the label alluded.

From Cannon's statement, it is clear that the fundamental class-struggle socialism of the *Communist Manifesto* is at the core of this political content, involving the struggle of the working class for political independence from, and final victory over, the capitalist class.

his study of the degeneration of that revolution in the book *Revolution Betrayed* (1936), or his expose of the Moscow Trials in testimony before the John Dewey Commission in 1937. The books I mention are also available here at Tamiment in the Breitman collection.

In addition there are several anthologies: *The Basic Writings of Trotsky*, edited by Irving Howe; *The Essential Trotsky*, published in this country by Barnes and Noble in 1963; and *The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology*, selected by C. Wright Mills shortly before his untimely death. This last book was produced in collaboration with George Novack, with an introduction by Isaac Deutscher, and was published in 1964.

Instead of trying to relate Trotsky's life work — the crowning achievement of which he considered the founding of the Fourth International (in 1938) and its adoption of the Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution — to the history of Trotskyism in the United States, I have opted to talk about the purpose of Trotskyism in the United States and give some examples of how what was known as "the Trotskyist movement" attempted to fulfill that purpose.

What Is Trotskyism?

But first, what is Trotskyism? Both Alan and Paul have tried to define and describe what Trotskyism means. Paul relates the attitude, certain decisions taken, and what actually happened about this question. It is on page 51 of this book, a rather interesting episode in the post-World War II history of the Socialist Workers Party. [See accompanying box "On Cannon's Proposal to Drop the Label 'Trotskyist.'"]

I can tell you that those of us who identified with what was called the Trotskyist movement were not unhappy to be called Trotskyists. It made us rather proud to be identified with such a great historic figure as Leon Trotsky. Of course we knew more about Trotsky and the Russian revolution and Trotsky's contributions to a better understanding of world events than most other people. We shared the general attitude of Mary McCarthy, who came in contact with some Trotskyists at the time of the Moscow Trials and was glad to be identified with them because they knew more and seemed to be brighter than the Stalinist detractors of Trotsky.

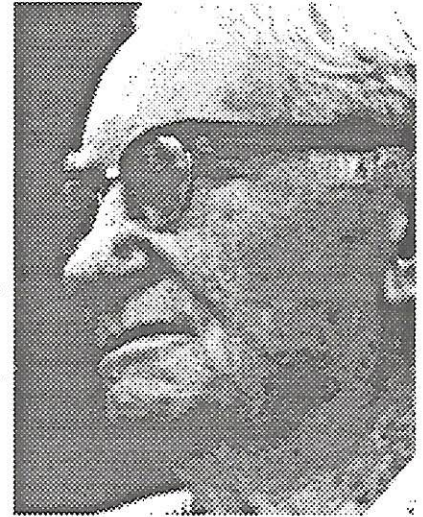
The truth is, however, that the term "Trotskyism" was coined by the enemies of Trotsky, the opponents of the Marxist method of economic and political analysis. It never occurred to Trotsky to call himself a "Trotskyist," just as Lenin in his time could not conceive of himself as a "Leninist." He was a Bolshevik, as was Trotsky, because that was the name of the party they led at the time of the 1917 October revolution in Russia.

Marx remarked once, after hearing that some of his German socialist comrades in America were described as "Marxists" or had taken to calling themselves Marxists, that he was glad not to be a Marxist. He did not want to be part of that company of doctrinaire exiles and poorly educated socialists.

Marx and Engels described themselves as scientific socialists. Commentators and enemies of the socialist concept like to personalize this whole body of economic and political theory in order to make it appear as if it is the property of an individual, the "revealed word" of a sect. Much of Trotsky's political life was spent in ideological struggle against sectarianism. All of his work — theoretical, organizational, military, economic — was the application and extension of scientific socialism. I don't suppose we will soon escape the term "Trotskyism," but we ought to try and make it synonymous with scientific socialism.

What Is the Purpose?

Whatever name we use — whether Trotskyism, or scientific socialism, or simply Marxism (Trotsky conducted a struggle against the revisionism of James Burnham in 1939 under the banner "In Defense of Marxism") — it is natural to ask, What is the purpose of this method and body of ideas? This question appears in Paul's essay on the first 50 years of American Trotskyism (p. 45). He is quoting from an article by



James P. Cannon Walter and Miriam Schneir that appeared in the *Nation* magazine in the 1970s:

The SWP is clearly a way of life, and those who enter it believe profoundly in its mission, which is stated succinctly in the SWP constitution: "the purpose of the Party shall be to educate and organize the working class for the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a Workers Government to achieve socialism."

This was not an amendment. It was there from the beginning. The founders of the SWP understood, as did their teachers Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, that the basic task of scientific socialism is education. Education and organization.

Cannon often explained, in many different ways, that the essence of Marxist philosophy is that the modern industrial working class is destined to destroy class-divided society and to usher in a new egalitarian social order; that only the working class can accomplish this historic mission; and that in order to fulfill its task, the working class must create its own vanguard party out of its own most advanced elements, together with enlightened intellectuals and other elements of the old society.

This means that those who wish to help create the vanguard revolutionary working class party must begin by educating themselves in order to help educate others.

This is easy to say, but of course it remains meaningless unless some guidance is given as to how the educational process is to be conducted. So what I want to do is give a few examples from the history of American Trotskyism.

Choosing an Audience

When Cannon and others were expelled from the American Communist Party (CP) in 1928 they had no choice as to whom they must address their appeal. It was the active membership of the CP at that time, and they concentrated on the facts about the struggle within the Soviet Communist Party and in the Communist International and the issues at stake. In this way they recruited a few new supporters and advanced their own education.

At the same time, none of this was kept secret. They began right away publishing a weekly newspaper, *The Militant*. Within the broader radical movement and in organized labor (in what was then called the progressive sector) there was interest and curiosity. But the main target of the campaign to get out the truth about the wrong policies being pursued by the Soviet bureaucracy, led by Stalin, was the CP membership.

The Matter of Timing

The Communist League of America (CLA), the organization of pro-Trotsky expellees from the CP, continued to target the CP membership (despite lack of any sensational success) for about four years. Meantime the Great Depression was deepening and millions of people were losing faith in capitalism here in the United States. In Europe the capitalist crisis was even more severe than here. Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933. This was recognized as a terrible blow to the working class movement, and the Stalinist bureaucracy, through its control of the Communist International, was largely responsible for Hitler's success.

At this point the International Left Opposition, the Trotskyist movement worldwide, recognized the bankruptcy of the Communist International and called for the formation of a new international. Here in the United States the combination of changes in the economic and political situation throughout the world prompted the CLA leadership to turn its attention outward, to the unions and to the unemployed organizations.

It happened that the strongest CLA branch, consisting of union veterans with experience in the CP and in earlier formations, was in Minneapolis. The conditions were ripe, and an experienced and recognized leadership was present. So the Minneapolis Teamster strikes of 1934, highly publicized by the local and national bourgeois press as being led by dangerous men connected to the co-leader of the Russian revolution, ended finally in victory for the strikers.

This was a profound educational experience for the strikers and for many in the radical movement who were paying close attention to the strategy of the strike leaders. The leadership of the CLA utilized this experience to further educate their own ranks and to reach out to other sectors of the radical movement. As a result, Trotskyism was on the political map in the U.S. labor and radical movement. This could not have happened without the sense of timing that comes only with working class experience and training in the revolutionary movement.

Content and Subject Matter

It is all well and good to talk about the need for education. But political education depends upon accurate knowledge of the constantly shifting political situation and command of accumulated historical experience of the class struggle. In the Minneapolis situation the strike leaders were in tune with the strikers and their allies, and knew the mood of the strikers and the attitudes of the unemployed workers to the strike at every phase of the struggle. One aspect of the successful strike strategy was the ability of the Trotskyist leadership to explain that the struggle in that situation had to be conducted within the confines of the established union movement of the day, a firm conviction then shared by few other radical groups or organizations, including the Stalinists. The debate over this issue was part of the educational experience.

The growth of the Trotskyist movement in the pre-World War II period, the 1930s, was conditioned in large part by the success of the Minneapolis Teamster strikes, which gave the Trotskyist some measure of prestige, authority, and respect. It led to the merger with other labor radicals of the American Workers Party, led by A.J. Muste, and soon thereafter to entry into the Socialist Party, where the human material that in 1938 founded the Socialist Workers Party was gathered and molded. This all came about through a process of intensive debate which educated the class-struggle activists, the socialist cadres. People who hope to make a revolution — or to lead any kind of social movement — must

be confident that they know what they are doing and capable of testing continuously the validity of their ideas.

World War II

In 1939–40, on the eve of World War II, and in its beginning stages, the Trotskyist movement in the United States debated the class character of the Soviet Union (whether it remained a deformed workers state or had become a new formation, a “bureaucratic collectivist” state) and the character of the war in Europe at the time (whether it was a struggle for redivision of the world among the imperialist powers or a struggle against fascism and bureaucratic collectivism). Related to this was the question of whether the revolutionary working class movement should continue to support the Soviet Union after the Stalin-Hitler pact, which had prepared the way for war.

The principal protagonists in this debate were Trotsky and Cannon, on one side, and Professor James Burnham and SWP leader Max Shachtman, on the other. The debate ranged over the entire field of materialist dialectics and revolutionary theory. I mentioned earlier that Trotsky's contributions to this debate are found in his book *In Defense of Marxism*. The debate helped prepare the Trotskyist movement throughout the world for intransigent opposition to the war. This, of course, was a very big part of our education in those years.

I promise not to review the content of this debate here. But there is a point I want to make about the war. I do not believe that Trotsky or any of his political supporters and associates thought that the shaky, outmoded capitalist structure of that day could possibly survive the terrible destructive power of world war. And certainly they did not believe that the Stalinist bureaucracy could pull through. They expected that the suffering masses of the world would rise up against the merchants of war and stop the slaughter, bringing down the heads of state in the major countries.

This actually did begin to happen. In 1943 a mass uprising overthrew Mussolini's fascist government in Italy, but German intervention maintained the fascist hold in northern Italy for two more years, and Anglo-American intervention stabilized capitalist rule in southern Italy. In India a mass movement grew during the war that ended in that country's winning independence from Britain, although this movement did not succeed in going beyond capitalism.

In Yugoslavia an armed resistance movement against Nazi occupation, and against the native capitalist collaborators with the Nazis, came to power and carried through a socialist revolution. A similar process under way in Greece was stopped by Anglo-American armed intervention. Eventually anticapitalist revolution came to the rest of Eastern Europe. But capitalism survived in its strongholds of Western Europe, North America, and Japan. And the Stalinist bureaucracy survived. In fact, the bureaucracy seemed to gain strength as social transformations (mostly by military-bureaucratic means) were carried out in Eastern Europe and North Korea in the immediate postwar years, then in China (1949–50), and later in North Vietnam (as a result of victory over the French in the Indochina war of 1946–54).

“Two Phases” of Trotskyism?

Both Alan Wald and Paul Le Blanc, in their essays in this book, speak of “two phases” of Trotskyism: one in the 1930s and '40s; the other in the 1960s. But I believe that the dividing line was World War II.

The war changed the world. It changed almost everything about the world that we had known. It changed class relations among

peoples around the world. And of course it left vast destruction and devastation in its wake.

But this was the very condition needed for the recovery and expansion of the capitalist system. Capitalism as a world system gained renewed strength from the process of rebuilding.

Our entire post-World War II era is colored by this — first, the recovery of capitalism; and then, since the early 1970s, the deepening crisis of the system as it entered a new “long wave” of decline, caused fundamentally by the worldwide falling rate of profit.

Alan Wald, in his essay on the old left and the new left (radicals in the 1930s in contrast to those of the 1960s), lists what he calls some “defining events of our epoch” (p. 236). These include: the defeat of fascism in World War II; the wrenching free from U.S. imperial domination of Cuba in 1959 and South Vietnam in 1975; and the collapse of Stalinism in 1989–91.

Of course, a great deal more was going on in the world from 1945 to 1989 or 1991. The class struggle continued everywhere, and often flared into class warfare. But the fact remains that in the power center of world imperialism, in the United States, the class struggle became muted and has only recently begun to flare up again.

Hands Off Social Security!

Continued from page 11

The pocketing of huge administration and brokerage fees — which are completely independent of the performance of investments — are a major objective in the drive to privatize Social Security. These fees would be totally at the expense of money set aside for present and future retirees.

But management fees are not all that Wall Street expects to get out of privatization. They also would have available a huge influx of investment capital. Eventually our Social Security payments could represent 10 percent of all stock. You can bet a big chunk of this fresh injection will go to expanding global investments. The flip side of global investment is further jobs loss for U.S. workers.

Invest in America — Dump Your Savings Bonds

Shifting SS money from Treasury bonds to the open market would have other unpleasant side effects. This wholesale dumping would depress the value of government bonds. That not only would hurt individuals holding savings bonds — usually as part of their retirement planning — but also major lending institutions required to hold bonds as part of their mandated reserves. Reduced reserve values will mean less funds available for loans — and higher interest rates. The lowered value of bonds will also aggravate the debt problems of the federal government.

Unsocial, Unsecured

But perhaps the biggest threat of all posed by privatization is that it takes the *security* out of Social Security. Instead of our retirement being backed by the “full faith and credit” of the federal government, we would be dependent on the performance of the stock market.

Right now the stock market is at an all-time high. But even the most optimistic promoters of capitalism can't promise this expansion of the market will go on indefinitely. Most expect a

The reason class struggle receded was the postwar boom, which lasted for two decades, with a gradual rise in the standard of living for a broad sector of the population, including especially the organized sector of the working class. As we know, this is changing. Real wages have slowly declined for two decades, and organized labor finds itself under attack on almost every front. With this change comes change in the social consciousness of millions of people.

This is what Trotsky taught and what he prepared us for in the Transitional Program so well described and explained by George Breitman in this book.

Let me conclude with a brief quotation from Isaac Deutscher (from his introduction to *The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology*):

“In sociopolitical ideas American conservatism seems unshaken. Yet it is in the field of ideas, Marxist ideas, that Americans have most to learn, if they are not to land themselves in a grim historical impasse.

“And in the field of ideas, Trotsky, I am sure, is still a superb teacher.” □

“correction” in the near future. What goes up generally, at some point, comes down.

We shouldn't forget the devastating blow Orange County, California suffered a few years ago when its investment schemes went sour. The near collapse — saved only by a massive bailout by taxpayers — of the savings and loan industry is also within our living memory. And we should never let them obliterate the history of the massive loss of life savings in the Great Depression that sparked the creation of the system to begin with.

Privatization of Social Security is the biggest rip-off of the working class yet proposed by politicians. That's the gut reaction of many working people. To its credit, the AARP is hanging tough so far in defending our present system. So are most labor-oriented “think tanks,” such as the Economic Policy Institute. But there is a dangerous sign of waffling on the part of our unions' leadership.

In 1994, Clinton appointed a 13-member Advisory Council to study Social Security and make some recommendations. There were three appointees from labor, three from corporate leaders, and a collection of economic policy experts. The agenda was promptly and firmly set by the privateers and the labor reps soon found themselves looking for a “lesser evil.”

The Council issued a public report in January that contained no fewer than three contradictory positions, none of which could muster a majority. Robert Ball, a former Commissioner of Social Security, proposed allowing up to 40 percent of SS funds to be invested in the stock market by government-appointed fund managers.

Council Chairman Edward Gramlich, an academic from the University of Michigan, pushed a plan to impose an additional 1.6 percent payroll tax that would be placed into individual 401(k)-type accounts that would pay an annuity upon retirement.

Sylvester Scheiber, from the benefits consulting firm Watson Wyatt Worldwide, came up with an ambitious two-tiered plan. A fixed

benefit of about \$400 per month would be financed through about 60 percent of SS taxes. The other 40 percent would be turned over to individual workers to invest as they please and reap the reward (or loss) of their efforts.

All three plans shared some other goals such as raising the retirement age to 69 — hoping we'll drop dead before we can collect much, shifting Medicare taxes from health care over to pay for retirement, and chiseling a few bucks off spousal survival benefits.

The labor reps seemed a bit disoriented in the rarefied atmosphere of high finance and higher education. They didn't want to appear quarrelsome while rubbing the padded shoulders of Wall Street or the patched elbows of the Ivy Towers. They looked around, concluded Ball's plan was the most moderate, and lent their names to it.

All these plans are bad news. Our response to all the privateer hucksters should be: *Hands Off Our Social Security!*

But we should do even more than fight to hang on to what we have. We need to *expand Social Security*. And not just the monthly retirement benefits — though that's certainly needed. We also should include health care as part of a broader Social Security, *Medicare for everyone*. We should be *lowering the retirement age*, not raising it.

It's high time we stopped letting the bosses and bankers dictate the political agenda. An answer to the lies and distortions about Social Security is long overdue. We should make clear to the bosses and the politicians that the destruction of our Social Contract will not be accomplished through civil discourse but only through civil war.

The Kansas City Area Labor Party is joining with the Institute for Labor Studies and the American Federation of Government Employees in taking a first step in defense of Social Security in our area with a conference in June. I hope you will join us there. □

On Valuing and Evaluating the History of U.S. Trotskyism

by Paul Le Blanc

The following is the text of a talk prepared for a panel discussion on American Trotskyism at the Socialist Scholars Conference in New York City the afternoon of March 29, 1997. That panel discussion was followed by a reception at the Tamiment Labor Library at New York University the same evening. (See the accompanying article by Frank Lovell.)

I want to share some thoughts on the value of studying a small but influential current of revolutionary socialists in the United States who embraced the perspectives of Karl Marx, V.I. Lenin, and Leon Trotsky. Formed in the 1920s as part of a Left Opposition to the early growth of bureaucratic and authoritarian elements that were destroying the Communist movement as a revolutionary force, they eventually accepted the label “Trotskyist” as one of their identifying appellations. At the same time, they were part of a rich left-wing labor tradition existing in the United States for more than a hundred years.

Leading personalities in the early days of American Trotskyism were James P. Cannon and Max Shachtman, each in their own way impressive figures in the history of American radicalism. There are many other important personalities — some well-known, many unsung — several generations of men and women whose often inspiring collective story has much to teach us. Of course, it is possible to string together idealized anecdotes and morality tales that glorify the story of American Trotskyism, but that won't explain why the U.S. Trotskyists never enjoyed a membership of much more than 2,000 people. Nor will it explain the actual reasons for their impressive successes: from the defense of revolutionary Marxist perspectives against the perversion of Stalinism, to leading the powerful 1934 Minneapolis general strike, to developing an impressive understanding of the Black liberation struggle, to helping mobilize a massive and effective opposition to the Vietnam war.

Nor will an idealized story explain the decline and fragmentation of the major organization which once identified itself as Trotskyist and ended up openly abandoning Trotskyism — the Socialist Workers Party. Most important, settling for idealized history won't help us move forward to a better society.

In the early 1940s, a projected history of American Trotskyism was lampooned by the ex-Trotskyist intellectual Dwight Macdonald in the following manner:

Evidently [President Franklin D. Roosevelt] will be lucky to get a footnote in future [Trotskyist] histories of the period 1930–1950. The Chapters compiled from the files of the Trotskyist publications promise to be epic: CHAPTER IX: 1929 DEPRESSION BEGINS, JAMES P. CANNON AND MAX SHACHTMAN

LEAVE COMMUNIST PARTY. CHAPTER XII: CIO LAUNCHED, LITTLE STEEL STRIKE, JAMES P. CANNON AND MAX SHACHTMAN LEAVE SOCIALIST PARTY. CHAPTER XV: NAZI-SOVIET PACT, WORLD WAR II BEGINS, JAMES P. CANNON AND MAX SHACHTMAN LEAVE EACH OTHER. [*Past Politics* (New York: Viking Press, n.d.; formerly titled *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*), p. 273.]

Macdonald's joke can be taken as a warning to avoid superficiality in recounting the history of American Trotskyism. Yet it can also be taken as a superficial dismissal of that history. In fact, there is enough craziness, irrationality, absurdity, and pettiness in all of us, in the human condition, that it is possible to find ample raw materials for producing hostile, funny, dismissive accounts of anyone and anything. It is necessary to keep a sense of proportion and a sense of humor, but I don't think that being dismissive will get us very far in understanding anything — especially small groups of dedicated people struggling against immense odds for a better world.

A more useful approach is suggested in the *Prison Notebooks* of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, which is interesting enough to justify lengthy quotation:

In what will the history of a party consist? Will it be a simple narrative of the internal life of a political organization? How it comes into existence, the first groups which constitute it, the ideological controversies through which its program and its conception of the world and of life are formed? In such a case, one would merely have a history of certain intellectual groups, or even sometimes the political biography of a single personality. The study will therefore have a vaster and more comprehensive framework.

The history will have to be written of a particular mass of men [and women] who have followed the founders of the party, sustained them with their trust, loyalty and discipline, or criticized them “realistically” by dispersing or remaining passive before certain initiatives. But will this mass be made up solely of members of the party? Will it be sufficient to follow the congresses, the votes, etc., that is to say the whole nexus of activities and modes of existence through which the mass following of a party manifests its will? Clearly it will be necessary to take some account of the social group of which the party in question is the expression and the most advanced element. The history of a party, in other words, can only be the history of a particular social group. But this group is not

isolated; it has friends, kindred groups, opponents, enemies. The history of any given party can only emerge from the complex portrayal of the totality of society and State (often with international ramifications too). Hence it may be said that to write the history of a party means nothing less than to write the general history of a country from a monographic viewpoint, in order to highlight a particular aspect of it. A party will have had greater or less significance and weight precisely to the extent to which its particular activity has been more or less decisive in determining a country's history.

We may thus see that from the way in which the history of a party is written there emerges the author's conception of what a party is and should be. The sectarian will become excited over petty internal matters, which will have an esoteric significance for him, and fill him with mystical enthusiasm. The historian, though giving everything its due importance in the overall picture, will emphasize above all the real effectiveness of the party, its determining force, positive and negative, in having contributed to bringing certain events about and in having prevented other events from taking place... [*Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), pp. 150–151.]

My own essays in the volume *Trotskyism in the United States* are influenced by this approach recommended by Gramsci, although I don't believe they achieve that level of analysis. I attempt to provide a coherent story, connecting a number of facts in a way that makes narrative and political sense. I attempt to provide — in a more or less chronological account — a reading of the historical material that is sympathetic to the American Trotskyist tradition, in the sense that it takes seriously its participants' lives and commitments, and also in the sense that it is consistent with the political orientation of those in the Trotskyist mainstream. I define “Trotskyist mainstream” as the majority of U.S. Trotskyists in the succession of organizations leading up to and including the Socialist Workers Party, which was founded in 1938 and of whom the most consistent and impressive leading figure was — it seems to me — James P. Cannon.

At the same time, I seek to connect with, incorporate insights of, and respond to criticisms from, those who broke from or were never part of this mainstream, and those who in various ways disagree with my own appreciation of American Trotskyism. No less important is the attempt to connect my “sympathetic reading” with larger political, economic, social, and cultural realities that made up the history of the time. What was the interplay, the mutual influence, between the Trotskyists, others on the left and in the labor movement, the multi-cultural and multi-racial and multi-occupational working class, various social movements, the intellectuals, the government, the bourgeoisie, as well as the economic and cultural transformations of our century?

In my essays I try to suggest at least some of the answers to this long, convoluted question. A quote from the book gives a sense of how I “read” the Trotskyist mainstream:

In the first period of American Trotskyism, we see a predominantly working-class current, whose leadership was an organic part of an authentic tradition of U.S. labor radicalism. This leadership had been involved in a process through which some of the most vibrant qualities of that labor-radical tradition were fused with a relatively high quality of Marxist theory and experience emerging from the revolutionary movement of Russia. The result was American Communism. Although cut off, by 1928, from the small but vital and promising American Communist movement, the initial Trotskyist cadres had absorbed its best qualities into the very fiber of their being, and some of these qualities were strengthened by the same circumstances that forced them out of the Communist mainstream.

What were these qualities? There was a deep idealism blended with a determination to put the ideals into action and to struggle against oppression. There was an organizational and strategic sophistication, combined with a practical-minded "horse sense" and flexibility. There was a rootedness in the working class as it actually existed, integrated with a vision of what it could actually become. In addition to this, there was a kind of Marxism that provided an analytical framework capable of orienting them in a complex world: a sense of history as a long and contradictory process; a firm grasp of the struggle between classes and of the immense creativity and revolutionary potential of working people; a perspective on the structure and dynamics of capitalism, both as a world system and as an American reality; a practical political orientation in which the immediate struggles of workers and the oppressed are taken seriously in their own right but also related to and combined with the longer-term goal of socialist revolution; an understanding that the working class of any country must attain political independence from its own ruling class but must also make common cause with the workers' struggles of other countries. All this implies a programmatic perspective and, flowing from that, a particular organizational form and mode of operating within such an organization: principles take priority over personalities; comradeship includes critical-minded honesty; fundamental decisions must be made, carried out, evaluated, and — if necessary — altered collectively; individual initiative, within the agreed-upon programmatic framework, should be encouraged. [*Trotskyism in the United States* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996), 67–68.]

Such an appreciation of American Trotskyism poses a problem. The Socialist Workers Party, founded and shaped by men and women to whom I have attributed this glowing perspective, came to be led by a new leadership team — more or less handpicked by some of the old Trotskyists — and the new team distinguished itself by discarding the basic political perspectives of historic Trotskyism, largely through a process of dishonesty and manipulation. How could something so good turn out so wrong?

There are two ways of answering this question that — for me — are not persuasive. One is to attribute to the new SWP leader who oversaw this transformation — a clever, charming, and ruthless person named Jack Barnes — almost magical powers, making him into an evil genius, a trickster who can somehow transcend historical materialism and spin revolutionary gold into sectarian straw. It is more plausible to argue, on the contrary, that the triumph of Barnes demonstrates that American Trotskyism was not as good as it was cracked up to be, that it contained some kind of fatal flaw: a fundamental deficiency in Cannon, in Trotsky, in Lenin, in Marx, or perhaps in all of these.

I reject both of these explanations, which attribute immense power to flawed personalities or faulty ideas. The explanation I offer in my essays argues that profound economic and cultural developments of the 1940s and 1950s resulted in a major historical shift which obliterated the labor-radical sub-culture of which American Trotskyism had been an organic part. Capitalism generated a process of recomposition of the U.S. working class in a manner which de-radicalized working-class layers that had been the rank-and-file base of labor insurgencies from the time of the Knights of Labor down to the heroic struggles of the CIO. Within that broad working-class activist milieu, Socialist, IWW, Communist, and Trotskyist organizations had flourished, and within that context the earlier cadres of American Trotskyism had been formed and the political perspectives of American Trotskyism had practical meaning.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the shrinking number of U.S. Trotskyists — despite their strength of character and ideas — became threadbare and brittle as a political force. When new recruits began to flood into the ranks of the Trotskyists in the 1960s and the 1970s, they came from a different experience and with a different consciousness. Important political work was done, important contributions were made — especially in struggles against war, racism, and sexism — but the revolutionary working-class orientation that had been at the heart of American Trotskyism was understood and practiced in a different, more abstract, less vibrant manner than had been the case earlier.

This was inevitable, if one accepts the Marxist precept that being determines consciousness — how we live, what we actually experience, determines how we think. People from different realities will understand and apply the same ideas differently. In fact, some serious efforts to remain true to the old perspectives necessarily generated sectarian results. In my opinion, this is not because the old perspectives were inherently sectarian (on the whole, they were not), but because the context in which they had made sense no longer existed.

Attempts to directly apply perspectives of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s to the qualitatively different post-1950 situation — in the absence of an insurgent working-class movement and in the absence of a broader labor-radical sub-culture — could be relevant only to the internal universe of a political sect, not to the actual lives of real workers.

It is within this analytical framework that the decline of the Socialist Workers Party (as a Trotskyist organization) can best be understood.

Such an analysis has practical implications for those who would like to be true to the best elements of the Trotskyist or revolutionary socialist traditions. An attempt to build a revolutionary socialist party equivalent to the organizations of the early U.S. Trotskyists will, in today's realities in the late 20th century United States, tend to result in the creation of yet one more political sect. For the perspectives of the 1930s to have greater relevance, we must more or less duplicate essential conditions of the 1930s.

It is not the case, of course, that things are going to be just the way they were in the 1930s. But the global capitalist developments of the past twenty-five years have been creating the basis for a new mass radicalization within the working class. Rather than building little socialist sects, we must help rebuild the labor-radical sub-culture and working-class insurgencies that are essential for the development of militant class-consciousness on a mass scale. We must build strong and democratic unions, build caucuses to revitalize unions, build the Labor Party as a vital political force, organize conferences of socially-conscious and insurgent working-class people, circulate labor publications, promote working-class cultural activities, and more.

At the same time, of course, we must preserve revolutionary Marxist perspectives and the memory of their expression in U.S. labor and radical history — because those perspectives and experiences are going to be relevant to the radicalizing masses of workers who will be fighting for survival and a better future in the years to come.

Because of developments in our economy and society, a revitalized labor movement and social movements will grow as expressions of a self-conscious working class, in part due to the reconstituted labor-radical sub-culture. This growth will at the same time enrich and revitalize that sub-culture, and the political orientation of revolutionary Marxism and of American Trotskyism will consequently have more practical relevance than has been the case since the mid-1940s. It will be important not to have forgotten, and not to have dismissed, the valuable experience and lessons accumulated by our revolutionary sisters and brothers of those bygone decades. □

Comments on “Trotskyism in the United States”

by Louis Project

On March 11 the following article was forwarded to Alan Wald by Louis Project, who noted that he had posted it “a couple of months ago to the marxism-international list,” a computer-network discussion conference, or “newsgroup.”

Trotskyism in the United States — *Historical Essays and Reconsiderations* has just been published by Humanities Press in New Jersey. It is essential reading for anybody interested in the recent collapse of Trotskyism in the United States. It will also be useful to people of other political backgrounds who are trying to figure out how to reconstruct the left.

The authors are George Breitman, Paul Le Blanc, and Alan Wald, and all of the essays have appeared elsewhere. It is a major achievement since these essays are very closely related to each other thematically.

George Breitman was a veteran of the Socialist Workers Party, which he joined in the 1930s. He is best known to the broader public as an early champion of Malcolm X's Black nationalism.¹ In the 1980s Breitman was expelled from the SWP along with a number of other party members who were unhappy with National Chairman Jack Barnes's rejection of the theory of permanent revolution. The expulsions were based on trumped-up charges.

Paul Le Blanc was a member of this grouping. He is also author of the essential *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*, which I discovered was basically commissioned by Breitman in an effort to understand the collapse of the SWP. Alan Wald was also a member of this grouping, as well as being a well-known literary scholar of depression-era radical fiction.

Le Blanc hews to a position that the SWP of James P. Cannon, who founded and led the party until the 1950s, was basically a healthy revolutionary formation that was hijacked and trashed by Jack Barnes. Wald maintains a position closer to my own, that the party degenerated because it was based on unsound principles at its birth. Barnes was an exceptionally malevolent individual, but the seeds of the degeneration were in the genes.

The book is grouped into two parts, the first dealing with outlines and essentials and the second with “reconsiderations.”

In the essay “Trotskyism in the United States: The First Fifty Years,” Le Blanc provides an overview of the history of the SWP until the early 1980s, its heroic period according to him. James P. Cannon emerges from this history as a practically flawless leader.

“The Liberating Influence of the Transitional Program: Three Talks” by George Breitman and “George Novack, 1905–92: Meaning a Life” by Alan Wald are the two remaining

essays in the first part. They are basically hagiography about the splendors of the SWP and are of little interest to people outside the Trotskyist milieu.

The second part is much more interesting. It consists of clashing accounts by Le Blanc and Wald to make sense of the collapse of the SWP. People who lived through the collapse of Maoism in the 1980s will no doubt be struck by the similarities of the two movements in succumbing to sectarianism and dogmatism.

“Leninism in the United States and the Decline of American Trotskyism” by Paul Le Blanc defends the position that the noble “Canon Tradition” was eroded by Jack Barnes. According to Le Blanc, “the maintenance of a democratic atmosphere when there were sharply disputed questions was essential, Cannon felt, for the party to educate its cadres in rich lessons of the past as well as in complex new realities.”

Probably the most interesting insight Le Blanc has about the Barnes regime involves some Freudian psychology. He says:

The impact of Barnes in the SWP is a reflection not of Leninist principles or the tradition of Cannon, but of basic human psychological dynamics. The functioning of some SWP members, responding to the powerful personality and tremendous authority that Barnes assumed, brings to mind Freud's insights on group psychology: “the individual gives up his ego-ideal [i.e., individual sense of right and wrong, duty, and guilt] and substitutes for it the group-ideal as embodied in the leader.” The authority of the leader (in the minds of at least many members) becomes essential for the cohesion of the group, and the approval of the leader, or a sense of oneness with the leader, becomes a deep-felt need that is bound up with one's own sense of self-worth. The member of the group enjoys “a feeling of triumph” when his or her thinking coincide with this leader's judgments, and is vulnerable to “delusions of inferiority and self-deprecation” whenever inner doubts arise about the leader's authority. Indeed, “opposition” is perceived to be “as good as separation” from the group and is “therefore anxiously avoided.” The compelling “group ideal” that Barnes symbolized for such members involved a powerful mix of strongly held values, accumulated theoretical wisdom, and hopes for the future triumph of socialism. His authority flowed from the continuity that he seemed to represent with previous revolutionary generations.”

This is an absolutely brilliant observation. I happen to think that most of Freud is utter

nonsense, especially that canard about infant sexuality, but his understanding of group dynamics in a group like the SWP seems right on the mark.

What was of more substantial value to me in this essay was some brief observations on the role of Zinoviev in the creation of the “Marxist-Leninist” model that everybody — Cannon, Barnes, Avakian, Cliff, et al — adheres to. This is a theme that I have been researching recently and one that I plan to write extensively about. According to Le Blanc, “the conception of a monolithic party was advanced in the Comintern under the leadership of Gregory Zinoviev, who influenced Cannon's own formulations in the early 1920s.” There is much more to be said about this.

The final two essays are by Alan Wald: “From the Old Left to the New Left and Beyond: The Legacy and Prospects for Socialism in the United States” and “The End of ‘American Trotskyism’? Problems in History and Theory.” I want to quote several paragraphs from the final essay to give you a sense of Wald's diagnosis of the problem. It should be familiar by now to those who have been reading my [computer network] posts on “Marxism-Leninism”:

In truth, although the more sectarian Trotskyists get attention (including, sometimes, greater media notice due to their propensity to differentiate themselves from the rest of the Left), there are many other Trotskyists who work wholeheartedly for reform as a way of raising political consciousness and strengthening the positions of subaltern groups. But even this nonsectarian approach seems insincere to many independent radicals, because most Trotskyists regard only a tiny number of people — usually their group and affiliated organizations, and certain select movements from the past — as genuinely “revolutionary.”

Surely one of the most tragic features of the history of U.S. Trotskyism is the inability of individuals, who were once comfortable in an organization and then on the “outs” to recognize problems in theory, practice, and organization until “one's own ox is gored.” Like those former Communists who believe that anyone who left the Communist Party by a certain date (usually when they themselves left) is all right, but those who remained afterwards are total dupes, many Trotskyists also put a “date” on the degeneration of the group from which they have broken. In most cases, this date roughly approximates the time that they were deposed, although some go too far the other way and

Continued on page 39

1. Actually Breitman, as editor of *Malcolm X Speaks* and *By Any Means Necessary* and author of the outstanding *Last Year of Malcolm X: Evolution of a Revolutionary*, played an indispensable role in helping keep Malcolm's ideas alive. For a fuller picture of the remarkable individual George Breitman was, see the memorial volume dedicated to him, edited by Sarah Lovell. — Eds.

Two Critics of “Trotskyism in the United States”

by Paul Le Blanc

Those of us who identify with the Trotskyist tradition and are immersed in the efforts to build a broad and vital Labor Party capable of fundamentally changing the face of U.S. politics have a responsibility to explain the connection of these two things — especially if we believe that the revolutionary Marxist program continues to be relevant, and that the historical experience of American Trotskyists continues to be useful, to the present and future struggles of the working class.

Two critical reviews of *Trotskyism in the United States* have recently appeared. One by Louis Proyect was posted on a computer network discussion conference; the other, by Peter Drucker, is in the Fourth International’s monthly publication *International Viewpoint* (the issue for April 1997).

Louis Proyect is not entirely critical. In fact, he recommends *Trotskyism in the United States* as “essential reading” for those interested in the history of U.S. Trotskyism and as “useful to people of other political backgrounds who are trying to figure out how to reconstruct the left.” This is gratifying for me, and I’m sure for Alan Wald as well, especially because this was precisely what we wanted to accomplish.

Of course, rebuilding a revolutionary socialist movement, especially if it is to become stronger than anything yet seen on our soil (i.e., actually capable of bringing about a working-class democracy and socialism), must be a collective enterprise incorporating a variety of insights. Because of this, the critical contributions to the evaluation of American Trotskyism offered by Proyect and Drucker are most welcome — and yet at the same time are somewhat disappointing. Both of them appear to have very fundamental criticisms of the American Trotskyist tradition represented by James P. Cannon, but they fail to translate this into something that could advance our understanding of the history, or the present, or the future of the revolutionary movement.

Whatever disagreements there are between Alan Wald and myself, each of us attempts to carry the discussion of U.S. Trotskyist history to a deeper level than that at which we found it. One may disagree with what one or another of us has to say — but the best way to advance the discussion is to grapple critically with the specifics of our arguments and then put forward an alternative interpretation grounded in factual material. Sweeping dismissals based on mere assertion, or knocking down straw men (that is, misrepresenting what one or another of us says), doesn’t get us very far.

What Are Non-Trotskyists Interested In?

What is especially surprising is Proyect’s dismissive comment that the essays in the first section of the book constitute “hagiography” (that is, legends about saints) of no interest to people outside the Trotskyist milieu. It is hard to know what is of interest to the expansive category: “people outside the Trotskyist milieu”. As someone who used to belong to that nearly all-inclusive group, I must confess that discussions and explanations of one or another revolutionary socialist current (even something such as my own attempt at a straightforward introductory narrative of U.S. Trotskyist history) were not without interest to at least some of us. I would think that Alan Wald’s sympathetic yet critical-minded portrait of leading Trotskyist intellectual George Novack is of interest even to some non-Trotskyists. And George Breitman’s lectures on key issues debated by revolutionaries in the 1930s are much better described, I think, by Peter Drucker: a “sample [of] the best of the SWP’s thinking and educational work,” and “a model of revolutionary pedagogy: clear without oversimplifying, engaged but critical-minded.”

Serious political activists outside the Trotskyist movement (and inside the Trotskyist movement!) are not particularly interested in legends about saints, but they are interested in how practical-minded revolutionaries of earlier periods viewed things and carried out their activities. Some information on how U.S. Trotskyists saw things and what they did about the things they saw can be found in the first section of our book.

To do justice to Louis Proyect’s criticism, it should be noted that he himself was once part of the Socialist Workers Party and that he may be impatient with material in the first section of the book because he is already more or less familiar with it. He is intent on finding an explanation of why things turned out so much more badly than he — as well as Breitman, Wald and Le Blanc — had expected. This question of learning what went wrong is a focal point of the book’s second section, so there is a logic to Proyect’s inclination to so rudely sweep the first section aside in order to get to what for him is the much more important material. Such a critical-minded impulse is understandable and even praiseworthy, except that — as Drucker seems to grasp better than Proyect — the positive lessons of U.S. Trotskyism are just as important for revolutionary activists to learn as the nega-

tive lessons. Of course, not all of us agree over what is positive and what is negative.

Did James P. Cannon Have Faults?

This brings us to the common ground which Drucker and Proyect occupy: a fundamental disagreement with a positive assessment of the Cannon tradition in the history of U.S. Trotskyism. They advance an identical criticism of my contribution to the book. Drucker complains that “James P. Cannon is, in Le Blanc’s eyes, virtually beyond reproach,” and Proyect agrees: “James P. Cannon emerges from this history as a practically flawless leader.” But this is demonstrably false. My discussion of Cannon cites:

(1) his drinking problem and the assertion by Novack that “he was somewhat self-indulgent and not as industrious as he might have been” (p. 13);

(2) the fact that he had picked up bad factional habits in the early Communist Party for which he required “comradely pressure and assistance from Trotsky” to transcend (pp. 175–176);

(3) the fact that while some of his admirers were “insisting that ‘Cannon was an utterly forthright and courageous man,’ they complained that he knew little about African Americans or other racial minorities, lacked theoretical breadth, and in general ‘didn’t know anything about complexities’” (p. 13). Indeed, important theoretical growth and reorientation were required — through the work of newer party leaders such as George Breitman — to enable the SWP to come to grips with some of the “complexities” (pp. 42, 53–54).

I conclude on page 180: “Although there can be debates about the imperfections of Cannon, there is no controversy over the fact that he had imperfections. Yet none of these was of a nature that would wreck the effort to build a working-class revolutionary vanguard party. In fact, Cannon’s great strengths were ideally suited to facilitate the development of such an organization. Great as his strengths were, however, and great as were the strengths of his comrades, the SWP found itself up against a larger reality that would necessarily overwhelm the labors of the most dedicated, far-sighted, flexible, and effective revolutionaries that one might imagine.”

In my comments prepared for the Socialist Scholars Conference, reprinted elsewhere in this issue, I elaborate on the “larger reality” that overwhelmed Cannon and his comrades. At the same time, the quotation above raises the question: what were Cannon’s strengths? It is worth spending a moment on this.

What Were Cannon's Strengths?

The admirers of Cannon quoted above were far from being "orthodox Cannonites." In fact, they were former associates of C.L.R. James — Lyman Paine and Freddy Paine, James Boggs and Grace Lee Boggs — who had long before rejected Trotskyism and Leninism (and were even questioning Marxism) at the time they were reminiscing about bygone days in the SWP. Their comments originally appeared in their jointly-authored book *Conversations in Maine: Exploring Our Nation's Future* (Boston: South End Press, 1980).

It seems obvious that these four veteran activists had no reason to idealize Cannon, yet in their frank assessment they commented that "he was not an insecure person" and could therefore "sit back and not have to interfere with everything going on." They recalled that "Cannon never tried to ballyhoo Cannon," and that he encouraged "a great deal of freedom" in allowing all comrades, dissidents included, to develop their own ideas. "Cannon was not a small or a mean man; he had a basic faith in the proletariat, but he sensed that there was much more to life, to history, to politics and to revolution than just the proletariat. He welcomed intellectuals as long as they did not go off in all directions. C.L.R. James used to say of Cannon that he was not the kind of man who would trample on a minority... So Cannon was a man who had a great deal to teach about how to live within a party."

This strikes me as a significant piece of evidence regarding Cannon's strengths, coming as it does from four people who had decisively broken with Cannon many years before offering such an evaluation. It appears to corroborate other positive reminiscences by people who didn't break from Trotskyism. It can be found on page 13 of *Trotskyism in the United States*, but presumably it is seen by our two critics as mere "hagiography." If Drucker and Proyect believe the evidence is flawed, they should engage with it, criticize it, disprove it, rather than ignoring it and making unsubstantiated counterassertions. At the very least, one should expect that they would acknowledge the existence of these positive qualities in the Cannon tradition.

These strengths of Cannon may be of some help to us as we attempt to orient ourselves in the efforts to build a Labor Party.

Was There More Than One Revolutionary Vanguard in 1946?

To be fair to Peter Drucker, he does offer evidence for his critical counterassertions. Or to be more precise, he repeats the point that Alan Wald made in one of the book's essays: it is necessary to "break radically" with the assertion (voiced by Cannon ally Morris Stein) that Trotskyists "can tolerate no rivals."

Unfortunately, Drucker fails to take this point any further than Wald's initial argument. Drucker ignores the fact that I actually offered a counterargument. Here was what I wrote (page xi):

Alan [Wald] sees this as a dramatic illustration of a sectarian impulse within the tradition of American Trotskyism. To extend the debate between Alan and myself, I think that (1) the primary rivals of the SWP in the 1940s were Stalinists and social democrats, who could not have been embraced by revolutionary socialists in the way Alan suggests; (2) the SWP was prepared to consider reunification with the Workers Party led by Shachtman (a reunification that failed to occur, in large part, due to differences on cold war anti-communism — unity negotiations were torpedoed by Shachtman precisely over this question); and (3) at the same time, the SWP always defended the political rights of all others on the left and sought united fronts with them on specific issues.

Perhaps there's something wrong with this — but it's not clear to me that there is. By failing to attempt a rebuttal or even engagement with this counterargument, Drucker misses a valuable opportunity to advance the discussion.

In a broad sense, the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, and the Social Democratic Federation could be seen as "vanguard" formations within the working class of the 1940s and early 1950s — in the sense of containing experienced cadres and spheres of political influence that were important to the functioning of organizations (especially trade unions) within the labor movement. But can it be claimed that any of these rivals to the SWP could be considered a *revolutionary vanguard*?

The Communist Party cited "Trotskyism" as a primary enemy, and as one of the "many poisonous elements of bourgeois ideology" infiltrating the workers' ranks. It claimed that "counterrevolutionary Trotskyism... has become the spearhead of the reactionary forces striving to overthrow the Soviet Union and to demoralize the labor movement" (William Z. Foster, *Outline Political History of the Americas* [New York: International Publishers, 1951], p. 382). Where Communist Parties took power, they set up ruthless one-party dictatorships, and among their first victims were Trotskyist militants among the workers and intellectuals. Even when not in power but simply leading strong movements, the Stalinists assassinated revolutionaries, including Trotskyists, as in Spain and Vietnam. Also, the Soviet bureaucracy's collaboration with imperialism, as well as its Cold War military-bureaucratic rivalry, should not be forgotten. Workers of the world paid a terrible price for Stalinist domination of "the left" in the 1940s and 1950s.

In the same period, Socialist Party leader Norman Thomas and other luminaries of the social democratic movement issued a manifesto declaring that U.S. imperialism no longer existed, that U.S. foreign policy was no longer functioning in the interests of capitalism, and that "the outstanding conflict today is between democracy, with all its human and capitalist imperfections, and totalitarian despotism" (Harry Fleischman, *Norman Thomas, a Biography: 1884-1968* [New York: W.W. Norton, 1969, p. 254].

Drucker himself has documented that Max Shachtman's own organization — although still adhering to Trotskyism in 1946 — was beginning (despite the dogged resistance of many of its members) to be pulled along in the same undertow of Cold War anti-Communism and accommodation to capitalism that affected the social democrats and Stalinists in different ways.

Reality Changed — and Changed Again

It hardly seems fair to criticize Cannon, Morris Stein, and other SWP leaders for refusing to denigrate the SWP's revolutionary Marxist program by modestly claiming that it was no better than the others. [The SWP's program *was* better than the programs of collaboration with imperialism and capitalism, the essence of the programs of the Communist parties and of the Social Democracy in all its varieties, including the Shachtman variety. Shachtman did, after all, end up in the right wing of Social Democrats USA, supporting U.S. imperialist intervention in Vietnam and the bombing of Hanoi (as is discussed by Joe Auciello and Mark Weber elsewhere in this issue).

It is also revealing that in a very different historical context in the late 1950s (a fragmentation among those previously in the Communist Party orbit, left-wing breakaways from the Social Democratic and Shachtmanite milieu, the rise of the Black liberation struggle, the early beginnings of a youth radicalization), Cannon and his comrades were advancing a very different orientation — one in which "all genuine socialists of all tendencies, whether presently affiliated to one organization or another, or independent at present, to recognize that we are all part of one movement, and that we ought to work together fraternally in one field of action after another, work together against the injustices and oppressions of capitalism" (Cannon, *Speeches for Socialism* [New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971], p. 338).

It is not the case, however, that Cannon envisioned a permanent multi-party socialist coalition. In the same breath that he urged cooperation among the different groups, he asserted that "the basic aim for which we are all striving, is to regroup the scattered socialist forces, and eventually to get all honest socialists together in one common party organization." Today, the best chance for doing this is obviously through building a Labor Party — seeing this not as a reformist organization run by bureaucrats, but as a mass workers party, which must struggle to "win the battle of democracy," place political power in the hands of the working class, and democratically restructure the economy so that the free development of each person will be the condition for the free development of all.

Louis Proyect's rather ahistorical idealization of A.J. Muste's necessarily short-lived American Workers Party strikes me as an unattainable goal — but perhaps the positive qualities that attract him to the AWP can be realized

in the kind of Labor Party that many of us are striving to build.

There is more to be said about the historical questions that Peter Drucker raises, especially about his one-sided characterization of the SWP's 1946 program, *The American Theses*. Only a couple of points can be made here. It is certainly the case that the expected post-World War II revolutionary upsurge failed to materialize, at least in the manner and with the consequences that were anticipated. This created a new global reality — as Frank Lovell so eloquently emphasizes — and it is worth a more serious historical analysis (which is partially attempted in *Trotskyism in the United States* on pages 28–34 and 182–190). History was not kind to the underlying political-economic assumptions of the 1946 orientation.

How a Minority Can Change Society

Drucker argues that “Cannon’s 1946 claim that the SWP, with fewer than 2000 members, would itself become the organization of millions that could lead a U.S. revolution was far-fetched.” There are several things to be said. One is that the failure of the U.S. working class to radicalize as expected might not have been a foregone conclusion (see, for example, George Lipsitz’s important new study *Rainbow at Midnight*:

Labor and Culture in the 1940s [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994]). Just because reality turned out one way doesn’t mean that there weren’t other possibilities inherent in that reality. If there had been a mass working-class radicalization extending beyond the 1940s, the question of political power would have been posed, and the revolutionary Marxist program of the SWP — in stark contrast to the programs of the Communists and Social Democrats — would have spoken to the aspirations of millions of insurgent workers.

Of course, things turned out differently — and sheer will power was not enough for the SWP to change the realities. The process of decomposition and recomposition of the once militant working-class movement into a deradicalized institution in which bureaucratic “labor statesmen” led a more or less well-off membership (that viewed itself as “middle class”) resulted in a long detour for the U.S. Trotskyists that greatly weakened the revolutionary socialist movement even as it was renewed by the radicalization of the 1960s and early 1970s. This created the dynamic that led to the collapse of the SWP as a Trotskyist force — as well as a general crisis of the left. The changes of the 1980s and 1990s, on the other hand, have generated a new process of decomposition and recomposition, opening up exciting new possibilities.

But if the exciting new possibilities are to be realized, we must not accept the debilitating notion that a small minority will be incapable of growing into a powerful force, will be incapable of drawing strength from the creativity and energy of hundreds of thousands of working people, and will be incapable of providing political leadership to millions. The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party had fewer than 2000 members when it formed in 1898 (seven years before the 1905 uprising, and less than two decades before the 1917 Revolution).

Our infant Labor Party is also incredibly small and weak, given our mighty goals. But Drucker and the rest of us really can’t afford to shrug off Cannon’s comments of 1946 (quoted on page 30 of our book): “Nothing condemns a party more than a lack of faith in its own future. I don’t believe it is possible for any party to lead a revolution if it doesn’t even have the ambition to do so.” This is not sectarian arrogance. It is a political truism. In the words of the American Theses, “Our part is to build up this party which believes in the unlimited power and resources of the American workers, and believes no less in its own capacity to lead them to storm and victory.” □

April 20, 1997

Comments on “Trotskyism in the United States”

Continued from page 36

write off the entire movement from start to finish. These responses reflect all-too-human traits that recur so frequently that they must be acknowledged and addressed; efforts to ignore, deny, or simply denounce them have proved inadequate.

I generally agree with Wald’s approach, but my prescriptions are more radical. He is still something of a Trotskyist and identifies with the Fourth International. While I include these forces and Militant Labor as having made the

strongest break with sectarianism, my own concept of what is needed has much more in common with A.J. Muste’s American Workers Party (AWP), a formation that fused with Cannon’s Trotskyist forces in the 1930s to become the Socialist Workers Party.

Le Blanc discusses Muste in his essay in the first part.

A.J. Muste had come from a religious and radical pacifist background, opposing World War I and at the same time gravitating to socialist ideas and the labor movement. A leader of the

1919 Lawrence textile strike, he soon headed up the left-of-center Brookwood Labor College, which played an important role in training many of the radical organizers who would help lead the 1930s labor upsurge. In the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, which evolved into the AWP, Muste had favored sidestepping sectarianism and blending radical ideas with practical organizing.

That should be our motto, shouldn’t it? Sidestep sectarianism and blend radical ideas with practical organizing. □

Rebel Victory in Zaïre

Continued from page 5

Rebellion in Eastern Zaïre

How was the dictatorship-in-exile broken? Such was the insane logic of its chauvinist, Hutu-supremacist ideology that it began to prey, in collaboration with the corrupt Mobutu regime, upon people of Tutsi origin who had lived for centuries in eastern Zaïre. The pro-French Hutu militarists tried to apply in Zaïre the same methods of terrorism and genocide that had failed them in Rwanda.

Thankfully, their methods failed them in eastern Zaïre as well. The persecuted local people of Tutsi origin, the Banyamulenge, fought back. They rose in armed rebellion in defiance of orders to pick up and leave Zaïre or be slaughtered. And they found ready allies in the army

of the new anti-chauvinist Rwanda. Also, they were joined by Lumumbist rebels, whose guerrilla war against the Mobutu regime had persisted for thirty years and whose most prominent leader is Laurent Kabila.

These combined forces broke the power of the dictatorship-in-exile in the Hutu refugee camps. And quickly gaining popular support, their victory in eastern Zaïre exposed the hollowness, the absence of popular support, underlying the Mobutu regime’s reign of terror. In the first four months of 1997 they have marched into the second and third largest cities of Congo-Zaïre and are now within close reach of the capital, Kinshasa. Western media reports also suggest that the decades-old civil war in Angola is spilling over into Zaïre. They say that

Kabila’s Alliance forces have the backing of the MPLA government of Angola, while Mobutu is being defended by pro-imperialist Angolan forces whom he had consistently aided over the years.

All the most retrograde, colonialist, racist forces are gathering around Mobutu. Hopes for a better life bring healthy forces in Zaïre, in all of Africa, and from all the world to rally around the rebels. The martyrdom of Patrice Lumumba, and of Malcolm and Che, was not in vain. The spirit of independence, of true freedom for Africa, despite all the challenges it faces, is marching on. □

May 7, 1997

Max Shachtman and Some Political Offspring

Peter Drucker, *Max Shachtman and His Left* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1994), 346 pp., paperback \$18.50.
Tim Wohlforth, *The Prophet's Children*, (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1994), 332 pp., paperback \$18.50.

Essay/review by Joe Auciello

Of the thousands of books published yearly, few receive more than cursory notice, a condition most writers know all too well. Even the far smaller number of worthwhile books of interest to the left often fail to gather the attention they deserve, especially as the revolutionary and socialist press shrivels in the 1990s. The two books considered here were published three years ago, but they are significant achievements that deserve to be recognized, albeit in a belated review. What's more, the life stories of Max Shachtman and Tim Wohlforth contain beneficial lessons for the contemporary left, for anyone able to learn from another's experience — even if the proper conclusions are not necessarily what the authors intended.

Peter Drucker's biography provides the most comprehensive account of Max Shachtman's life and political career, which has also been one of the subjects taken up in books by Maurice Isserman (*If I Had a Hammer*, 1987) and Alan Wald (*The New York Intellectuals*, 1987). The biography is well-researched and well-documented: Drucker has read thousands of articles, pamphlets, and books. He has listened to the available oral histories and corresponded with Shachtman's comrades and contemporaries. If there is any fact about Shachtman that Drucker does not know, it is probably not worth knowing.

In the early 1920s, Max Shachtman joined the Communist movement while in his teens. He wrote for the *Daily Worker* and became editor of the paper published by the Communist Party's youth group. As a member of James P. Cannon's faction in the party, Shachtman joined the International Labor Defense staff and soon became editor of its newspaper, *Labor Defender*.

In 1928, Cannon returned from the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, armed with a hidden document written by Trotsky and the conviction to fight for the Marxist program which Trotsky, and the Left Opposition in the Soviet Union, had articulated. Shachtman was among the very first of Cannon's recruits. Shachtman became a leader within the Trotskyist movement, nationally and internationally. He served as editor of the Trotskyist newspaper, *The Militant*, and the theoretical magazine, *New International*. He translated Trotsky's writings on

fascism into English and translated and edited Trotsky's *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*.

During the Minneapolis truck drivers strike in 1934, Shachtman edited the strike newspaper put out by Local 544. In addition, he was one of the Trotskyists' most popular public speakers, as well as one of its best writers. Due to his work among Trotsky's European supporters, Shachtman presided over the founding congress of the Fourth International in 1938.

Political Issues and Debates

Drucker focuses primarily on the political issues and debates that constituted a good part of Shachtman's life in every organization of which he was a member and leader. Drucker's purpose, as he explains in a preface, is twofold: first, to "introduce people in the United States" to Shachtman and the socialist left of his time; and second, to present Shachtman "as a major, sometimes brilliant socialist thinker," one whose "political life is rich in lessons for those who are trying to rebuild a socialist movement in the United States today."

For Drucker, those lessons would include Shachtman's theory that the Soviet Union represented a new form of class society "bureaucratic collectivism," his idea of a "third camp," separate from the Communists and capitalists, and also the concept of an "all-inclusive revolutionary party," one that is more open and "diverse" than its rivals on the revolutionary left: "a multi-tendency party, all of whose tendencies would be revolutionary and Marxist."

Of all Shachtman's theories, his idea of revolutionary organization is the one most likely to be applied in the present and is therefore the one most deserving of consideration. In Drucker's estimation, "[Shachtman's] model was, if not a departure from the Bolshevik tradition, a development of it, even an innovation within it." In support of this view, Drucker counts the number of splits from the SWP and compares this to the fewer number of splits from Shachtman's organizations, concluding that fewer is better. This superficial argument, if it is any argument at all, does not take into account the causes of the splits, the issues in dispute, or the legitimacy and consequences of the decisions.

Naturally, there will likely be fewer fights and splits over party program, the more that program is elastic and the less it is binding on the membership. But the revolutionary organization pays a price for such elasticity in becoming less cohesive and less effective in applying its program.

Was Shachtman's Group More Democratic?

Other evidence indicates that the more democratic variant of Leninism to which Shachtman aspired was never accomplished in reality, though Shachtman believed it was. Drucker cites the testimony of a former member of the WP and SWP who thought the difference between the two organizations, in terms of democracy, was "not qualitative." Wohlforth, in his memoir, refers to the "poisoned atmosphere" in which one of those splits took place in the late 1950s.

The degree of Shachtman's fidelity to Leninism is also open to debate. Albert Glotzer, a longtime associate of Shachtman, says flatly that the Workers Party was never Leninist at all, a view seconded by Irving Howe, a former editor of the Shachtmanite newspaper, *Labor Action*. Drucker's approach and his conclusion, therefore, are hardly convincing.

In short, Shachtman's theory of the "all-inclusive party" has charted no real theoretical or practical advance over the Leninist model. Shachtman's organizations were no less prone to faction fights, resignations, and splits than the more traditional democratic-centralist, Leninist formations. Shachtman's political offspring, in the 1970s and beyond, also went through bitter faction fights, splits, etc.

The Split with Trotsky

Throughout the biography Drucker tries to present Shachtman and his ideas in a highly favorable light. The most significant and revealing experience — the defining experience — of Shachtman's adult life was the split he helped to lead from the Socialist Workers Party in 1939–1940. Drucker supports and defends Shachtman's ideas and his role in this period. He has nothing but praise for Shachtman, praise for his "courage," "insight," his "innovations" and "enduring contributions" to Marxist theory, etc. Drucker argues: "The biggest issue behind the Socialist Workers Party's split had been whether a group could have the open, public discussions Shachtman called for and still function effectively." Not so. The biggest issue was actually over the program that would define the revolutionary Marxist organization — especially over what policy to follow in World War II and in relation to the USSR.

Drucker tries to obscure the clear, if sharp, judgment that Trotsky made of Shachtman after Shachtman split from the SWP: "Had conscious agents of the class enemy operated through Shachtman, they could not have advised him to do anything different from what he himself has perpetrated. He united with

anti-Marxists to wage a struggle against Marxism. He helped fuse together a petty-bourgeois faction against the workers....”

Drucker, instead, believes that Shachtman defended and developed the Bolshevik tradition. It's fair to conclude that Drucker's biography is, in no small way, a polemic against Cannon's *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* and Trotsky's *In Defense of Marxism*.

Shachtman's Rightward Evolution

By the early 1950s, almost ten years after leaving the SWP, Shachtman's politics were, in Drucker's estimation, "no longer founded on a revolutionary strategy for achieving socialism." By the end of that decade Shachtman led his dwindling group into the Socialist Party, where he remained for the rest of his life. His positions continued to move rightward. Ultimately, Shachtman's hostility to Stalinism became hostility to revolution. As his support for revolutionary movements lessened, his support for bourgeois democracy grew. In accordance with this logic, Shachtman would not condemn the U.S.-sponsored invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, and he would defend the U.S. government in the Vietnam war. He would support the labor bureaucracy in the trade unions and champion the right wing of the Democratic Party. By the end of his life Shachtman had unwound the thread he had woven in 1940 when he helped to lead a split from the SWP. He finally, unambiguously, fulfilled Trotsky's judgment of him: "Shachtman is in a camp where he does not belong."

(For more on the rightward trajectory of Shachtman and his associates in the Socialist Party, see the article by Mark Weber elsewhere in this issue.)

In his conclusion, Drucker tries to present a balanced appreciation of Shachtman's life and accomplishments by showing the unifying thread in all of Shachtman's contradictions, reversals, and paradoxes. Drucker is generous to Shachtman and highlights what he takes to be the positive and enduring aspects of his legacy. Nonetheless, Drucker cannot avoid a concluding judgment that, in summing up Shachtman's political trajectory, echoes Trotsky: Drucker concludes that Shachtman's last years were a "tragedy," lived "in the camp of counterrevolution."

Yet, at his best, Shachtman could instill in the minds of his listeners and readers a vision of socialism that inspired them to join or strengthen their commitment to the struggle for working-class emancipation. That goal — a world free of exploitation — links socialists to the best of humanity's past, present, and future. For the decades during which he did contribute to that as yet unrealized goal, Max Shachtman deserves to be remembered and honored.

James P. Cannon's Assessment of Max Shachtman

As long as Shachtman was following Trotsky's political guidance [1928–38], he did well. For example, his pamphlet "First Ten Years of the Left Opposition" is an effective restatement in English of what Trotsky and other Russian Oppositionists had written about the LO, covering the period 1923–1933.

Under Trotsky's political influence, then, Shachtman made a strong contribution as a writer, editor, translator, speaker, and so on. But when he began to "think for himself," following his own "independent" line, full of "new and fresh ideas," he actually began to reflect the pressure of bourgeois society, especially as that was transmitted by the bourgeois professor James T. Burnham (who later became an editor of the extreme right-wing publication *National Review* and an ardent supporter of U.S. imperialism's "Cold War"). Likewise, Shachtman ended up siding with U.S. imperialism in its Cold War against the Soviet bloc, going so far as to support the imperialist war in Vietnam with all its horrors.

James P. Cannon, during the debate against Shachtman and Burnham inside the Socialist Workers Party in 1939–40, had the following to say about Shachtman and the other leaders of what Trotsky and Cannon characterized politically as a *petty bourgeois opposition* inside a working class party. Cannon even quoted the kind of good things Shachtman had written when he was still following Trotsky's political guidance.

The leaders of the opposition consider it outrageous, a malicious faction[al] invention, for us to place this class signboard [petty bourgeois] above their faction, when their only offense consists in the simple fact that they turn their backs on the Soviet Union and deny it defense in the struggle against world imperialism. But our definition and description of such an attitude is not new. Back in the days when Shachtman was paraphrasing Trotsky, and not Burnham, [emphasis added] he himself wrote:

"At bottom, the ultra-leftists' position on the Soviet Union, which denies it any claim whatsoever to being a workers' state, reflects the vacillations of the petty bourgeois, their inability to make a firm choice between the camps of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, of revolution and imperialism."

This quotation, from an article written in the *New Internationalist* by Shachtman two years ago, can be accepted as a scientific definition of the opposition combination and its present position, with only one small amendment. It is hardly correct to describe their position as 'ultra-leftist.'

The leaders of the opposition [and Shachtman in particular] in the past have written and spoken a great deal along the lines of the above quotation. Year in and year out in innumerable articles, documents, theses, and speeches the leaders of the opposition

have been promising and even threatening to defend the Soviet Union — "In the hour of danger we will be at our posts!" — but when the hour drew near, when the Soviet Union almost began to need this defense, they welched on their promise.

So with the program in general, with the doctrine, the methods, and the tradition of Marxism. When all this ceased to be the subject for literary exercises in times of tranquility and had to be taken as a guide to action in time of war, they forgot everything that had been said and written and started a frantic search for "new and fresh ideas." In the first half-serious test they revealed themselves as "peacetime Trotskyists."

(See James P. Cannon, *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, New York: Pioneer Press, 1943, pp. 2–3.)

A similar assessment of Shachtman as one of the leaders of the petty bourgeois opposition in the Socialist Workers Party appeared in an unsigned article in the *Fourth Internationalist* magazine of May 1940, entitled "The Convention of the Socialist Workers Party." (That was the April 1940 convention at which Shachtman & Co. were defeated; they then split from the SWP and went off in a rightward direction at varying speeds, Burnham becoming a spokesperson for the imperialist bourgeoisie almost immediately, Shachtman becoming one undisguisedly only later, during the Cold War.)

Here is what the May 1940 *Fourth Internationalist* said:

Disoriented by the war, a section of the leadership [Shachtman, Burnham, etc.] turned their backs on the program, which had been elaborated in years of struggle in preparation for the war. Overnight, they forgot the principles which they had defended jointly with us up to the very day of the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact [in August 1939, resulting in the beginning of World War II]. These soldiers of peace had evidently assimilated the ideas of Bolshevism only as a set of literary formulas. They wrote endlessly, and sometimes cleverly, in favor of them. But the moment the formulas were put to the test of life...the literary exponents crumpled miserably and shamefully....

Similarly, in 1953 Cannon said:

Shachtman and Burnham were by no means mere ornaments in the Political Committee. They were the editors of the magazine and of the paper, and they did practically all the literary work. There was a division of labor between them and me, whereby I took care of the organizational and trade union direction, administration and finances — and all the rest of the chores that intellectuals don't like to bother with as a rule — and they did the writing, most of it. And when they were on the right line, they wrote very well... (*Speeches to the Party*, p. 177.)

Wohlforth in Shachtman's Organization

Tim Wohlforth entered the socialist movement in 1953 by joining Max Shachtman's Independent Socialist League (ISL). This part of *The Prophet's Children* complements Drucker's focus on political analysis by providing a feeling of daily life in the organization and by giving snapshot portraits of leading members like Hal Draper and Michael Harrington. Wohlforth has a keen eye and a good memory for the revealing anecdote. One delightfully ironic instance of "proletarian internationalism" involves Michael Harrington. Annoyed that Jewish comrades took party names which concealed their ethnic identity, Harrington, a Midwestern Irish Catholic by birth, sometimes wrote under the pseudonym "Eli Fishman."

Political issues are the main concern, as befits a political life. Within a few years, as Shachtman marched resolutely to the right, Wohlforth led a left-wing split from Shachtman (in 1958) that brought him to the Socialist Workers Party. He helped to start the *Young Socialist* newspaper (1958-59) and to found the Young Socialist Alliance (in 1961), becoming its first national chairman.

This positive evolution did not last long, however. It was also in 1961 that Wohlforth formed a faction to oppose the majority of the SWP in their favorable appreciation of the Cuban revolution and to oppose the reunification of the divided world Trotskyist movement. In this reunification, common support for the Cuban revolution was the driving force — see Joseph Hansen's *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution* for a more detailed discussion of politics in the Fourth Internationalist movement at that time.

Opposition to FI Reunification

Wohlforth's hypercritical attitude toward the Fidelista revolution and opposition to FI reunification led him into the arms of Gerry Healy, head of the Socialist Labor League, then the major British Trotskyist group. In 1964, the Fourth International reunified despite the protests of Healy and others. In 1965, Wohlforth's group was expelled from the SWP and soon after began publishing its own journal, which formed the basis of establishing a rival organization called the Workers League.

No doubt, Tim Wohlforth will always be remembered as the founder and former leader of the Workers League, the U.S. arm of Gerry Healy's London-based "International Committee of the Fourth International," a sectarian split-off from the mainstream of the world Trotskyist movement.

Hostility to a developing revolution and to the principled reunification of a majority of the Trotskyists in the world was not the least of Healy's defects. The Workers League in the U.S. and Healy's organization in England were destroyed by the pseudo-Marxism and paranoia of the all-powerful leader.

Wohlforth aided this process and, for a time, benefited from it, until he was eventually crushed by it. Though Healy's organizations presented themselves as the most "orthodox" of Trotskyists, "Healyism" was sustained by violence against its members, by emotional and sexual abuse, and by physical and psychological intimidation. Unfortunately, the "will to believe" numbed the feelings and stifled the thinking of members who endured from "comrades" what they would never have endured from the bosses or cops.

In Gerry Healy's Sect

Wohlforth describes what happened when Healyite dogma clashed with reality:

We in the Workers League were among the most disoriented of those on the left. We were deeply convinced that world capitalism was in its deepest crisis ever...The more our vision clashed with reality, the more frenzied we became...

As we increased the pace of our activities, we stepped up the internal struggle within the organization. Each branch meeting was dominated by attacks against comrades who failed to sell sufficient tickets to an event or to sell papers or subscriptions, or who failed in some other fashion. The comrades were forced to confess their middle-class weaknesses, even their purported hostility to the working class and to the party. A physically exhausted membership found itself under continuous attack...preoccupied with our own internal demons. These kept most of us, at least for a while, from questioning the party's perspective.

Wohlforth ran the Workers League using the methods he had learned from Healy. Yet compared to life in Healy's own organization, life in the Workers League was almost benign. Wohlforth tells the story of Kate Blakeney, a member of Healy's Central Committee and a party leader in Reading, England.

Her area, like all the areas, was stretched beyond endurance. Every penny they could collect and a sizable portion of comrades' pay packets were being shipped off to the center. Comrades were running around from dawn to dusk trying to sell their bundles of papers. They were getting exhausted...

The more money they raised, the more was demanded by the insatiable center. The more papers they sold, the bigger was the bundle next week. The center charged the comrades for papers even if they didn't sell them....

Kate had four children. She was finding it increasingly difficult to scrape together the money to buy food for them; no one would lend her money anymore; she was cut off from her family. Yet she believed and put the party first. She drove herself and all those around her to greater and greater effort.

Eventually, she was called to the party center for a meeting with Healy that was to take place in his apartment near the party offices. As Kate Blakeney herself tells the rest of the story:

Healy opened the door for me. He had been drinking. Something was all wrong. I pushed by his large body, sat down in a chair, and started to make my report. Healy came toward me, was

hovering over me. He was not listening to a word I was saying.

He wanted only one thing from me: my sexual submission. For a moment I just stared at him: fat, ugly, red-faced. Was this the price I was supposed to pay for some respite for my area?

Naturally enough, this lack of cooperation and respect from an underling entailed political consequences. Wohlforth explains, "At the next Central Committee meeting, Healy launched a bitter political attack on Kate." Given all that had happened — and, as it turned out, Healy's crimes against comrades, in particular female comrades, occurred routinely — who could be surprised? In his own peculiar way, Healy demonstrated that the personal is political.

Healy's hysterical and brutally bureaucratic treatment of his own followers was extended to his political opponents in other organizations, especially leaders of the SWP. His obsession with "Security and the Fourth International" led him to accuse SWP leaders Joseph Hansen and George Novack of being agents of the GPU (Soviet secret police) and/or the FBI. Wohlforth observes: "The most sickening side of Healy's campaign was that he had gone over to slandering his political opponents in much the same way Stalin had done during the Moscow Trials. Healy's problem was that he did not have state power and therefore could not coerce his opponents into confessing to his outrageous charges; nor could he punish them with death. Yet his methods certainly suggested that if Healy had had state power, he might very well have acted as Stalin did."

The Cult Phenomenon

The Prophet's Children, therefore, also contains lessons for the present, though these differ from the cluster of issues raised by Drucker's biography of Shachtman. Wohlforth's experience points especially to the necessity of democracy within a socialist organization and the catastrophic consequences of the "great man" or cult phenomenon.

Nominally, Wohlforth was the head of the Workers League, but in reality he was only the chief errand boy. Real authority resided with Healy in London. The Workers League may have voted for its leaders, but democracy in the organization was a charade. Healy put Wohlforth in power, propped him up, and kept him there. "International collaboration" meant following Healy's line, toeing the mark, or being summoned to London and enduring harangues and insults until browbeaten into obedience and conformity. Wohlforth describes the result of one set of "discussions": "The attacks were so intense that I actually felt physical fear, fear for my life."

Subservience characterized relations between Healy and Wohlforth from the outset. "I was rather treated as the colonist who would now be straightened out by the masters from the mother country." Wohlforth uses the

Continued on page 59

A Bit of History on the Socialist Party

by Mark Weber

The author is a former president and current member of the Greater Cleveland Labor History Society.

In 1968, the Socialist Party, which had once been the party of Eugene Debs and Norman Thomas, was split over the issue of working within the Democratic Party or engaging in independent political action. Identified with the former strategy were the “realignment” forces, led by Michael Harrington and Max Shachtman. Advocating the latter approach was the Debs Caucus, led by pacifist David McReynolds and former Milwaukee mayor Frank Zeidler. When the realignment forces captured control of the party and its newspaper, *New America*, the Debs Caucus people went into opposition. Some resigned from the party, while others remained in it. This tendency began publishing the *Socialist Tribune*.

At the time, the national secretary of the Socialist Party was Penn Kemble, now a neo-conservative writer associated with the American Enterprise Institute. Kemble was succeeded by Joan Suall. Joshua Muravchik, now another neoconservative writer, was national chairperson of the Young People’s Socialist League (YPSL). National secretary of the YPSL was Max Green, now a conservative writer and author of *Epitaph for Labor*, a book which attacks the new Sweeney leadership of the AFL-CIO. The editor of *New America* was Paul Feldman, who was, at the time, married to Sandy Feldman. She is now president of New York City’s United Federation of Teachers. He was succeeded by Arch Puddington as editor. Also prominent in leadership circles in the Socialist Party were Rochelle Horowitz, Tom Kahn, and Carl Gershman. Horowitz became an official in the American Federation of Teachers; Kahn became George Meany’s assistant and later succeeded Jay Lovestone as head of the AFL-CIO’s International Department.

Associates of Shachtman

All of these people were closely associated with Max Shachtman. By 1972, a split had developed in the Socialist Party between these people and the followers of Michael Harrington. Harrington and people like Dan Shelley of Los Angeles and Carl Shier of Chicago formed the “Coalition Caucus.” The issue was the Vietnam war. The followers of Shachtman moved toward

support for the U.S. military intervention in Southeast Asia, while the Harrington people opposed it.

The Shachtman people formed the “Unity Caucus,” and controlled the National Office and a number of organizations such as Frontlash (an AFL-CIO funded voter registration project), the Youth Committee for Peace and Democracy in the Middle East, the A. Philip Randolph Institute, and others. Many other younger people associated with this tendency got jobs in the labor movement. At a tumultuous convention in 1972, the Unity Caucus — in complete control — forced a change in the organization’s name from Socialist Party to Social Democrats USA. This was the first convention to be held after the death of Shachtman. Also at issue in the convention was the candidacy of George McGovern. The Unity Caucus condemned the “new politics” (meaning the left wing) of the Democratic Party and some voted for Richard Nixon.

In 1973, the old Socialist Party — renamed the Social Democrats USA — split in three ways. The Debs Caucus and others outside of it who supported independent political action formed the Socialist Party at a founding convention in Milwaukee. It was a small gathering of socialists, many of whom had resigned from the “old” Socialist Party. Prominent in this new organization were Frank Zeidler, who was elected its chair, Virgil Vogel; Fred Thompson; Charles Curtiss; Bill Munger; David Fries; and Harry Siitonen. In 1973, the Harrington forces, for the most part, left the Social Democrats USA and formed the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee. Later, it became the Democratic Socialists of America, after a merger with the majority of the New American Movement (NAM).

What happened to the Social Democrats USA? Well, after the splits, its conventions got much duller. Joan Suall was replaced by Carl Gershman, who held the title of Executive Director. Gershman resigned after the Reagan victory in 1980. He joined the staff of Jeanne Kirkpatrick when she became Reagan’s ambassador to the United Nations. Later, he became the Executive Director of the National Endowment for Democracy, a private organization that

received government funding. Gershman was succeeded as Executive Director of the Social Democrats USA by Rita Freedman, whose husband, Joel, was employed by the Bricklayers Union. He always seemed to represent the SDUSA at meetings of the Socialist International. She resigned in 1994 to accept a position with the American Federation of Teachers.

During the early years of its “new” existence, the Social Democrats USA sought to reach out to public figures such as Sidney Hook and former LBJ policy advisor Eugene Rostow. Seymour Martin Lipset was also seen at several conventions. During these years, Bayard Rustin was National Chair of the organization. After Rustin’s death, Don Slaiman became the chair. However, the organization got smaller and smaller and conventions more and more infrequent. At the last convention in March of 1994, a handful of people debated a resolution which called for the United States to invade Cuba!

It was clear from the gathering that this convention no longer used the delegate system — the organization was too small. Many people had died.* Others got jobs in the labor movement and simply forgot about the Social Democrats USA. However, others drifted in the direction of outright political conservatism and left the organization. Their articles and book reviews still appear in publications like *Commentary* and the *American Spectator*. In 1995, members of the SDUSA received a mailing informing them that the organization would no longer keep an office, but would have an electronic address. It has no publication. *New America* ceased publication at least ten years ago. With few members and no internal life, it remains to be seen what will keep the organization together.

The history of this period is now being written. Already there is Peter Drucker’s biography of Max Shachtman (reviewed elsewhere in this issue of *BIDOM*). Also, Maurice Isserman’s book *If I Had a Hammer*, Isserman’s biography of Michael Harrington will be appearing soon. □

October 18, 1996

*By 1994, Bayard Rustin, Max Shachtman, Sidney Hook, and Tom Kahn had all died. Yetta Shachtman, Max’s widow, died a few weeks ago.

Discussion on the Labor Party

Chapter Convention Contributes to Building the Party

by George Saunders

The present report on the Chapter Convention is one of several items in this issue which we are printing under the general heading "Discussion on the Labor Party." In the course of this article, I will say a few words about the other documents published below.

About 60 delegates and 40 observers representing Labor Party chapters from all across the country gathered in Newark, New Jersey, in mid-March for the first-ever Chapter Convention of the Labor Party. Technically the convention's main purpose was to elect five chapter representatives (with one-fifth of a vote each) to the Labor Party's governing body, the Interim National Council (INC).

But just as important, the convention served as a platform for the kickoff of the party's national campaign for a constitutional amendment guaranteeing everyone in the U.S. the right to a job at a living wage (defined as \$10 per hour in 1997, adjustable with inflation). The report on plans for this campaign, given by its director Ed Bruno, was refreshingly flexible, educational, and inspiring.

The convention was an opportunity for delegates to get to know one another. As each chapter gave a 3-minute report on its activities, and later as candidates for the INC presented their qualifications, a more solid base was laid for choosing chapter reps to the party's leadership body.

Still in Infancy

National Organizer Tony Mazzocchi, in his hour-long report and response to questions, rightly stressed that the party is still in its infancy. He was optimistic, however. He reported that among labor officials he has talked to since the end of the 1996 elections, there is more openness, more willingness to listen to the labor party idea than he has experienced before.

Another fruitful report and discussion was held concerning the gradual progress being made in establishing statewide organizations of the Labor Party. This report was also given by party organizer Ed Bruno. He is able to work full-time for the Labor Party thanks to his union, the United Electrical Workers. That illustrates again why unions are key to the labor party. Chapters alone wouldn't have the resources for the full-time national staff, small as it is, that now exists because of union contributions.

The Electoral Issue

A good summary of the main aspects and decisions of the Chapter Convention appears in Laura McClure's article in the May-June *Labor Party Press*. One aspect that McClure did not touch on is that there were two opposed groupings at the convention. On the one hand, there

were those who want an *electoral* party now, who clamor for running candidates immediately, ready or not, and who tend to be perennially critical of the LP leadership.

The most extreme spokespersons for what, for want of a better label, can be called the "electoralists" were Jeannette Barisonzi, editor of the Madison, Wisconsin-based unofficial newsletter *Labor Party News and Discussion Bulletin (LPNDB)*; Eric Lerner, of the Central New Jersey chapter, and Steve Zeltzer, of the Golden Gate San Francisco chapter. These three coauthored a series of resolutions, with a motivating article "The Future of Our Labor Party," published in the *LPNDB* before the Chapter Convention. Their views were answered by *BIDOM* Editorial Board member Bill Onasch in our previous issue ("I Have Seen Their 'Future' — And It Doesn't Work").

(Onasch incidentally is one of the ten trade unionists constituting the Labor Party's newly established Electoral Committee, whose task will be to report and make recommendations to the 1998 LP convention.)

In this issue, we reprint another statement taking issue with the Barisonzi-Lerner-Zeltzer position. It is signed by three representatives of the Piedmont (North Carolina) Chapter, one of whom, Mark Dimondstein, president of his Postal Workers local, was elected as one of the five chapter reps to the Labor Party's Interim National Council.

"Now or Never?" vs. "Now or Later?"

Onasch and Dimondstein, and also Dan McCarthy and Cheri Honkala (two of the other reps elected to the INC), were part of a grouping that agreed that the Labor Party needs to stay non-electoral for now. As Lisa Frank, a delegate from the Metro Pittsburgh chapter, put it: it's not a question of "now or never," but of "now or later."

The electoral hard-liners were defeated at the Chapter Convention. The votes received by Lerner and Barisonzi as candidates for the INC were among the lowest. Zeltzer didn't even win enough votes in his own chapter to be a delegate, although he was present as an observer.

The moderate electoralists fared better. Bill Shortell, of the Connecticut chapter, who ably chaired most of the convention, apparently favored an early 1998 convention — to allow time for the LP to field some candidates in 1998. (He too is on the newly established Electoral Committee.) Many other delegates also favored the early convention idea, including some self-styled revolutionary socialists from Portland, Oregon, Vermont, and the Golden Gate chapter.

The majority, by a vote of 32-28, with the Twin Cities delegate abstaining, defeated this proposal. The majority view was that the LP convention in 1998 should take its time to consider and discuss electoral questions, hear a report from the Electoral Committee, and decide what to do then. And not be rushed or pressured into running candidates in 1998 without full and due consideration.

In the majority view, the essential task is to win a decisive sector of the unions to the idea of a labor party voicing the needs and interests of organized labor and all working people. As long as the party does not represent a decisive sector of the unions, for it to run candidates would be ineffectual, self-defeating, and counterproductive. It would simply display weakness, and wouldn't help win more unions to the labor party.

All were agreed on the appropriateness of a resolution urging the Electoral Committee to solicit written statements of their views on the issue from unions, chapters, and individual members.

The moderate electoralists gained two reps on the INC — Sean Sweeney of the New York Metro Chapter and Leal Sundet, an ILWU member from Portland, Oregon. Speaking of the ILWU, its position as spokesperson for the electoralism-now elements in the LP was weakened at the recent ILWU convention in Hawaii, where pro-Democratic Party forces in the ILWU defeated a motion for the union to officially affiliate with the Labor Party and pay the \$10,000 stipulated for affiliating national unions.

Despite disagreements, and strong feelings on both sides of the "electoral" issue, an atmosphere of mutual respect was maintained. This was accomplished largely owing to the positive focus on building the party, especially with the amendment campaign for the right to a livable-wage job, and building support for the Detroit newspaper workers. We reprint below the resolutions adopted on these two questions, which were drafted by supporters of the majority view. Dan McCarthy and Fred Vitale, the Detroit chapter delegates, presented the Detroit resolution. The 28th amendment campaign resolution was presented by Howard Botwinnick, of the Central New York State chapter. He coauthored it together with Preston Smith of the Massachusetts chapter and George Shriver of the Arizona chapter.

In addition to the texts of these two resolutions and the Piedmont chapter statement, we are printing a statement of position by Judy Wright of the Detroit chapter, along with an explanation of why she deferred to Dan McCarthy in the Detroit chapter's election of delegates to the Chapter Convention. She rightly stresses the need to win the unions to the labor party. (After all, if it isn't based on the organizations of the working class, it isn't a labor party.) We would disagree with many of the points she makes in her statement of position, but that is a subject for a later issue. Some of the disagreements over electoralism voiced at the Chapter Convention are reflected in the exchange between Frank Wright and David Jones, which we print below. □

Discussion on the Labor Party

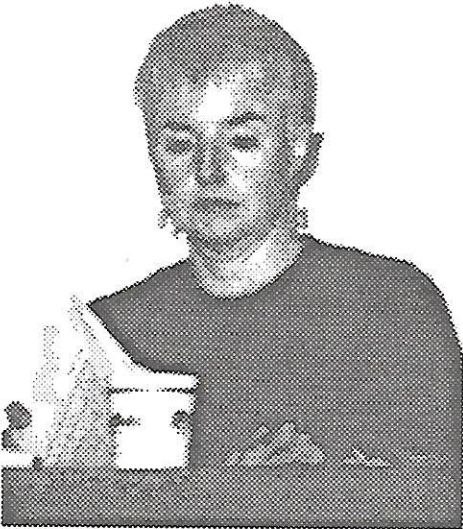
North Carolina Chapter Opposes "Democracy Resolution"

Statement of NC Piedmont Triad Chapter

We reprint for the information of our readers the following document, which has been circulated to Labor Party chapters. Mark Dimondstein, one of its signers, was elected as a chapter representative to the Labor Party's Interim National Council. For more on the "Future of the Labor Party" group, which circulated the so-called "Democracy Resolution," see Bill Onasch's article in our previous issue: "We Have Seen Their 'Future' — And It Doesn't Work."

To Our Brother and Sister Labor Party Chapters and Chapter Delegates.

The NC Piedmont Chapter of the Labor Party debated the recently distributed "Democracy Resolution" at our February chapter meeting. Following the democratic debate, we unanimously voted *not* to endorse the resolution.



Kathy King, one member of the five-member committee which organized the Chapter Convention

For a Productive Chapter Convention

Certainly we want the upcoming chapter convention to be as productive as possible. The comments published in the *Labor Party Press* make it clear that there will be more business conducted than just the election of 5 delegates to the Interim National Council. In fact, we have mandated by a membership vote at that same chapter meeting to push and promote the urgency of the national campaign for a guaranteed

job at a living minimum wage as a critical step forward to building the Labor Party.

Why, then, did we vote against the "Democracy Resolution"?

1. The resolution calls for all chapter members to have the right to attend the chapter conference "either as delegates or observers." A five-person committee was appointed to organize the convention under the auspices of the Interim National Council. The number of delegates eligible to be sent by each chapter has been clearly established. It is not clear from the resolution whether it is an attempt to change the delegates structure to the chapter convention. Clearly all chapter members who are duly elected to represent their chapters already have the right to attend the chapter convention.
2. The resolution calls for the delegates to have the right to set the agenda "without restrictions." The chapter convention was created by the founding convention of the Labor Party, its supreme authority. The National Convention established the sole purpose of the chapter convention as the election of five delegates to the Interim National Council. The founding convention also established an

Interim National Council responsible for making decisions between conventions. One of their decisions was the appointment of a five-person committee to organize the chapter convention. To promote the right of chapter convention delegates to set an agenda *without restrictions* runs counter to the decisions of the highest authority of our Labor Party, its National Convention. It also has the danger of creating anarchy, rather than democracy and organization.

3. While we agree that it would be productive for the chapter convention to discuss and debate resolutions of recommendation to the Interim National Council, the "Democracy Resolution" seems to promote the idea of binding resolutions that "directly address the Labor Party Chapters." It is our view that only the National Convention of the Labor Party has the authority to make binding resolutions.

Don't Create a Nonexistent Enemy

The founding convention of the Labor Party was true democracy in action. We are confident that the committee planning the chapter convention will put into place the needed democracy to help move the Labor Party forward. If our confidence is misplaced, there will be ample opportunity to struggle it out at the chapter convention itself. Resolutions (even good sounding ones) that create a nonexistent enemy or pit the chapters against the national leadership, are not the way forward to building our Labor Party.

We look forward to seeing you at the Labor Party chapter convention on March 15-16 and to a productive chapter convention in the cause of building our Labor Party!

Fraternally and on behalf of the NC Piedmont LP Chapter,

/signed/ Mark Dimondstein, delegate to the chapter convention

Sandra Koritz, delegate to the chapter convention

Richard Koritz, delegate to the chapter convention

□

Chapter Convention Resolution on Campaign for the Right to a Livable Wage Job

Whereas, decades of plant closings, layoffs, and poverty-level wages have made the right to a livable wage a crucial issue to all working people;

Whereas, a campaign for a constitutional amendment ensuring the right to a job at a livable wage will allow the Labor Party to bridge longstanding divisions between organized and unorganized workers and between the employed and the unemployed;

Whereas, such a campaign will allow the Labor Party to shift the terms of the political debate away from the false issues of bal-

anced budgets and victim blaming to the real issues that confront working people;

And whereas, the national Labor Party has designated this constitutional amendment campaign for a right to a job as a signature campaign that will allow the Labor Party to expand its membership and clearly distinguish itself as the only party that truly speaks for working people;

Therefore, be it resolved that this Chapter Convention enthusiastically supports this campaign and urges all chapters to energetically promote this effort across the country.

Political Possibilities and Tactical Questions

by Judy Wraight

Following is a statement by Judy Wraight distributed to the February 18, 1997, meeting of the Detroit Labor Party chapter explaining the basis on which she would have run for Labor Party Chapter Convention delegate, had she decided to run. She withdrew to ensure that UAW Local 417 President Dan McCarthy would be elected. Her explanation for not running, also distributed to the February 18 meeting, is reprinted in the sidebar to this article. McCarthy was elected as a delegate to the Chapter Convention and then as a representative to the Interim National Council. The author has submitted the statement and letter as examples of the political possibilities and tactical considerations of work in the Labor Party.

My name is Judy Wraight. I am an auto worker at the Ford Rouge Plant and a member of UAW Local 600. I hired into the Rouge in 1978 as a production worker in the Dearborn Assembly Plant and am now a skilled-trades worker (journeyman pyrometer technician) in the Tool & Die Unit. I am also a Registered Nurse. I have worked at a variety of industrial and hospital jobs in addition to Ford and have been a member of the United Electrical Workers and Hospital Workers Local 1199, as well as the UAW. I am currently a member of the Local 600 Tool & Die Unit Executive Board and of the Detroit Labor Party Steering Committee.

As a rank-and-file worker and a union officer I have made statements, published leaflets and newsletters, raised motions, walked picket lines, demonstrated, and been arrested fighting for union recognition and contract demands, against concessions, for mass picketing, workplace occupations, solidarity strikes and other militant tactics, for union democracy, for the rights of Blacks, Latinos, women, gays and youth, for cross-border organizing and international working-class solidarity, against U.S. wars and military interventions, against union support for the Democrats, and for a labor party.

At the January Tool & Die Unit Executive Board meeting I made a motion to support the Detroit newspaper strikers' Appeal to AFL-CIO President John Sweeney for a National March on Detroit. The Executive Board passed the motion, and Tool & Die Unit President Gene Szymaniak took it to a UAW Region 1E "Crisis Meeting," which also passed it.

I have had less success with motions for the Labor Party. Neither Local 600 nor the Tool & Die Unit have been willing to buck Solidarity House to endorse the Labor Party, although Local 600 called for a labor party into the 1960s and the Tool & Die Unit still calls for it in the abstract. That fight isn't over yet, however.

I am [not] running to become a delegate to the Labor Party Chapter Convention. The Chapter Convention is a chance for representatives of the chapters to get to know each other, to elect five chapter members to the Interim National Council, and to state the Convention's views on a few key questions. In my opinion, the Chapter Convention should (1) declare that the next Labor Party Convention should reverse the current policy against running candidates in elections, (2) protest the leadership's attempts to marginalize the chapters through reregistration of chapter members, pulling or threatening to pull chapter charters, and similar high-handed measures, and (3) commit the chapters to building the Labor Party among the workers and the oppressed, particularly in the unions, and through that struggle to change Labor Party policies where they are weak or wrong.

Build the Labor Party in the Unions!

The Labor Party is different from the New Party, the Greens, and other progressive third parties primarily because it is based on unions, the only really mass organizations of the working class. This gives it the potential to succeed where all the other third-party efforts have failed, since the unions have the numbers, the organization,

and the money to challenge the Democrats and Republicans successfully. Yet just over 5 percent of organized workers and less than 1 percent of all workers belong to unions that endorse the Labor Party, and few of those really participate in the Labor Party through their unions or Labor Party chapters. We need to build rank-and-file Labor Party committees in the unions, recruit union officers to the Labor Party or replace them with Labor Party supporters, and win union endorsements at all levels.

Rebuild the Labor Movement!

The Labor Party cannot advance very far with the labor movement in retreat, as it has been for more than twenty years and still is despite the new AFL-CIO leadership. The proportion of union membership has shrunk from 35 percent of the nonagricultural work force in the late 1940s and 1950s to 25 percent in the mid-1970s to 15 percent today, the lowest since 1936 and still declining. Partly this is caused by the relative decline in industrial employment due to automation, increased labor productivity, overproduction for limited markets, and, to a lesser degree, imports. Partly it is caused by the failure of the unions to put resources into organizing. Even Sweeney's SEIU grew mainly from mergers and acquisitions, not organizing. But mainly the decline is caused by the failure of unions to win significant new gains for their members.

No More Concessions!

The living standards of 80 percent of the U.S. population have fallen since 1973, as the world capitalist economy has stagnated. Yet corporate profits and the income and wealth of the top 20 percent, top 5 percent, and especially the top 1 percent have soared. The top 20 percent now take nearly 50 percent of the national income and own 80 percent of the assets. The top 1 percent do not bother with income (it can be taxed) and own 40 percent of the assets. Unions have not been able to stop the decline in workers' living standards. In fact, the wages of union members have risen more slowly than the wages of unorganized workers, with both lagging behind inflation. The reason for this is the "one-sided class war" Doug Fraser helped impose on the UAW and the labor movement and then lamented. The unions make the concessions, and the companies make the profits.

Chapter Convention Resolution Supporting June 20-21 Action in Solidarity with Detroit Newspaper Workers

Whereas, the AFL-CIO is calling for an action in solidarity with Detroit newspaper workers on June 20-21; and

Whereas, solidarity actions can help the Detroit newspaper workers' struggle for reinstating and recalling all newspaper workers and for a union contract; and

Whereas, Detroit newspaper workers, including workers who are members of the

Labor Party, have asked the Labor Party to support and help build this action;

Therefore, be it resolved that:

The National Contention of Labor Party Chapters supports the June 20-21 action in solidarity with Detroit newspaper workers and urges all chapters and unions affiliated with the Labor Party to help organize forces from their areas to come to Detroit on June 20-21 and participate in the action.

Win the Right to Strike!

As workers have seen at PATCO, Hormel, Firestone, Staley, Caterpillar, and now the Detroit newspapers, unions cannot win against really determined employers, so long as they limit themselves to fighting in one bargaining unit within the bounds set by the antilabor laws. These laws forbid unions to stop production through mass picketing, sitdown strikes, secondary boycotts, or solidarity strikes, while they allow employers to break strikes and unions by drawing on the resources of their corporate empires, locking out workers, hiring scabs and security guards, calling in the cops and National Guard, or moving production. But the unions are far more powerful than they were 60 years ago, since the most important industries are still organized. We need to use this power to defy the antilabor laws, make them unenforceable, stop production, and force the companies to concede our demands.

Democratize the Unions and the Labor Party!

One reason unions are losing the one-sided class war is that they are run by bureaucracies, by top officials who have left the working class for the world of managers, lawyers, and politicians. The union bureaucrats have a strong interest in getting along with the bosses and little interest in confronting them. They rationalize this by saying that labor and management have common interests, corporations must stay competitive and profitable, imports are the problem, the government will be on our side if we elect Democrats, unjust laws must be obeyed, strikes are ineffective, jointness is essential, and on and on. Even the best union bureaucrats, like those who founded the Labor Party, succumb. The solution is democracy from the ground up, with full information for the ranks, regular decision-making meetings and conventions, frequent elections to all offices, and easy recall.

Defend the Most Oppressed!

Blacks, Latinos, women, gays, and youth are the most oppressed sectors of the working class and also its large majority. They are the workers who must be reached to rebuild the labor movement and build the Labor Party. The Labor Party has excellent demands on jobs, wages, hours, union rights, pensions, health care, and education, all of which affect oppressed groups. It opposes discrimination based on race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability. It defends affirmative action and "informed choice."

Yet it hedges on key questions like quotas to make affirmative action effective, an end to the "war on drugs," the prison industry and capital punishment, the unequivocal right to abortion, and full equality for lesbians and gay men in relationships and parenting. We must strengthen the Labor Party as defender of the oppressed.

For International Labor Solidarity!

The employers try to divide workers along national lines, as well as lines of race, sex, sexual orientation, and age. One favorite trick is to try to get workers to unite with their bosses against workers in other countries and immigrants, while the bosses show no such loyalty toward workers. The Labor Party program calls for "an immigration policy that does not discriminate on any basis," "freely trading with all trading partners who adhere to basic minimum labor and environmental standards," and "promot[ing] a strategy of international solidarity and cooperation with labor movements and labor parties in other nations." But it does not call for full rights for "illegal aliens," its "minimum standards" could be used to justify protectionism against Mexico and China, and its pledge to "ensure adequate national defense" means supporting U.S. militarism and contradicts real international solidarity.

Challenge the Democrats and Republicans!

The Labor Party leaders say that the Labor Party cannot challenge the Democrats and Republicans in elections until it grows significantly, yet political reality says that it cannot grow significantly until it challenges the Democrats and Republicans in elections. This expresses a general problem: The Labor Party needs the leaders of the endorsing unions, the leaders of the endorsing unions do not want to confront the

AFL-CIO leaders, and the AFL-CIO leaders do not want to break with the Democrats. Yet this chain must be broken for the Labor Party to survive and grow. The best conditions for this would be created by a working-class upsurge in which the unions were forced to defy the government, but that may come too late for this Labor Party. We must fight now for the Labor Party to begin challenging the Democrats and Republicans in elections, as well as on picket lines and in the streets.

For a Workers' Government!

The present U.S. government is a bosses' government. Workers need a very different government: a socialist government. All major political and economic decisions should be made by democratically elected workers' councils, not a political and economic "market" dominated by monopoly corporations. Only a small minority of Labor Party members agree with this now, but experience is a great teacher. If a Labor Party government attempted to implement our current program, for example, a \$10 per hour minimum wage or 32 hours work for 40 hours pay, the bosses would go on strike, lock out workers, and shut down the economy. The [LP] government would have to abandon its program or impose socialist measures of nationalization and workers' control. Under those circumstances, I am confident, most Labor Party members would decide that they, too, are socialists. □

Statement on Delegate Election for Chapter Convention

Dear sisters and brothers of the Detroit Labor Party,

I am writing to explain why I am not running for Labor Party Chapter Convention delegate, having been nominated at the January meeting. Those of you who know me know that I do not normally sit out elections. They are good opportunities to get out your views, even if you don't get elected. The uncut election statement on which I would have run is attached, so that you can see my views. I am currently on the Detroit Labor Party Steering Committee and expect to run for it again on a similar platform.

I would have made a good Chapter Convention delegate, and the Detroit chapter would have made an important statement by sending a woman industrial worker.

But I decided not to run because of another vital consideration for the Detroit Labor Party. As I say in my election statement, we must build the Labor Party in the unions. This means building the Labor Party from the bottom up by recruiting union members and forming Labor Party committees in the unions. But it also means building the Labor Party in the unions from the top down.

The Detroit Labor Party would be much more effective if its meetings consisted mainly of rank-and-file workers and their elected union leaders and looked less like a

small gathering of radicals. In Detroit the key union is obviously the UAW. The problem is that Solidarity House supports the Democratic Party, not the Labor Party. Because of this, few UAW officers are willing to risk publicly endorsing the Labor Party. Russ Leone is the highest-ranking UAW officer in the Detroit Labor Party, but he is not really active in the chapter, and I am only a minor UAW officer, a Local 600 Tool & Die Unit Executive Board member.

The highest-ranking UAW officer active in the Detroit Labor Party is Local 417 President Dan McCarthy. I was very pleased that he was willing to run for Chapter Convention delegate, and I want him to play a more prominent role in the Labor Party and the chapter. As I counted the votes, Fred Vitale, as elected chapter secretary and acting chair, was certain to get elected. If I had run, I would have been taking votes away from Dan. I didn't want to do that, so I withdrew in his favor. I don't mean to disparage Paul Felton in any way. He would make an excellent delegate and has strong union credentials of his own. But I think the highest priority for the Detroit Labor Party is to make inroads in the UAW.

In solidarity,

Judy Wraight
February 18, 1997

Electoral Issues Facing the Next Convention of the Labor Party

by Frank Wright

We are now less than a year and a half from the second convention of the Labor Party, assuming it is held as scheduled. Since the second convention will be spared the responsibility of adopting a constitution and approving a basic overall program — these having been taken care of at the founding convention — it should be able to deal in greater depth with some of the key issues before it, including the main electoral issues: Should the Labor Party run candidates and, if so, what should the criteria be for doing so? Should the Labor Party endorse candidates put forward by the bosses' parties?

My purpose here is to discuss these two questions and in doing so to cite some disagreements with three articles that appeared in *BIDOM* Number 134 (November-December 1996): "Evaluating the Present Stage of the Labor Party Movement" by David Jones; "Between Walking and Running — Expect a Long March" by Bill Onasch; and "Robert Wages's Endorsement of Clinton — Its Meaning For the Prospects of Building A Labor Party" by Don Fowler.

On the Labor Party's Running Candidates

It seems to me that faced with the choice of the Labor Party's waiting two years to run candidates or sanctioning the immediate running of candidates without clear-cut guidelines or criteria, the founding convention correctly chose the former. But, as Don Fowler suggests, I believe the better course would have been for the Labor Party to have "picked a few places" where there already was in place an adequate base of support "to run viable independent labor candidates in selected working class districts on a Labor Party program." However, a proposal to that effect which was introduced at the founding convention was ruled out of order on procedural grounds.

The Onasch article, which argues against any Labor Party electoral activity in the here and now, does not take into account the *uneven development* in the base building process in various parts of the country. For example, some central labor councils in California (which represent thousands of workers) affiliated with the Labor Party were anxious to field candidates for local electoral contests. In Cleveland, Ohio, the labor movement is confronted with a viciously anti-labor Democratic Party mayor, who would like nothing better than to rescind laws giving

public employees collective bargaining rights. Labor Party leaders within the Cleveland Federation of Labor, which is an affiliate of the Labor Party, are precluded by the founding convention's decision from raising the proposal for a broad-based independent Labor Party candidate put forward by the Federation to provide an alternative in this year's mayoralty election.

The sentiment within the Labor Party is, in my judgment, overwhelmingly in favor of having an electoral component. Trade union leaders with few exceptions are imbued with the belief that elections count heavily in effecting social change. This includes those active in the Labor Party.

Historically, revolutionary socialists have favored the labor movement's running independent candidates from its own ranks in order to educate the working class, raise its political and class consciousness, and recruit to working class political formations. Establishing criteria which will permit running even some Labor Party candidates will be a struggle at the party's second convention, due primarily to the near intransigent opposition of Tony Mazzocchi to the running of candidates. In this regard, Jones in his *BIDOM* article misrepresents Mazzocchi's views on running candidates.

Jones gives Mazzocchi high marks and accolades for his extraordinary leadership in getting the Labor Party off the ground. No one that I know of — except perhaps a few hopeless sectarians — would quarrel with this. But people with a revolutionary left perspective have voiced significant differences with Mazzocchi around some rather fundamental issues, including whether the Labor Party should have an electoral component *along with a mass action program*.

Jones suggests this is not the case. Quoting from the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Organizing Manual, he tells us that the Manual advises, "*The party will engage in elections*," and then explains Mazzocchi's motivation for the party to be "developing the idea of the existing two-party system as a fraud, advocating a working class party based on the organized union movement, explaining the necessity for a broad mobilization of the union rank-and-file and, *while incorporating electoral activity into the party perspective*, taking a realistic view of what is needed to present a credible challenge to the two parties." (Emphasis added.)

Does the Organizing Manual say what Jones says it does? Not at all. It poses the question of running candidates, emphasizes the need to recruit "many more members before we can hope to mount a credible challenge to politics as usual," warns that "the running of candidates could actually foster dissension among labor ranks," states categorically that "LPA is strictly non-electoral," and then says this about the Labor Party to be formed:

At the Founding Convention, members should decide when to actually start to function as a party. Important considerations to the decision are (1) can we as an organization impact the important issues for working people; and (2) can we successfully engage in elections. The question of successfully engaging in elections is NOT whether we win, but whether we increase our numbers and our platform by participating.

So the Manual presents the issue without in any way suggesting that its authors favor running candidates.

But apart from the Manual, Tony Mazzocchi has been completely consistent for years in advocating a *non-electoral party*. In public speeches and in private conversations, he has argued vehemently that running candidates is a diversion from the mass action strategy needed to bring about social change. He contends that running candidates is a waste of resources; that even if labor candidates were elected they could not change things; that they would not be accountable to their base; that they would inevitably be co-opted by the bosses' parties, etc. *He has consistently said that he is for a non-electoral party. What could be clearer than that?*

Mazzocchi has studied the history of the Progressive Party, which ran Henry Wallace for president in 1948; the miners' experience in successfully running Jack Stump for the Virginia state legislature; the New Democratic Party in Canada; the Labour Party in Britain; other third party developments in the U.S.; and he has concluded that electoral activity for a labor party does not work and should not be part of its perspective.

That is a point of view which is not going to disappear at the next convention of the Labor Party. But it is a minority point of view, as conceded by Mazzocchi. So he and others who share his point of view may not make the issue whether the Labor Party should be electoral or non-electoral, but rather how restrictive electoral activity should be.

In this connection, there should be general agreement on the need for an adequate working class base anchored in the organized labor movement together with sufficient resources to mount credible campaigns. There must also be controls and safeguards to ensure that all Labor Party candidates run on the basis of the Labor Party's program, and that all Labor Party candidates are accountable to the base.

We can anticipate some real bones of contention around such questions as these: Should candidates run only on a local basis, or should they also be free to contest for federal office? Should unions and Labor Party chapters on the

local level be free to decide for themselves whether to run candidates or must they have authorization by the national leadership? How can the question of running candidates be reconciled with the mass action perspective of the Labor Party? And how can it be reconciled with the need to raise money to meet administrative expenses?

It is around this last question that Mazzocchi and those who support his position will predictably take their firmest stand. Today, the Labor Party gets most of its money from union treasuries. This is so-called "hard money." Once the party embarks on an electoral course, legal questions arise as to the availability of this funding. This is especially true if the Labor Party runs candidates for federal office, though in some states, such as Ohio and Michigan, it would also apply if the Labor Party runs candidates on a local level. By banning the running of any candidates, the Labor Party has avoided this problem, at least for the first two years of its existence.

Now, of course, if the Labor Party has a large enough membership to provide the necessary funding, even without union treasury money, then it becomes feasible for the party to run candidates and at the same time maintain a national office (and perhaps regional and local offices), employ staff, etc. But recruiting such a large membership is a task for the future and it is not at all assured that the task will be carried out by the Labor Party's second convention.

These are the kinds of practical problems it seems to me we should be grappling with, along with the ideological problems, as we prepare for the Labor Party's second convention.

For a Clean Break with the Democratic Party

The Fowler article, which takes up the question of Bob Wages's endorsement of Clinton, sets forth clearly why labor must break cleanly with the Democratic Party and why the Labor Party must be a genuinely independent working class political force. But I believe Fowler is too preoccupied with the subjective side of things in making his points.

Fowler writes that Wages, who endorsed Clinton, was, after all, expressing an "honest conviction." Fowler adds, "It is not equivalent to the duplicity of the CP in 1936 and afterwards."

That is undoubtedly true, but so what? Many trade union leaders supported Clinton as a lesser evil and did so out of "honest convictions." Their position must be fought and so must Wages's.

It must be pointed out here that Wages looks favorably upon fusion politics, i.e., putting the names of "lesser evil" ruling class politicians running as Democrats on the Labor Party ticket as well. Again, his sincerity in doing so is unquestionable — but irrelevant. For principled socialists, the line has to be drawn sharply and clearly against supporting the bosses' candidates, with subjective factors put to the side.

In this regard, it is especially troubling to read David Jones's comment concerning Wages:

It seems to me that in order to understand what is going on here it is necessary to recognize that Wages, Mazzocchi, and the emerging leadership of the LP represent a developing *political tendency* within the unions.... The ideas which it advocates, and the methods employed in organizing others around them, are, at the least, consistent with and not opposed to, a class-struggle perspective. (Emphasis in the original.)

Jones knows that Wages endorsed Clinton and urged OCAW members to vote for him (as shown in Jones's reference to Fowler's article, both in the above-cited issue of *BIDOM*). I assume he knows of Wages's advocacy of fusion politics (see *BIDOM* #133, p. 58). Yet Jones apparently sees these views of Wages's as "consistent with and not opposed to a class struggle perspective."

Where is the class line drawn? If, as Fowler points out, it has historically been "a principle of anti-capitalist working-class parties... that the Democratic and Republican parties were bosses' parties and, as such, it was inconceivable for a class-conscious worker to cast a vote for their candidates," are we now saying this is no longer a principle? Or because we appreciate the contribution made by union leaders like Wages to the formation of the Labor Party, do we overlook or minimize their endorsement of a Clinton and still say that what they advocate is "not opposed to a class struggle perspective"?

Incidentally, Jones errs in lumping Mazzocchi with Wages in the same "political tendency." On some very key questions, Mazzocchi's views differ from Wages. For example, at no time did Mazzocchi endorse Clinton or urge workers to vote for Clinton.

Where Does the Main Danger Come From?

In his evaluation of the present stage of the labor party movement, Jones targets sectarians for criticism while painting a glowing and uncritical portrait of the Labor Party's leadership. His analysis is the same as that of Barrett and Saunders (see their article in *BIDOM* #132, May-June, 1996).

The sectarians do pose a problem and they need to be fought. But they are not the main problem.

For the fledgling Labor Party to get off the ground and evolve into an authentic mass workers' party, it will have to be fully independent of the bosses' parties. It is not the sectarians who pose the greatest danger to unshackling the Labor Party from the Democratic Party. The main danger comes from the populist politics which many of the labor officialdom have embraced.

At the Labor Party's second convention, we are going to be confronted with the threat of endorsing fusion politics or even "lesser evil" Democratic Party politicians. Influential Labor Party leaders like Wages, assuming he adheres

to the positions he has taken, will likely be joined by other labor leaders who have put one foot in the Labor Party movement while keeping the other in the Democratic Party.

If the second convention of the Labor Party adopts an electoral position which allows the party itself to endorse or support candidates of the bosses' parties, this could well spell the doom of the Labor Party. This is the greatest danger to the future growth and development of the Labor Party and it is this danger, above all, which must be fought.

For an Independent Class Line

There is, in my opinion, a growing tendency among sections of the left to orient so completely to the Labor Party leadership as to lose perspective regarding the role of the left itself. Instead of advancing and fighting for proposals to ensure the Labor Party's political independence, the raising of class consciousness through international labor solidarity, full-scale internal party democracy, and a real struggle in support of the national liberation movements, and the fight for women's equality, there is a holding back (or a total avoidance) regarding these important questions. Instead, the theme seems to be: uncritically follow the leaders.

Those who pursue this tailist course no doubt do so because they consider this is the path that must be taken in order to build a mass workers party. As Barrett and Saunders advised, for example, take up the liberation issues later — don't rock the boat now.

Trotsky wrote, "Centrists talk a lot about the 'masses,' and always end up orienting themselves toward the reformist apparatus."

Having been through the experience of the British Labour Party, the New Democratic Party in Canada, and other social democratic formations, it should be evident that the left must sharply counterpose its perspective to those reflected by reformist trends in the Labor Party. This, it seems to this writer, should be the role of *BIDOM*, among others. This can be done while at the same time recognizing the immensely positive contributions made by Mazzocchi, Wages, and others in getting the Labor Party off the ground.

But the revolutionary socialist left must maintain an independent class line. For what will be decisive in determining the Labor Party's future will not only be objective political developments and the intensity of the class struggle but also the degree to which the left is effective in advancing a consistent, independent class line. If it is not prepared to do so, then, as Cannon wrote, conscious revolutionists "might as well retire from the field and let the automatic process take care of everything. The automatic process will not take care of anything except to guarantee despotism." □

February 1997

Electoral Action Without Union Backing Is a Dead End: A Reply to Frank Wright

by David Jones

Frank Wright writes in this issue about his conviction that the Labor Party should run or sanction the running of candidates in the party's name. He takes issue with other contributors to this magazine who have supported the decision made at the founding convention to refrain from any such action at the present time. The central leaders and organizers of the party have continued to hold to this position, and Wright anticipates that the issue will be central to the second party convention in 1998. He says that he believes it will be necessary to enter into a struggle with the party leadership over this question at the coming convention.

"We are now less than a year and a half from the second convention of the Labor Party..." Wright says. This convention, he anticipates, "should be able to deal in greater depth [than the first convention] with some of the key issues before it, including the main electoral issues. Should the Labor Party run candidates [for public office], and, if so, what should the criteria be for doing so?"

Wright answers his first question with a "Yes." He thinks that it is most important that the Labor Party undertake to run candidates in the near future. The criteria he proposes include "an adequate working-class base anchored in the organized labor movement" and "sufficient resources to mount credible campaigns." Wright wants candidates who make a "clean break" with the Democratic Party and run as authentic independent labor candidates. He also urges "controls and safeguards to ensure that all Labor Party candidates run on the basis of the party's program, and that all Labor Party candidates are accountable to the base."

These general criteria are consistent with the labor party perspective and socialist program advocated by this magazine, and there is no doubt that a fully developed labor party could utilize elections to organize and broaden the party's base. But the editors and most contributors to the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, including myself, have not agreed that the present course of the party is inconsistent with this general perspective, or that support for it requires aligning ourselves politically and tactically against the leadership of the LP.

On the contrary, we have argued that the LP leadership's perspective on electoral activity, adopted at the founding convention of the party in June 1996 and reaffirmed at the recent chapter convention in March 1997, is the correct one for the present and should be supported.

Wright's criteria beg the question. The Labor Party has no "credible working class base"

outside of the affiliated unions — primarily OCAW, UE, and BMW. These unions presently oppose running candidates. This, essentially, is the end of the discussion. Opening the door to co-called "Labor Party" electoral initiatives without solid union support would be as sectarian and self-defeating as organizing a self-proclaimed "Labor Party" without any solid union backing.

Wright advances multiple and contradictory arguments to support his contention that there is an urgent necessity for the LP to get into electoral politics. On the one hand, he says that the possibility that "the second convention of the Labor Party [may adopt] an electoral position which allows the party itself to endorse or support candidates of the bosses' parties... is the greatest danger to the future growth and development of the Labor Party."

On the other hand, he says that "establishing criteria which will permit running even some Labor Party candidates will be a struggle at the party's second convention due primarily to the near intransigent opposition of Tony Mazzocchi to the running of candidates."

Mazzocchi, he explains,

has argued vehemently that running candidates is a diversion from the mass action strategy needed to bring about social change. He contends that running candidates is a waste of resources; that even if labor candidates were elected they could not change things; that they would not be accountable to their base; that they would inevitably be co-opted by the bosses' parties, etc.... [Mazzocchi] has concluded that electoral activity for the labor party does not work and should not be part of its perspective. [Emphasis added.]

Mazzocchi's position, as Wright describes it, would exclude "endorsing or supporting the bosses' parties." Yet Wright assures us both that there will be a struggle at the convention over whether or not to sanction the running of candidates due primarily to Mazzocchi's "intransigent opposition" and that the order of the day is for "the left [to] sharply counterpose its perspective to those reflected by reformist trends in the Labor Party." This juxtaposition makes no sense.

If "the greatest danger" is opening the door to support of candidates of the bosses' parties, and if the most authoritative leader of the party is against running candidates because it may detract from mass action, wouldn't those who seek to "support the candidates of the bosses' parties" want to defeat Mazzocchi? How else do you "open the door"?

Wright simply seems to be providing as many arguments as he can think of in favor of running candidates now, regardless of whether the arguments contradict one another.

What the Labor Party Actually Is

It is necessary, at this point, to review once more what actually makes up *this* "Labor Party." First, the main base of the party, politically, financially, and organizationally, is the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW), an industrial union of about 100,000. Two of the central leaders of the Labor Party are OCAW President Robert Wages and Mazzocchi, now a special assistant to the president of the union and formerly secretary-treasurer. Mazzocchi, as is well known, is the founder of the party, and it is he who convinced OCAW to support the effort a number of years ago.

The United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers Union (UE), and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMW — a rail union), are the other two national organizations which have played a major role in the organization of the party. All three had big contingents at the founding convention. A sizable group of California-based building trades unions came into the effort early on and are the fourth major base of support in the unions. Two other significant union formations are the California Nurses Association and the Farm Labor Organizing Committee. Both were well represented at the convention. Some six other national unions have endorsed the LP and have minor roles in it so far, as have a scattering of other local and regional union formations. This is unprecedented since at least the end of World War II. But it is far from representing a majority, or even a powerful minority, of the unions.

Second, there are some forty chapters, mostly based in cities and constituted on the basis of individual membership. The chapters do not require that their members belong to unions, and adherents of various small radical tendencies are disproportionately represented in many of the chapters. They were even more disproportionately represented at the founding convention's microphones. Most of the delegates representing unions supported the leadership's proposal not to sanction running candidates at this time, and most of the support for the contrary position came from elements in the chapters. (A majority at the recent chapter convention did support the founding convention majority by voting down a proposal for an early convention next year, a proposal aimed at pushing for immediate electoral activity.)

Any useful discussion of the dynamics of the Labor Party has to recognize this organization's actual composition as described above. To discuss, for example, the role of the "chapters" in this debate as though they were community-based working-class membership organizations in an actual mass labor party is preposterous. These "chapters," which often speak in the name of entire cities, are for the most part small groups of 50–100 people at best — primarily radical political activists. Most of those who *are* members of unions are not delegated to represent their locals in the "chapters" and speak only for themselves. The chapters' value for the Labor Party is that to some extent they provide a more or less public arena for organizing modest additional support for the party.

Of course the Labor Party is not really a party at all, or even a mass organization, so far. But the commitment of OCAW, UE, and BMWE to the Labor Party introduces a profound and historic change into the organized labor movement in the U.S. The *action* of these three national unions makes it possible to *begin* to engender a class-conscious tendency within the unions. And — does it need to be said again? — the labor party, by its very existence, inherently and inescapably introduces the consideration of class on a scale that radical propaganda can never achieve. And this begins to open up the possibility of transformation of working-class consciousness, which is a precondition for the socialist transformation of society.

From this perspective, the question of running candidates cannot possibly be of central importance, most certainly not at the labor party movement's present stage, not if you see a labor party as the political expression of the unions. The centrally important task is to win over more of the organized labor movement to support the Labor Party. *That* is the standard to measure proposals against. The question of whether a fully developed mass labor party should run candidates for public office is an entirely different matter from what *this* proto-Labor Party should do at the present stage of its existence. Running candidates before the affiliated unions are prepared to participate would only narrow the appeal of the Labor Party.

Wright says that "some central labor councils in California...affiliated with the Labor Party were anxious to field candidates for local electoral contests." (But not anxious enough, apparently, to just go ahead and do so.) Wright even suggests that the LP's position on electoral politics has prevented Labor Party supporters from raising proposals for independent political action in the Cleveland Federation of Labor.

He writes: "Labor Party leaders within the Cleveland Federation of Labor are *precluded* [emphasis added] by the founding convention's decision from raising the proposal for a broad-based independent Labor Party candidate put forward by the Federation to provide an alternative in this year's mayoralty election."

What else can this possibly mean but that independent labor candidates might have been

put forward by the Cleveland Federation of Labor if only the Labor Party had a position in favor of endorsing candidates? The statement suggests at least that Labor Party supporters might have won a new and broader hearing for the idea of running independent labor candidates, but were "precluded" from doing so by their affiliation to the Labor Party.

This suggestion is absurd. Are the unnamed "Labor Party leaders within the Cleveland Federation of Labor" under some sort of Labor Party discipline to refrain from raising *their own* proposals for the Federation itself to run independent labor candidates? Do they think they are under such discipline? Did any of these "leaders" go to the Labor Party leadership and say: "We have a great opportunity in the Cleveland Federation to raise the idea of independent political action? Is that OK with you? Can you help us?" If they did, Wright does not report it.

Perhaps all Wright means is that Labor Party members in the Cleveland Federation could not propose that the Federation run candidates *jointly* with the Labor Party, or in the name of the Labor Party, or endorse Labor Party candidates. So what? If the possibility of independent labor politics was actually present in the Cleveland Federation, only waiting for someone to so move, then supporters of independent labor political action were duty-bound to do so, regardless of any positions taken by the Labor Party. If they didn't, they weren't leaders. And if the possibility was there, are the national leaders of the Labor Party such hidebound bureaucrats and reformists that they would have reacted to the possibility with hostility and resistance? This is argument by innuendo. And to what end?

Does Wright believe that Mazzocchi and the other leaders of the LP would impose sanctions against a member of the Labor Party who proposed genuine independent political action by an authentic labor organization, but not against those who support the Democrats, which is what his argument suggests? If so, then the formation of the LP by Mazzocchi and the other trade union leaders who created it is a deliberate fraud, designed not to seek independent political action by labor, but to preempt any possibility of its happening. This is, of course, the subtext of the sectarian caucus.

The present controversy over running candidates is essentially an artificial one, created mainly by the amalgam of radicals described above. It is a sideshow to the real event. The only purpose it serves is to allow the sectarians to coalesce around a phony "left opposition" to Mazzocchi and the Labor Party leadership and make a lot of noise. And as was amply demonstrated at the founding convention, when the question of electoral politics is opened up at this point in the party's development, the reformists take charge, not the "people with a revolutionary left perspective," to use Wright's term.

Wright never explains how we are supposed to differentiate these retrograde political adventurers from the "revolutionary socialist left" whom Wright says "have voiced significant

differences with Mazzocchi around some rather fundamental issues." It is hard to escape the conclusion that Wright is more concerned with an alliance with the "revolutionary left" than with the trade union forces in the Labor Party. If that is the case, he ought to spell out who they are. If not, he ought to explain why his position inevitably leads to a bloc with the sectarians against the LP's trade union leadership.

The power of the labor party idea, as has been explained many times before, is its organic connection to the trade unions, the only mass working-class organizations that exist. This is the standard against which specific questions arising in this movement need to be measured.

Labor Party candidates who were not an expression of a decision by the affiliated unions to engage in independent electoral activity would be propagandistic at best. Wright's underlying idea seems to be that if the LP would decide to run candidates under these conditions — which barring new developments, will be the conditions present in 1988 — the LP could then go to the unions and ask for endorsement.

Such a perspective reduces the LP to an outside agency seeking to change the unions through exemplary action. This is not a labor party as we have understood it. To cite again what James P. Cannon said in 1948: "The minimum condition...is that the [labor] party must be really based on the unions and dependent upon them, and at least ultimately subject to their control as to program and candidates... The danger," he continued, "is that we may get impatient and [impatience] may impel us to seek shortcuts to a labor party or some wretched substitute for it, over the head of the official trade union movement."

The issue of whether the Labor Party should run candidates now or in 1998 is a tenth-rate matter compared to whether taking such a position leads to a bloc with sectarians and reformists against the trade union leadership of this incipient labor party. *That* is a matter of principle at this stage of the development of the labor party movement, in my opinion.

The question of electoral action by the Labor Party is not, and cannot be at this point, a question of principle from this perspective. The *real question of principle* is to continue to deepen the organic connection of the labor party movement with the unions. Premature electoral action, without a solid union base, will retard the development of this connection. Electoral action will mean something when such action can be credibly seen as representing the "official trade union movement."

There is, of course, an inherent contradiction in unions committed to a labor party movement supporting the bosses' parties, which is what happened in the 1996 elections. But that contradiction cannot be overcome without further experience and further development. Trying to leap over this contradiction by outvoting the unions at the 1998 convention won't advance the prospect of independent political action by labor, not by a fraction of an inch. □

A Book Which Working People Will Not Put Down

Straight Talk from Michael Moore

Downsize This! Random Threats from an Unarmed American by Michael Moore. Crown Publishers, Inc., New York. 278 pp. Hardcover, \$21.00.

Reviewed by Tom Barrett

Shortly before taking my family on its first summer vacation in seven years, I was shopping at our local warehouse buying club — where I shop for everything from cat food to computer disks, all at wholesale quantities — and saw on the discount book table a hardcover copy of Michael Moore's *Downsize This!* The book was marked down nearly \$10.00, so I followed my impulse and bought it. That was my reading material for the week at the Jersey shore in September 1996, and it was entertaining indeed.

For those readers who are not familiar with the author — and I suspect there are very few — Michael Moore was born and raised in Flint, Michigan, during the postwar baby boom. His father worked on the assembly line at the General Motors Fischer Body plant, and made a good living through the 1950s and 1960s. Moore was briefly editor of the social-democratic slick monthly *Mother Jones*, until he was fired for taking the magazine in too radical a direction.

In 1989 he wrote, produced, and directed a film called *Roger and Me*, a documentary

on the economic devastation of his hometown during the 1980s. The "Roger" of the title was Roger Smith, chairman and chief executive officer of General Motors, for whom Moore searches throughout the film for the purpose of confronting him and demanding that he come up to Flint and explain to the citizens and laid-off workers why GM has made management decisions which have caused such severe dislocation in their community. The film contrasts the posh country clubs of Grosse Pointe, where Smith lives, with what were once stable working-class communities but are now rundown slums. Moore's film crew follows the county sheriff as he evicts family after family from their homes. *Roger and Me* became the highest-grossing documentary film in history and made Michael Moore a celebrity.

Moore's talent — amply demonstrated in *Roger and Me* — lies in demonstrating not only the injustice of late twentieth-century capitalism but its complete absurdity. Indeed, the theme of *Roger and Me* is the intense irony that General Motors — a company making record profits in the late 1980s — was economically decimating the communities which had made General Motors the greatest manufacturing enterprise in the history of human society, foremost among them Moore's hometown of Flint. And yet the laid-

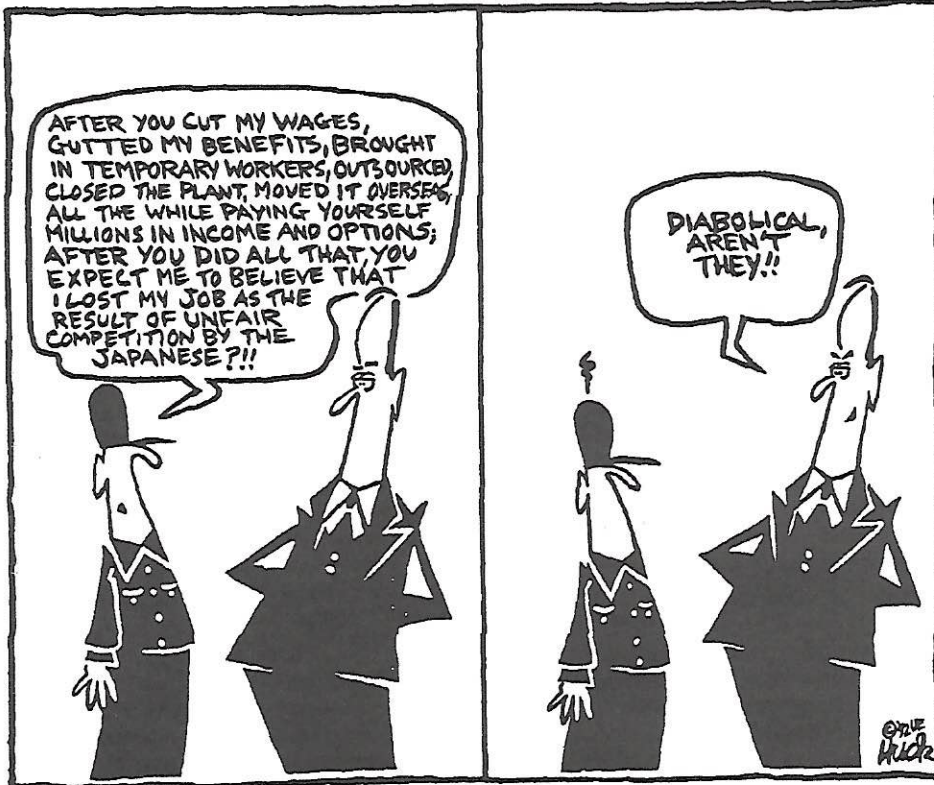
off workers interviewed by Moore and his film crew have not lost their sense of humor, and neither has Moore. Instead of whining or preaching, Moore makes us laugh. And by making us laugh, Moore holds our attention.

In *Downsize This!* Moore expands his attention from Flint to the entire United States; he takes on corporate welfare, the union officialdom, immigration, political hypocrisy, and even the O.J. Simpson case. Not only does his writing have all the edge that we appreciated in *Roger and Me*, he gets the facts straight and has convincing evidence to back up everything he says. For example, he compiled an "Etiquette of Downsizing" from internal memoranda from a number of corporations, including Chemical Bank and Times-Mirror. Among the guidelines:

1. The termination meeting should last no more than 5 to 10 minutes.
2. The termination meeting should be held in a neutral location, with easy access for security.
3. Avoid any small talk. Get to the point. Don't debate. Don't discuss any issues of "fairness."
4. The downsized employee should clearly understand that he or she is being *fired* and this will be his or her *last* day of work.
5. Have Kleenex available....
14. Managers need to recognize the following symptoms during the meeting that may indicate the terminated worker could turn violent: expression of unusual or bizarre thoughts; a fixation on weapons; romantic obsession; depression; and chemical dependence.
15. Request that the employee turn over his or her keys and other property of the company. Secure all access to the computers.
16. Contact security immediately if any assistance is required to escort the terminated employee from the property.

Is it possible that *your* supervisor has received a memo like this? Think about it.

Downsize This! is a collection of essays on issues including immigration, "corporate welfare," our twin-party political system, the end of the Cold War, and many other things. All of them are so well written that reading them is quite entertaining. Too often those who write social and political criticism take themselves and their writing much too seriously and fail to consider the wants and needs of their long-suffering readers. Every reader of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* has started reading an article in some socialist journal or other and abandoned it before finishing it — there is no need to feel guilty about it — and the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* has not been exempt. Moore's essays, by contrast, are page-turners. They grab the readers' attention and deliver their message much more effectively than the scholarly fare so frequently offered for the edification of the American



working class. An important component of providing information is the delivery, because if no one reads it or hears it, no one is informed. Moore holds his readers' interest very well.

Moore is at his best as a "muckraker" — following in the tradition of the great journalists of the pre-World War I period who exposed the abuses of capitalism and the hypocrisy of its politicians and thereby helped build the labor movement. One of the best chapters is "Corporate Crooks Trading Cards," which contrasts "white-collar" corporate crime to violent street crime and demonstrates that the former

...causes more deaths and costs you more money each year than all the street criminals combined[...]. In 1994, burglaries and robberies cost us over \$4 billion in losses, while corporate fraud cost us nearly \$200 billion! Or how about this statistic: handguns last year caused around 15,000 deaths. Unsafe working conditions on the job and occupational diseases caused more than 56,000 deaths.

Moore cites eight examples of corporate crime, illustrated with "trading cards" of each corporation's C.E.O., including photo, age, weight, known aliases, and golf handicap. Among the "public enemies" are LTV Corporation (steel), Dow Chemical Corporation, Nike Inc. (shoes), Ortho Pharmaceutical, Warner-Lambert Co. (also pharmaceuticals), and Samsung, the South Korean conglomerate. Moore gives us the following information about Nike:

Nike itself makes very few shoes; the company buys its shoes mostly from Asian contractors. According to a September 1994 report by Netherlands-based IRENE (International Restructuring Education Network Europe), 99 percent of the 90 million shoes Nike sells every year are produced in Asia, by a contractor workforce of over 75,000.

Thirty-six percent of Nike's shoes are manufactured in Indonesia, notorious for human rights abuses and poor working conditions. Indonesian girls and young women who sew the shoes start at an entry-level rate of about two dollars a day, a wage that meets only two-thirds of workers' "basic physical needs," as defined by the Indonesian government. Compulsory overtime, which is against Indonesian law, is common, as are other violations concerning working hours and holidays, maternity leave, and health and safety. One labor organizer who visited Indonesia found at least three of the Nike contractors using child labor, with one fourteen-year-old girl sewing shoes for fifty hours a week. Physical attacks on workers occur often.

This is the kind of information that American working people need. We need to know the consequences of capitalist "free trade." We need to remember that while many of capitalism's worst abuses have been alleviated in the United States and Western Europe

—due in no small measure to the battles won by trade unionists of previous generations — they continue unabated in the so-called Third World. And as sweatshop conditions are exposed in this country as well, Michael Moore's journalism reminds us that global competition could put an end to time-and-a-half pay for overtime (as Clinton is proposing in his "comp time" legislation), health and safety regulation, and the prohibition of child labor. In fact, the eight-hour day has already been virtually lost, the right to organize trade unions has become a legal fiction, and workplaces become dirtier and more dangerous by the year.

"Moral Failing" Not the Problem

Downsize This! is a lot less useful when it comes to strategies for fighting back. Moore, like most American working people, believes that the reason for exploitation is a moral failing on the part of the employers and politicians, rather than the inherent need of profit-driven corporations to produce ever more commodities for less wages.

As all of us are painfully aware, Bill Clinton was elected — and re-elected — with the support not only of the trade union leadership but of labor's ranks as well, not to mention women, African Americans, and other people of color. And it is nearly universally acknowledged that Clinton has been one of the most pro-business presidents in recent history, reneging on nearly all of his promises to the workers who elected him. Henry Nicholas, an African American labor leader from Philadelphia, has gone so far as to assert that George Bush could never have signed the Welfare Reform Act, but Clinton did and got away with it. Nicholas is right — the neo-liberal Clinton has succeeded in driving down working people's living standards far more than his more openly pro-business Republican predecessor was able. Unfortunately, however, Moore attributes this to Clinton's lack of moral courage in standing up to the business community. He fails to recognize that Clinton is carrying out his real agenda, the policies he has intended to carry out since January 20, 1993.

Moore's chapter title, "If Clinton Had Balls..." is unfortunate. Yes, this is how people talk on the shop floor, and Moore is writing in the language of working people. But the implication that courage — whether physical or moral — is a *masculine* characteristic is false, and Moore knows it. In a book which makes strong political points in favor of women's rights, such a concession to outmoded sexist ways of thinking is out of place.

Worse than that, however, is the thoroughly false idea that the Clinton who signed

the Welfare Reform Act, the Clinton who pulled every string to win the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement and did *not* pull every string to win universal health insurance, is somehow not the *real* Bill Clinton. The idea that if only Clinton had the courage to stand up to the moneyed interests, then he would govern in the interests of working people is false and dangerous. No, the *real* Bill Clinton is the political representative precisely of the "moneyed interests" — the employing class, and his political agenda is *their* political agenda. To the extent that capitalist politicians disagree it is on how best to advance the interests of the rich and powerful.

Moore gives credence to the fake debate between the "Liberals" and "Conservatives" about "Big Government" and "tax-and-spend." That is a complete smokescreen. Working people don't need or want "Big Government" or free handouts. We need jobs — with wages that support families and care for those who are unable for whatever reason to work; we have no interest in bloated government bureaucracies, especially the most bloated one of all, the Department of Defense. Furthermore, no one needs tax relief more than the working people of this country. Working people's resentment toward the Internal Revenue Service, which Republican demagogues such as Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole attempt to exploit, is legitimate. What needs to be explained is that *neither* Republicans nor Democrats have any intention of giving tax relief to working people without seriously cutting those programs which provide even minimal assistance to the very old, the very young, the sick, disabled, and unemployed. As Labor Party organizer Tony Mazzocchi has explained, working people have to change the framework of political debate in the United States — away from the issues of "Big Government" and "tax-and-spend" to the fundamental right to earn a wage. The Labor Party's campaign for the Twenty-eighth Amendment to the Constitution, to guarantee either a job or a wage to every American, is designed to do exactly that.

In spite of its weaknesses, *Downsize This!* is worthwhile reading, and it shows that worthwhile reading can be *fun* reading as well. The book exposes the Democrats' hypocrisy and does not attempt to convince us that Bill Clinton is a pro-worker president, as AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and other labor "leaders" are doing. The book entertains, educates, and motivates its readers to take action, and it does it with a sense of humor, without patronizing or preaching. Michael Moore has in that way set a good example for all working-class journalists to follow. □

Causes of the Million Man March, and Where We Go from Here

Continued from page 29

Program Needed

So we need a program to advance the motion of the Million Man March, and we need a prescriptive program to deal with technological apartheid. African Americans must now fight to remain a viable part of the working class and develop a long-range, flexible strategy to be a social and economic force in the 21st century.

So that means that while we enter into coalitions with others, African Americans must have a particular strategy to survive a systematic genocide, an institutional genocide where the system has restructured itself, where viable jobs will not be in the immediate future for African Americans. We have to develop a crash program for young people. We have to develop a program for saving those who are in crisis now, or are at risk, and develop a strategy for those who are secure, to lay a safety net for the future.

We Need Adequate Information

Where do we go from here? One of the first things we have to do is to have sessions where we talk to one another. We have to begin to pass on information to one another. I think our main weakness is the lack of adequate information.

I have a few articles here. This is an article by a sister named Barbara Ramsey. It's called "The U.S., The Black Poor, and the Politics of Expendability." It's published in a journal called *Race and Class*. But who does that journal get to? Unless you know about publications like this or unless you search them out, they're not going to get to the brothers and sisters in the Black community. But it's one of the best analyses there is. I mean she breaks it down to contemporary situations. She's saying that as far as national growth, the largest industries that are being built in the United States are prison-related.

There's another article here by William I. Robinson, a brother in Tennessee, on globalization, talking about essentially that the capitalist system has more expendable, unskilled labor than it can absorb. It can't even absorb white unskilled labor at this point. There's an international glut on the market now. There's overproduction and underconsumption.

Here's another article. This was in *Black Scholar* magazine a few years ago, and the author predicted what is now taking place. It's called "The Social Implications of the New Black Underclass" — by Troy Duster.

Here's another. This was given to me by a white professor. This was published in 1986; it's called "How Business is Reshaping America."

These are things that the average person doesn't see. This is what's affecting us. We need to know what's affecting us.

Here's another one from a magazine called *Dollars and Sense*, "The Racial Divide Widens: Why African American Workers Have Lost Ground." All right? So I'm not making this up, folks.

Recognizing the Crisis

We're in a crisis, and that's one of the first things that has to be stated. We need to know that we're in a crisis. If you don't know you're in a crisis, then you can't respond. So that's the first thing. We have to develop a consensus that we're in a crisis. If you realize you're in a crisis, you can't do what you did before you entered that crisis.

The cultural traits that have been transmitted inter-generationally since slavery in the African American community are inadequate for empowerment in the 21st century. Our habits, our way of life, our way of socializing that we are used to is not going to prepare us to survive in the 21st century. We are going to have to develop something new.

African Americans' life style must become a scientific, holistic, spiritual, materialistic one. When I talk about spiritual, I'm not talking about whether or not you believe in God. I'm talking about having human values and maintaining accountability to those human values. And aspects of a dialectical and historical materialism — understanding the nature of the system, or the nature of the beast. Synchronized with the latest in capitalist technology.

I have a friend in another city who's an organizer and he works with young people. We were talking about computers and he said, "That's somethin' for the white boy." No, that's something that we have to prepare our young people to master.

End Substance Abuse

This new culture must fuse a new people, a new generation free of all forms of substance abuse. All forms. We cannot afford it. We're not going to be around. We can engage in it if we want; you can play if you want. The system is changing over. The more weaknesses you have, the less chance you have of being around. We must teach our young people this.

We have the tendency to support our enemies and isolate our friends. It's done out of ignorance, but we need to go through a whole political reeducation process. And that's what a movement does and that's what we're talking about — creating a movement, a regenerating movement.

Transformational Program Needed

We need to form a transitional, transformational program. We need to look at what that transformational program will be about. We need to be about self-organization. This is what I'm saying about self-organization: If

you have to depend on me to tell you what to do, what happens if I'm not here? So you have to be about developing yourselves through struggles and organizing yourselves in developing a collective leadership, so that all of you can get up here and advance the struggle, a mass struggle.

So that's what we're talking about: the self-organization of our people to develop a collective leadership based around issues that demand a fundamental change of this society.

We have to develop a mass accountability system. I have to be accountable to you, you have to be accountable to me, we have to be accountable to ourselves. And our leaders who step forward, who we elect, have to be accountable to us. If we don't hold them accountable when they go astray, when they betray us, the movement will be derailed and set back. So we must have a mass accountability process.

We must begin to build economic and social institutions that will carry us forward through the sort of deluge that we are going through.

We must work up a scientific developmental plan for raising the next generation, concentrating on from birth to age 15. We need massive "rights of passage" programs, "mentoring" programs, concentrating on reading, writing, math, language, science, African American history, and labor history.

We have to educate the oppressed to constantly demand their rights, promote massive electoral participation, and maintain pressure on the elected to carry out progressive programs.

We need to have a division of labor. We need to have roles for everyone in the community. Everyone can be useful. We have to have a combination of young, middle-aged — what I call young elders — and mature elders. Each has a role.

For Black children from birth to 15 we need to set up liberation schools and rights-of-passage programs to develop scientific and technological skills for the 21st century. We don't need to teach Ebonics; we need to teach standard English in the home. That's the responsibility of parents. Now there are libraries all over. Cleveland has a good library system. So there really isn't any excuse for a parent to say they cannot get the information, because it is there.

We need to teach our children to read. My mother used to sit up reading to me before I could walk. I didn't know this. She told me this years later. I always wondered why I liked to read. She would read me to sleep. She said she hoped that by osmosis some of it would rub off. Teach your children to read, learn standard English. If you can, get them used to computers. Begin at an early age.

Also, begin to learn languages. We need to learn languages. As a community, one lan-

guage we need to learn is Spanish. There are, or will be in 3 or more years, 30 million Spanish-speaking people in the U.S. They have many cultural experiences similar to ours, and we need to enter into progressive coalitions with them to maximize the political power of our community with theirs. And I would say, learn Chinese. Malcolm X said to learn Chinese. Because China will be a force in the 21st century, and the Asian American community will be much larger than it is now.

Then there are ages 15 to 25. Those of us who are older, those of us who are trade unionists, those of us who have skills need to establish apprenticeship programs with those who are between the ages of 15 and 25 who are not college bound. Not everybody is going to go to college. There are skills — carpentry, electricians' work — many skills that need to be passed on, and we need to develop this kind of apprenticeship.

Those aged 25 to 45 should be the most politically active, engaging in mass civil disobedience, along with the 15 to 25 year olds. We need to develop a safety net. We need to engage in mass civil disobedience for the implementation of a transitional program that calls for a third reconstruction of American society.

As I end, I will talk about 13 points, very simple points, and I think that these points will relate to most Americans. Fundamentally you're talking about a reconstruction of American society as it is today.

We need to start by forming or creating Black workers' congresses or a grass roots congress from which we can network. We have people from many different religions, many different directions, many different organizations.

When I talk about workers I'm talking about most of us. I don't think there are too many African American multi-millionaires. There are some millionaires, but in our community most of us work for a living, or would like to work for a living. Just *like* to work for a living. We need to have African American workers or grass roots congresses, whatever they will be called.

From age 45 to 80, in that group, there are many who are still in our community who have no way to relay their skills to another generation. This is why we have to set up networks so that skills can be passed on. These can also be the teachers for our liberation schools.

Black Workers Congress Needed

One of the objectives that Minister Farrakhan laid out at the Million Man March was to join an organization or work with a coalition of organizations or if you don't like the existing organizations, form an organization. We need a forum, and this what we had hoped for, that the Million Man March could have been that forum. But we need a forum, a grass roots or Black workers congress, a united front from which we can deal with this crisis.

Also we need to form African American economic funds within collectives. We don't have to wait for a national economic fund to be created, but we need to get out of the concept of everything for me or a get rich quick scheme. We need to begin to have ventures in partnerships or work with collectives of folks, and there may be people who may not like this, this may not sound worthwhile to many people, but it takes millions of dollars to make a movement for social change. This is what Dr. King understood and what we didn't understand until it was too late. Dr. King was generating the money with which to mobilize.

In American society — which is a very bourgeois society, not a backward or rural society — it's going to take millions to bring forth any kind of major resolution of our situation.

We need to pledge ourselves to continue this protracted struggle from cradle to grave and never forget where we come from.

Voting Power

We have voting power, although it's going to deplete. But we have to set up a safety network. If we establish a safety network properly, we can pressure the politicians. There are politicians who are calling for a reinstatement of voting rights after one has completed their legal time as a felon. This should be one of our demands.

We should evaluate political candidates from a standpoint of community self-interest and develop a powerful political force which would evaluate them. We would evaluate all political forces and invite all political forces to come in front of us to be evaluated. We should know what left, right, and center mean.

Know what it means politically and know what it means to you. So that when you have a Reagan or a Bush or whoever, you know what they represent.

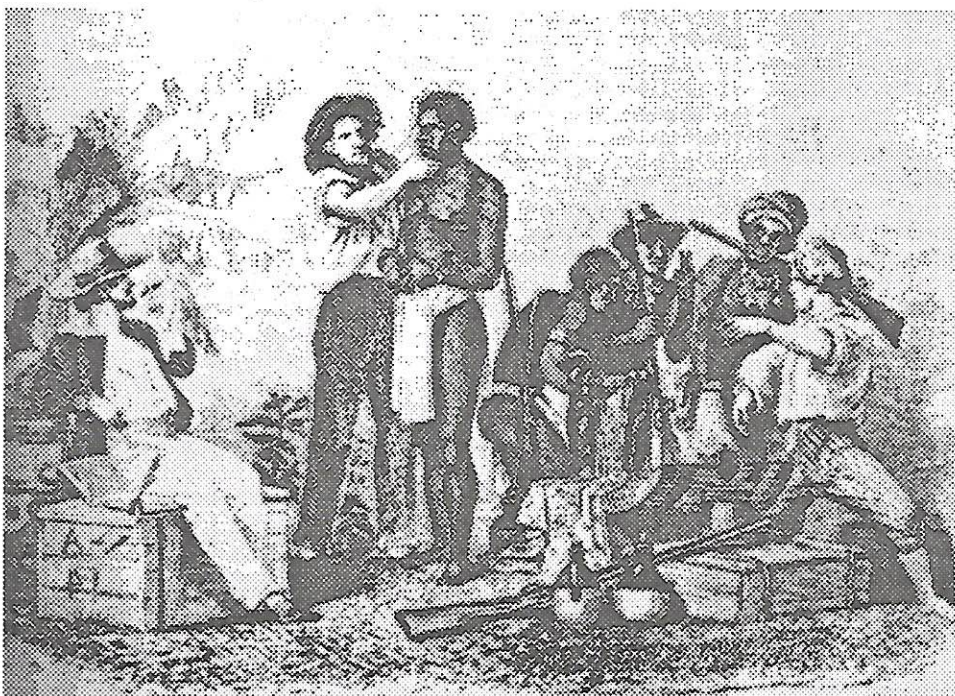
Labor Problems

We need to develop a worker-student alliance where students work in the community, so that students in college can develop a relationship with youth in the community. Sometimes there are artificial barriers. When I was a counselor, a student got a "D" and wanted an "F" because he felt that having a "D" made him white, and having an "F" made him Black. This is a negative kind of thinking. So many in the community don't view youth who are in college as progressive or as doing something for the community. They consider it going white. We need to reverse this.

We need a two-pronged strategy, which would link those in the communities with workers in unions and on the job. We need to develop and help lead unions wherever we can and support unions. Don't let the *Plain Dealer* turn you against unions. You buy that paper, but that's not your paper, folks, so we need to read between the lines. And support those who are in unions. We need to build Black labor caucuses wherever possible and develop consumer cooperatives.

The CIA Crack Cocaine Scandal

Above all we should be vigilant. In fact, we should be enraged. Representative Maxine Walters has revealed that the CIA had been instrumental in initiating and flooding the Los Angeles Black community (and whatever other Black communities we don't know about) with crack cocaine. I don't know why we're not down in Washington, D.C., now



Slave traders inspecting their "merchandise." Lingering effects of slavery have led to the demand for reparations to the African American people.

raising hell and demanding that the CIA and the FBI have to go. This shows you how asleep we are.

I hear my colleagues talk about me giving my ear to conspiracy theories, but when you have a revelation that a government agency has flooded crack cocaine into the Black community, you're not dealing with a "conspiracy theory." That conspiracy is a reality! You're dealing with institutional racism, on the one hand, and there's technological apartheid going on, plus you're dealing with a conspiracy of racists who have political power. So we should be outraged.

We should be outraged not only at the Oliver Norths and the Ronald Reagans and George Bushes but at the Uncle Clarence Thomases. We should be outraged. And if we were outraged enough, then we would understand that that guy or sister that you pass every day, and they say, "You straight?" — they are the CIA's secret weapon right inside the African American community. We should be outraged.

Drug pushers have to be reeducated, if possible, or neutralized, isolated, or destroyed, whatever it takes, but we should be outraged, and teach our children to be outraged.

We have to have a flexible, holistic strategy. We have to use an inside-outside approach, instead of pitting people against one another. This crisis is so great that it doesn't matter what organization you are in, what political philosophy. If you are doing something progressive, then I'm with you. We have to get out of that "either or" kind of thing. We have to have a flexible, holistic strategy. Something that's inclusive.

This program suggests rebuilding the Black liberation movement on a new basis, a strategy that combines current struggles, reform struggles, electoral struggles.

Some people say they are so revolutionary that they won't vote. Well, the rest of the people are voting. So if you're so revolutionary, who are you going to revolutionize but you and a few people like you? So we have to get out of that super-revolutionary ego thing. We need to combine these struggles with a broader, long-term revolutionary strategy.

Please don't get upset when I use the word revolution. I'm saying that we're in a crisis.

Now, we're going to evolve to a further crisis, so we're going to have to make an abrupt change in order to come out of this crisis. So that's what I'm talking about in terms of revolution: combining a movement for reforms with the perspective of long-term revolutionary change. That is one of the central concepts of the theory of social transformation.

So what would a transitional program look like? Even if I knew what a transitional program would look like, I would not present the entire transitional program. Because we have to come up with the entire transitional program together. I have just put forward some ideas. But we have to create that process by coming together and raising demands to deal with the issues that are affecting us in our community.

Right to a Decent Job

These demands may include something as fundamental as free health care for all Americans. Or free education, up to and including graduate levels, for all Americans. Adequate, decent, and affordable low-income housing for all Americans. And this is key: a guaranteed human right to a decent job at a livable wage, and free job training or retraining if unemployed.

I'm in favor of a non-racist, universalist education, based on an all-people's perspective. I mean, I may be Afro-centric because I'm an African American, but I'm not centric at all. Because if you have Chinese in poor housing and Indians, if I'm just Afro-centric, then I would really be leaving out part of the world.

So when we talk about a universalist perspective that means we need to know about Asian and European history, too. And real European history, about the workers who tried to take over France and how Napoleon stabbed them in the back. Because we don't get real European history. Or real American history. We need a non-racist, universal education for all children. Not just for Black children, for all children.

Proportional representation for all Americans. Now you want to talk about a revolution? A political revolution in American society? Today we have 8,000 Black elected officials and 400 Black mayors. But being 12 percent of the population, we should have

55,000 elected officials in America today out of 500,000. At least 55,000. So — in case you thought things were done with — we still have a long way to go.

Reparations for Slavery

I don't understand why people don't understand that African Americans deserve reparations. If you study world history, the African Americans have been through more trauma than most people in the world. And that's part of our problem. We're still in shock. So reparations for African Americans to be administered by African Americans is an important demand.

Also reparations for Native Americans. Nobody talks about reparations for the Native Americans. These people have been almost completely wiped out.

Preferential promotional job training on jobs for African Americans.

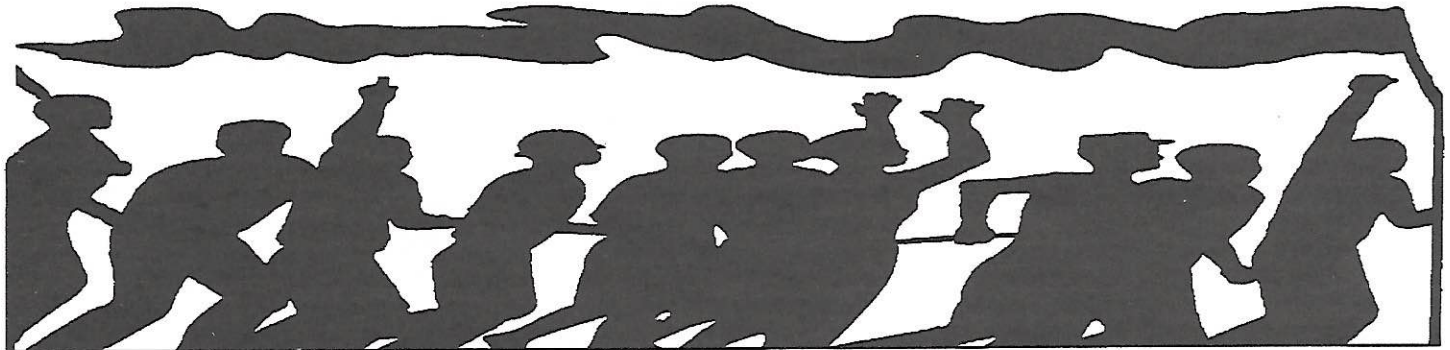
Restitution, which means repayment, for all African American soldiers who were forced to fight in U.S. imperialist, racist wars. And for their families. Restitution for all victims and families of victims of the Cointelpro ("counterintelligence program"). You want to see a revolution? You can't even count the people who have fallen victim of the counterintelligence program alone, let alone other programs. You talk about conspiracy theory: what they did to Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Black Panther Party. How far do we have to go before we become enraged?

Immediate release of all political prisoners and prisoners of war. There are at least 100 brothers and sisters who have been in prison since the 1960s.

An end to the covert economic, political, military, and chemical war certain agencies of the U.S. government have conducted against the African American community.

Self-determination. Whatever form that will take. It will be a collective consensus of the African American community.

These are just some ideas of the general direction that we should be thinking in order to develop a transitional program for Black liberation in this period of time. □



In Memory of Solomon Grauer

by Frank Lovell

When the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* began publication in December 1983, Sol Grauer was among the first to endorse its message and contribute to its continuation. Sol died February 27, 1997, at age 73. Even though he was in poor health during his last few years he never lost interest in the class struggle nor his confidence in the ultimate victory of the working class against the evils of capitalism.

Sol was a dedicated socialist, having been educated in the Trotskyist youth movement of the 1930s. He joined the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL IV) shortly after the founding of the Socialist Workers Party in 1938 and became an agitator for the socialist cause, part of a small band of youthful enthusiasts in Brooklyn. Throughout his long life his enthusiasm never flagged, nor did his zeal for agitation.

This characteristic, often referred to by his family and friends as "Sol's fight," carried a belligerent edge. He never backed down in any confrontation because he was always sure of himself, sure that his cause was just and he was right.

Sol was the son of Jewish immigrants, and his political activism began in the Zionist youth movement, but was soon transferred to the socialist movement when he discovered the racist implications of Zionism. In the Socialist Workers Party he met his lifelong companion, Gladys Barker, an attractive Black woman, who was the SWP candidate for public office in New York in local elections. She and Sol moved to Newark, New Jersey, in 1952, there to raise a family and continue their political activism. Gladys taught art in the public school system for many years and often exhibited her work in the Newark art museum. Sol spent most of his life as an industrial worker, a machinist by trade.

Sol was drafted in World War II and was shipped around in the Pacific theater from New Guinea to the Philippines to Japan. Back in the U.S., he became a lifelong member of the Disabled American Veterans. And in Newark he was active in the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council and the Avon Avenue and Peshine Avenue Schools' Parent Teachers Associations. These were nearly all-Black groups. Black except for Sol. He often joked that there was no way he could pass himself off as a Black person. But he identified with the needs of the Black community, and his family was Black.

During the 1950s student sit-ins at the Woolworth stores' lunch counters in the South against Jim Crow segregation Sol was busy helping to organize support for the Southern civil rights movement. He was a leader in organizing the picket lines around the big Wool-

worth's on Market Street in Newark that grew over time from a small band to hundreds chanting, "End Jim Crow!"

In the early 1950s, Sol, like his SWP comrade James Kutcher (the legless veteran from Newark) was targeted by the McCarthy witch hunters. They got him fired from Curtis Wright Aeronautical for refusing to sign a loyalty oath. Considering his service in the U.S. Army to be a sufficient show of loyalty, Sol fought back and was rehired less than a year later. He subsequently took a job as organizer for Local 1199 Hospital Workers Union and in the 1960s led a successful strike at Newark's St. Michael's Hospital. Later he worked as retail sales manager for Alladin Sales in Elizabeth, New Jersey, from which he retired in 1984.

Newark Memorial Meeting

Sol's community activity was ceaseless. As a socialist agitator he was indefatigable. There was never any doubt as to where he stood on any political issue of the day. This is why there was a large attendance of an estimated 150 friends and political acquaintances and associates at the memorial organized by his family at the Menorah Chapels in Union, New Jersey, near his Newark home.

It was a celebration of his life, introduced and chaired by his cousin Rhoda Grauer, who described her gratitude for the greater under-

standing of world affairs taught by "uncle Sol." She introduced invited speakers who were political associates of Sol's, including Frank Lovell and Bernie Goodman, both former SWP members and present contributors to the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. Also speaking were a close family friend, Richard Commerieri, and a son-in-law Halim Suliman. The remarks by these speakers prompted several others to talk about the Sol Grauer they had come to know and what they remembered best and most appreciated about him. His four children and a granddaughter all described his patience as a parent and his gentle contribution to their education and childhood experiences.

All in attendance at the memorial were invited to the Grauer home in Newark for food and informal reminiscing. Large quantities of food were prepared and served by friends and neighbors. It was clear to all that Sol Grauer in his lifetime had earned the respect of a broad circle of friends in the Black community who cherish his memory. Richard Commerieri read a long poem dedicated to Sol. A few lines from it summarize Sol's attitude and deep antagonism toward the capitalist system:

I know what you are about
you lie
I know how crude
and how sophisticated you can be
the masks you wear.

In our hands is placed a power
greater than their hoarded gold,
Greater than the might of armies,
magnified a thousand fold.
We can bring to birth a new world
from the ashes of the old.
For the union makes us strong.



KONO PAKI
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HUCK/KONOPACKI LABOR CARTOONS

Labor Party Planned for Triangle Area

Second LP Chapter Being Formed in North Carolina

Reprinted from "Justice Speaks"

The following article, datelined Durham, North Carolina, appeared in the May 1997 issue of Justice Speaks, monthly paper of Black Workers for Justice. Subscriptions; P.O. Box 26774, Raleigh NC 27611; one year, \$10 (individual); \$15 (organizations).

On April 12, the Raleigh Local of the American Postal Workers Union [APWU] sponsored a meeting to discuss the formation of a Labor Party chapter in the Triangle area (Chapel Hill, Durham, and Raleigh). As a Labor Party affiliate the APWU local issued the call for the more than forty members in the area to come together and map out a plan for building a chapter in the area.

In addition to members of the APWU, there was union representation from AFSCME [American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees] Local 1194 (Durham city workers) and a laid-off Transit Workers Union member. They were joined by several anti-welfare reform and other activists, and a labor historian. A number of United Electrical Workers union members were unable to attend because of other commitments.

The members that attended expressed their desire to build a chapter and laid out a plan for seeking a charter, which included contacting all members in the area to get 20 members to sign on, as required by the Labor Party constitution. Some of those members live in the Eastern part

of the state and will probably want to form a chapter in the Rocky Mount or Greenville area.

Nonetheless, there are enough members in the Triangle area to meet the constitutional threshold. It is likely that in the future each of the three cities will have their own chapters. Currently, there is a chapter in the Piedmont area (Greensboro, Winston-Salem, and High Point).

Party members are cautious about rushing to build a chapter without a solid working class foundation. While there is a great deal of interest in the Labor Party and independent politics among various activists in the area, there was agreement that the initial and main thrust should be in recruiting working people from the unions, workers organizations, and community groups. They also felt that this emphasis will guarantee good representation from Black and Latino workers. A subcommittee was formed to work on an organizing statement and plan.

Main Focus: Recruitment, Fighting Welfare "Reform" and Privatization
There was no interest at this meeting in getting bogged down in structure issues at this point.

Everyone acknowledged that officers, meetings dues, etc., would have to be placed on the agenda soon, but recruiting and program are at the top of the agenda.

Due to local opposition to attacks on welfare and an understanding that these are attacks on the working class as a whole, people are interested in continuing to build the resistance to these attacks and on the working class, and to connect it to the campaigns for a living wage.

Members also want to give attention to privatization and the struggle to organize public service workers. A committee was established to develop a work plan to mobilize people around the Labor Party's major campaign, a 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which would guarantee every citizen a right to a job at a living wage — which under current economic conditions is seen to be \$10 an hour.

The next meeting is scheduled for Saturday, May 31, at the Tobacco Workers Union Hall in Durham. For further information, call the APWU at 833-6196. □

Europe Marches Against Unemployment and Job Insecurity

Continued from page 15

range of trade unions, and from the ecological, feminist, and anti-racist movements. The existence of such a grouping incarnated our radical critique of neo-liberal policies, and the desire for a better, more egalitarian world.

3. This was a Europe-wide coalition, with organized groups (some larger, some smaller) in each of the EU states and several other European countries.

In February 1997, more than 600 people participated in the Brussels assembly which launched the marches. Just 12 months after the Turin meeting, we had a committee or collective in each of the 15 member states, as well as Norway and Switzerland. The representative character of these groups varied enormously, as did their political weight and militant force. But the assembly confirmed that the weaker had consolidated themselves since the Turin meeting, while the stronger were making headway.

More than half the participants in the Brussels assembly were from groups that almost never dominate public meetings: homeless people, immigrants without legal documents, unemployed people, including many whose benefits had expired. The tone of the meeting was set by representatives of the striking Liverpool dockers, workers from the Belgian steel works Forges de Clabecq (threatened with closure) and a representative of the French "immigrants without papers" movement.

After discussing the participants' various forms of struggle and demands, the assembly began to elaborate common demands: a tax on top fortunes, equality for women workers, shortening the work week with no cut in pay, special measures for young people, and so on.

Participants agreed on the general structure of the campaign: 18 main marches, converging on Amsterdam, with local welcoming committees along the route, activities targeting job cen-

ters, schools, universities, and town halls, public meetings and debates, and festivals.

Marches Begin in Morocco and Bosnia

To challenge the Eurocentrist consensus, the first marches would start in Tangiers, Morocco, and Sarajevo, Bosnia. On 14 April, simultaneous actions were held across the European Union.

It was not easy to establish a common program, because of the very varied social contexts, militant backgrounds, political values and priorities of the participants. There was disagreement about the details, and even about the basic aims of the campaign. Slowly but surely, consensus was reached on three points. The Florence Appeal would be the basic text of the marches. Participants in the Brussels meeting argued that mention should also be made of our rejection of the neo-liberal monetarist convergence criteria within the Maastricht Treaty. They also stressed that the march committees

should launch a debate, within the march movement and in the wider labor movement, about what alternative we could propose to replace current EU policies.

Participants did not adopt the draft appeal proposed by the European secretariat (made up of the French, Belgian, and Dutch march committees). Perhaps it was too early to propose a text. Perhaps it was too late. Either way, participants were divided in their views on key passages, and some objected that the document had been prepared without wide enough consultation.

As a result, the Appeal was only recognized as a "contribution" to the debate, to which many of the concerns raised during the Brussels assembly were added.

Different Currents in the Movement

Some currents and individuals saw the marches mainly as a chance to transmit radical opinions to a wider audience. At march meetings, these currents stressed the need to be "as autonomous as possible" and to reserve a large space for "testimony." They often confused the right way to work within the march movement, and the political objectives of the movement in relation to the outside world. Other participants reflected the desire of a new generation of militants for clear socialist goals. These participants demanded greater precision in the platform of the movement. Not all were convinced that the marches did indeed represent a radically different social perspective, of rupture with the governments of the EU states, and the traditional leadership of the labor movement.

The stakes were high. The goal was to defeat, or damage, the Maastricht process and the EU

integration plans. There was a chance that the marches would provoke an echo among more important currents in the labor movement, as more and more people became critical of the EU's neo-liberal policies. To do so meant understanding why there had to be a contradiction with the EuroMarch collectives: the forces actively involved in the project were almost all from the most radical part of the social movement, broadly defined. But the amended "platform" documents were very broad and open. Indeed, these texts were aimed at all those who had previously supported or accepted the supposed necessity of the Maastricht process, while struggling to oppose the anti-social consequences of the treaty, and the policies it generated.

Dilemma of Social Democracy's Leaders

The leadership of the political and labor wings of social democracy face a terrible dilemma. If they continue to support the EU and monetary union, they will have to confront a growing sector of their rank and file. More and more people are realizing that the Maastricht convergence criteria mean neo-liberalism, and that the "stability pact" agreed to at the December 1996 Dublin summit means neo-liberalism forever. As European integration intensifies, it provokes more synchronized labor and social struggles than ever before. Particularly for the more active sectors of the labor movement, and particularly in the core countries: France, Germany, Belgium, and Holland.

Alternatively, trade union bosses and social democratic politicians can try to take charge of the "rumblings from below." But they can't do

so without challenging elements of their previous support for integration, Maastricht and the Euro. The longer they hesitate, the more discredited they will be.

Renault Plant Closure

In the final weeks of the pre-march preparations, organizers adopted a double strategy to boost the campaign. Firstly, they created a synergy with labor struggles, like the closure of the Clabecq forge and a Renault car plant in Belgium. At the same time, the EuroMarch collectives maintained an open-spirited attitude toward the broader labor movement. More and more sectors of workers are recognizing the disastrous effects of the Maastricht process, and beginning to draw conclusions about the consequences for labor strategy and demands. It is important to win these sectors over, not alienate them.

The Florence appeal is certainly inadequate as an ideological alternative to the European Union. But it is a perfect document for this kind of political campaign. The spearhead of this movement is, of course, the rejection of the Maastricht convergence criteria, and the demand that unemployment, and a cut in the work-week with no loss in pay, take center place in European policy debates. These demands can be the basis for a wide unity, a convergence of dissatisfied sectors of the labor and socialist movements. Wider sections of the labor movement will be watching the marches, but hesitating about committing themselves. That is the struggle to watch! □

Max Shachtman and Some Political Offspring

Continued from page 42

language of imperialism to describe the kind of "democracy" that existed in Healy's organizations. When Healy was done with Wohlforth, that is, when Wohlforth showed some reluctance in complying with Healy's mania for "security," Healy saw to it that Wohlforth was thrown away.

Did Healyism Equal Trotskyism?

For too many years — more than a decade — Wohlforth was a willing victim of Healy, following the "great man" even to the point of condemning himself. Finally, in 1974, during a midnight meeting of the Central Committee, under terrible pressure, he voted for his own removal as national secretary of the Workers League. It was, without doubt, the lowest point of his life.

In writing these memoirs two decades later, Wohlforth has not entirely broken his "mind-forg'd manacles." Wohlforth has always accepted the spurious idea that Healyism equals Trotskyism. What he once advocated, he now criticizes, but without fully freeing himself from the grip of Healy's thinking. Since Healy claimed to be a Leninist, Wohlforth's rejection

of his former mentor has led him to reject the Leninist tradition as well.

Now Wohlforth argues that the left must go "beyond Trotskyism, Communism, and Leninism" by returning to the values of the New Left and creating a more open socialist movement. "We can strengthen the radical democratic socialist idea both through consciously rejecting vanguardism and through assimilating the positive content of past revolutionary experience." Unfortunately for this argument, Lenin's concept of the vanguard party is no small part of "the positive content of past revolutionary experience."

Rejecting the Traditions of Lenin and Trotsky

The root error in Wohlforth's thinking is to identify Healy and the organization he created as a legitimate expression of Leninism. It never was. Wohlforth's memoir is full of evidence that Healy perverted the concept of democracy in his own organization and in his relations with his international followers. In a meeting organized to defend Joseph Hansen and George Novack, Fourth International leader Ernest Mandel publicly dismissed Healy, too lightly, as a "little

rascal." Healy, in fact, was a petty tyrant. His kind of "democratic centralism" had little to do with the traditions of Lenin and Trotsky. A better, healthier alternative had existed all along in the functioning of the SWP and in the mainstream of the Trotskyist movement, the Fourth International.

After Joseph Hansen's death in 1978, the SWP, under a new "leadership team" headed by Jack Barnes, gradually abandoned Trotskyism over the course of the 1980s. It replaced democratic centralism with the rule of a clique, the Barnes clique. For a more thorough discussion of these questions, see two volumes in the series "In Defense of American Trotskyism" published by the Fourth International Tendency: *The Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party, 1979-1983*, edited by Sarah Lovell; and *Revolutionary Principles and Working-Class Democracy*, edited by Paul Le Blanc [New York, 1992]; also see *Trotskyism in the United States*, edited by George Breitman, Paul Le Blanc, and Alan Wald (a book discussed elsewhere in this issue of *BIDOM*).

Not to Weep or Laugh, But Understand

The Prophet's Children was written in middle age, and it is driven by an effort to take stock, reflect, and make sense of the turmoil of a tumultuous political life. Its tone is wistful, candid, and sincere. The book shows the eager honesty of a patient who has decided to cooperate with his therapist. "Neither to weep nor to laugh, but to understand," the motto Trotsky adopted from Spinoza, seems to be its guiding principle. That in itself is a notable achievement, as Wohlforth, who has suffered more hard knocks than many in the radical movement, has ample scores to settle and abundant cause to settle them.

Yet his recollections are motivated by a sense of fairness and forgiveness. Wohlforth displays a largeness of spirit, a generosity of character, that can only be termed admirable. Most autobiographies and memoirs, when recalling former factional foes, are rarely animated by the sympathetic understanding that Wohlforth has achieved. "As I thought back over my experiences with Healy, I felt strongly that he deserved some credit as well as blame" — this sentiment sums up the spirit in which the memoir is written. That urge to fairness helps to give the book its value.

Wohlforth rightly notes that the life stories of the Trotskyist rebels have been "almost totally neglected by historians of the left, which has resulted in a distortion of the history of the

American left." Readers may disagree with their conclusions, but Peter Drucker's and Tim Wohlforth's books are a part of the effort to create that critical history of Trotskyism which is needed for the next generation of revolutionaries.

These books, a political biography and autobiography, contribute to the understanding of 20th-century revolutionary history and, more specifically, the history of North American Trotskyism. They join the small but worthy collection of recent memoirs by Ben Stone, Michael Steven Smith, and the scholarly research of George Breitman, Paul Le Blanc, and Alan Wald. □

From the Managing Editors: Detroit to Kinshasa, the Fight Against Corporate Power

Continued from Inside Front Cover International On-the-Scene Reports

This firsthand information underlines once again why it is indispensable to have an international organization of revolutionary socialists, with coordination and communication around major world events.

This truth is similarly illustrated by the reports we print here by Barry Weisleder and Dan La Botz on May Day events and the general situation in our NAFTA neighbors, Canada and Mexico; by Fourth International leader François Vercammen on marches against unemployment in Europe; by the Fourth Internationalist publication *October Review* on the situation in Hong Kong; and by Michael Livingston on Indonesia. (An article about upcoming elections in Indonesia in the May-June *ATC* makes a good companion piece to Livingston's article.)

The press release we print here by Janine Jackson on the global solidarity demonstration in January in support of the Liverpool dock workers is a further example of the kind of action needed by workers everywhere. So are the reports on plans by the South Korean labor unions, which mobilized massively earlier this year against unjust labor laws, to form their own union-based political party. Readers are urged to respond to the call for protest messages over the arrest of revolutionary socialists in Sri Lanka. We hope to have more on this situation in our next issue.

Likewise, in our next issue we expect to have coverage on the recent big strikes and other fight-back actions by workers in Russia — together with a review/essay by Michael Steven Smith on the contrast between two lives: that of Nadezhda Joffe, daughter of a leading Russian revolutionary suppressed by the Stalin regime; and that of Victor Rabinowitz, an American lawyer whose positive contributions to the defense of civil rights are dimmed by his years of uncritical acceptance of the dogmas of the Stalinized Communist Party.

Be sure to subscribe, so you don't miss an issue.

Democratic Republic of Congo Proclaimed

At press time, the victory of the rebel forces and the declaration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo dominates the news. In this issue we have tried to present some of the historical background to this revolution of today in an article completed May 7. But some additional comments are called for in light of the victory on May 17.

Big Stakes for U.S. Workers in the Congo Revolution

It's regularly admitted now in the big business press that bipartisan, corporate Washington, through CIA "covert action," put Mobutu in power in 1960 and supported his dictatorship from then on. One former State Department official, for example, said it was a "hare-brained scheme" that the CIA engineered the assassination of Congolese independence leader Patrice Lumumba after Mobutu's CIA-backed coup of September 1960. Of course it's easy to try to disassociate now from past crimes by calling them "hare-brained schemes," but for decades Mobutu's dictatorship and assassination machine accomplished exactly what U.S. and European corporate boardrooms wanted. Mobutu kept the Congo safe for Western corporations.

Now that a genuine popular revolution is taking place, now that the Western-trained, Western-funded armed forces of the Mobutu dictatorship, and the other leftover machinery of state from colonial times, may be dismantled, now that the armed power of the masses may be asserted to meet the needs of Congolese workers and peasants rather than serve the interests of European and American capitalists, Washington is worried.

"U.S. Influence Over Zaïre Now Appears to Be Limited," said one *New York Times* head-

line. Another, next to a photo of Laurent Kabila, said: "Rebel Leader and His Plan Puzzle West."

But if "the West" doesn't have control over a military dictatorship on the ground, it still has influence — and plenty of it.

Here's how a former U.S. assistant secretary of state for African affairs (1981-89), now a professor at Georgetown University, described the leverage that still remains in the hands of the global corporate crowd:

"...we and our friends control the keys to the clubs and the treasuries that Kabila will need to tap if he is going to rebuild the country — the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, our development funds and those of the Europeans."

"So we have a tremendous amount of influence if we choose to use it..." (Chester Crocker, quoted in the *New York Times*, May 17).

Already they were dangling the carrot, and threatening the stick if Kabila did not "behave." There were reports that Washington had offered Kabila's new rebel government \$10 million in aid, "with more promised by European nations." And officials in Washington "did not deny that eventually the aid would be much larger than that — 'provided...that he [Kabila] behaves.'"

International support for the Congolese people, especially from the labor movement, will be critical to countering this corporate squeeze play.

Huge amounts of capital are controlled by the banks and corporations of North America and Western Europe and their governments. Essentially this is surplus value that was created by the effort and toil of working people all over the globe during the past several centuries and more.

The tiny minority of ruling rich who dispose of these huge amounts of capital want to use it as a chain to further enslave working people, whether in Africa, Europe, America, or Asia. If we can help the Congolese and Rwandan peoples break this chain of domination by global capital, we help break the chain of corporate power over our own lives. □

An Appeal to All Readers and Supporters of Bulletin IDOM

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Action! Motown'97

No More PATCO's!

Demonstrate!

June 20-21 in Detroit!



The AFL-CIO has called a National Mobilization in Detroit for Friday and Saturday, June 20-21, 1997. Currently planned activities include: a teach-in Friday evening, actions Saturday morning, a mass march and rally Saturday afternoon, and ecumenical services Sunday. This is the time for the entire labor movement and all of its allies to say in one loud, united voice:

- No to Union Busting!
- No to Permanent replacements!
- Solidarity with Detroit's locked-out newspaper workers —
All workers to be returned with a fair Union contract!

We believe we must act now because the future of the labor movement will be critically affected by the outcome of this struggle. After all, if multi-billion dollar corporations like Gannett and Knight-Ridder can break unions in a labor stronghold like Detroit, what union anywhere is safe from similar union-busting?

Make "Action! Motown '97" a massive success!

Help organize for this historic demonstration.

Detroit is a Union Town — Let's keep it that way!

June Mobilization Committee

A Committee of ACOSS, an organization of Locked-Out Detroit Newspaper Workers and Supporters

5750-15 Mile Rd. — Box 242

Sterling Heights, MI 48310-5777

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