

## Teamster Victory!

### Meaning of the UPS Strike for All of Labor

### Also, Carey vs. Old Guard: Struggle inside the Teamsters Continues



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# From the Managing Editors

**A**pologies to our readers. Because of logistical difficulties we were much delayed in bringing out this issue. We are calling it September-October. Unfortunately, this means no July-August issue this year. All subscriptions will be extended for an additional issue on the other end to make up for the omission.

## UPS Strike Marks a Watershed

This issue focuses on the deepening radicalization in the U.S. working class, dramatized above all by the UPS strike, as discussed here by Charles Walker in articles written both on the eve of the strike and after it was won.

Nearly all observers agree that this was a bellwether strike, indicating the increasing willingness of American workers to fight back against the relentless corporate squeeze of the past 2-3 decades.

Teamsters President Ron Carey said, after winning the strike, that this was labor's long-delayed answer to PATCO (referring to Ronald Reagan's breaking of the air traffic controllers union). "After 15 years of taking it on the chin," he said, "working families are telling big corporations that we will fight for the American dream. This is not just a Teamster victory — this is a victory for all working people."

As was stated on the front page of the *St. Paul Union Advocate* ("since 1897 Minnesota's leading labor newspaper"), "Solidarity from workers across the country helped the Teamsters win their strike." This was especially evident in the Day of Action for Good Jobs that Ron Carey called for August 21. Virtually every union in the country, and millions of non-union workers, supported the Teamsters because their leadership made the fight for more full-time jobs with good wages and benefits the central issue. (Polls showed public opinion favoring the workers against the company by 2-1.)

## More Affiliations to Labor Party

Another sign of the deepening radicalization among workers is growth of the Labor Party, which continues to consolidate itself and acquire new supporters. In this issue we carry material from the Kansas City and Metro Pittsburgh chapters of the party, and expect to have more from other chapters in the next issue (for example, on the founding of a statewide Labor Party chapter in Ohio scheduled for September).

The September issue of *Labor Party Press* reports that the Midwest region of UNITE! (Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees) voted to affiliate to the Labor Party. Several nationwide unions have also voted to formally "affiliate," that is, to contribute a regular annual sum to the Labor Party. These include the American Federation of Government Employees (acting at its convention in late August), and earlier the United Mine Workers and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees. Both AFGE and the California Nurses Association have run articles about the LP in their union publications, including coupons for members to clip and send in to join the party. We reprint the CNA article for our readers' information.

The next convention of the Labor Party has been called for October 1998. First choice for a convention site is Chicago, second choice Pittsburgh.

## Discussion of Labor Party Issues in *BIDOM*

During the coming year before the convention there will of course be continuing discussion in our magazine of issues facing the Labor Party. One of those issues — and not necessarily the most important, contrary to the beliefs of some — is electoral policy. In our previous issue we carried a number of articles addressing such issues. This discussion is continuing. We have received replies from Frank Wright and Ben Stone,

*Continued on page 63*

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# Fifteen Days in August: The UPS Strike

by Charles Walker

The men in suits are making all the loot.  
— UPS part-timer on the picket line

Early on, when people asked me how long the United Parcel Service (UPS) strike was likely to last, I replied that maybe I wasn't the one to ask, since I was surprised that the Teamsters were forced to strike in the first place.

The company's so-called "last, best, and final offer" of July 30 resembled a wish list for the company, not an end-game negotiating stance. For example, UPS sought the right to: convert virtually all full-time jobs to part-time; expand without limit the use of subcontractors; take control of pension moneys; impose managed care medical plans; eliminate family medical coverage for all newly hired part-timers; and force UPS workers to scab on other union workers. At least four of these outrageous demands were strike issues and, if accepted, would have left the union enfeebled, transferring hundreds of millions of dollars from wages to profits.

What wasn't clear to me, as late as the week before the strike started, was that UPS was ready to gamble that it could force some, if not all, of these major concessions on the Teamsters.

On the other hand, the Teamsters pre-strike "comprehensive offer" of August 2 seemed modest and realistic, relative to the company's ability to pay. Indeed, in all major respects except for the length of the contract, the union's August 2 position became the terms of the August 18 settlement that ended the strike.

## UPS Forces a Strike

After Carey made his offer the ball was in the company's court to make a counter offer. UPS refused, digging in its heels. Clearly the corporation had to know what everybody else knew, that Carey could not recommend to the members the company's take-it-or-leave-it position of July 30. But if Carey failed to strike, UPS could have declared an impasse and then legally imposed its "last, best, and final offer" on the work force, like the Detroit newspaper owners did to their work force two years ago.

UPS, then, must bear responsibility for forcing the strike. But strike or no strike, UPS calculated it could beat Carey, much as Carey's old-guard union opponents thought they could beat him. Perhaps if

UPS had paid attention when Carey out-generated the James Hoffa Junior forces at last year's Teamsters convention, they would not have taken so hard a line. But UPS representatives, along with all company executives, were barred by Carey from the Philadelphia convention, overturning an old guard practice of inviting its corporate collaborators to witness the officialdom's celebration of the good life, often in the neon wilds of Las Vegas.

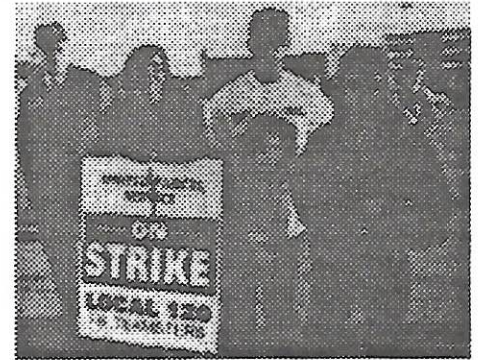
## Roots of UPS Miscalculation

UPS's miscalculation of the union's fighting strength was rooted primarily in two beliefs. One, they believed that Carey could not count on the Teamster officialdom to back him, since many old guard officials had failed to back him in 1994, when he defied a court injunction and called a one-day safety strike against UPS. Two, they believed UPS workers had swallowed the company's paternalistic pablum about workers, supervisors, and executives all being one happy, productive family. The *Wall Street Journal* interviewed UPS executives and reported that those executives "misjudged the strength of rank-and-file allegiance to Mr. Carey and the union."

## How the Union Built Its Strength

In contrast, months before the negotiations began, the Teamsters asked all UPS workers what issues should be taken up at the bargaining table. When 90 percent of polled members said that full-time jobs were their chief concern, the Teamsters leadership said that would be its number one demand. And Carey stuck to it.

Then, with the union behind the members' demands, Carey worked to get the members organized behind the union. He established a full-time nationwide staff to kick-start the union's contract campaign. Many of the staff members had recently been rank-and-file UPS activists, and some were volunteer organizers with the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). While working with local officials wherever possible, the campaign staff built rank and file on-the-job networks that, in most areas, kept members up to date during the five months of bargaining that preceded the strike. They also built rank-and-file actions to back up the union at the bargaining table.



The campaign staff's success was indicated in mid-July when full-time and part-time UPS Teamsters voted by 95 percent to authorize a strike.

Make no mistake. UPS was paying attention to what Carey was doing, but they refused to believe their own eyes. This is confirmed by the *Wall Street Journal* issue that reported on UPS executives making fun of the organizing efforts: "They're the Teamsters trying to stage a Broadway production of 'Les Miserables' and what we're seeing is a high-school production of 'Annie Get Your Gun.'" But as the newspaper wryly noted, "Look who's laughing now."

To boil it down, Carey beat UPS because the union's demands were set by the ranks, he involved the membership in the fight, and he and the members presented a united front to the corporation.

While Carey rightly credits the solidarity of the 185,000 strikers for winning the strike, it took Carey's militant leadership to ensure that the strikers' strength was not shortchanged at the bargaining table. A university professor and UPS paid consultant, who traveled the talk-show circuit during the strike, whined about Carey's toughness: "Mr. Carey was not playing the win-win partnership game of the contemporary style of conflict management. He defied the bargaining partnership approach championed by progressive labor leaders like Douglas A. Fraser of the Auto Workers, Lynn R. Williams of the Steel Workers and Jack Sheinkman of the Textile Workers. Sadly, Mr. Carey has fought all worker-management cooperative initiatives."

## Equal Pay for Equal Work

In 1998, Carey must deal with the freight industry for the second time since taking office in 1991. In 1994, Teamsters struck

## An Example of Broad Union and Public Support

### For the UPS Strikers: National Education Association Statement

*The following statement was issued on August 19 by Bob Chase, president of the National Education Association. The NEA, with more than 2 million members, is the largest labor organization in the U.S. Although not part of the AFL-CIO, the NEA is discussing possible merger with the American Federation of Teachers, which is an AFL-CIO affiliate and has a membership of around one million. We reprint this statement as an indication of the broad resonance of the central issue of the UPS strike among American workers in all trades — the question of part-time jobs that don't provide the income necessary for a full-time life*

We at the National Education Association pledge our support to the UPS employees and their fight for fair wages and benefits. UPS employees are taking a courageous stand on behalf of America's working families, and education workers stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them. Education employees across this country face a similar economic injustice. The outcome of this strike will decide whether the march toward a part-time economy continues and will determine the future of countless Americans.

The central issue involved in this strike — part-time work — is one that affects children, the quality of education, and our own members. As educators, we know the result of part-time work: parents without a living wage and with few or no health benefits for their children. Often, workers who are parents must take two or three jobs to compensate. The result is a more unstable and transient work force and a weakened community — one where parents spend less time with their children and are less likely to get involved in schools.

We've seen the impact of a part-time economy on our own members in higher education and in education support work. Part-time instructors at colleges and universities are often paid miserably, receiving

no benefits while carrying enormous course loads. They tend to burn out quickly and move from school to school, leaving college students without a reliable faculty for guidance and mentoring.

For school support staff, part-time work means working full-time in several jobs — often with no benefits.

For teachers in poor and inner city school districts, battling to combat apathy and cynicism in their children, the absence of full-time jobs sends a dangerous message to youngsters who already feel disenfranchised and who do not see any options for the future.

UPS employees have full-time children, they have full-time mortgages, and they have full-time bills — they need full-time jobs to support them. We call on UPS to negotiate fairly and settle this dispute for children and their parents.

Also, we need to continue daily and hourly and by the minute to send letters of support for the Teamsters to UPS's customer service address. We cannot let up! We need to send at least one e-mail daily in support of our union brothers and sisters.

The e-mail address is: [customer.service@ups.com](mailto:customer.service@ups.com). □

the freight industry for the first time in 18 years. If the 22 freight corporations under the Teamsters nationwide Master Freight Agreement thought that the 1994 strike was a fluke, the UPS strike should set them straight.

While the union's attention must turn to the next freight fight, UPS workers, especially the part-timers, are keenly aware that their struggle for a safe job, a secure job, and a living wage is far from over. The new contract raises the starting wage, which since 1982 had been frozen at \$8 per hour, to only \$8.50 — with four "progression raises" stretched out over four years. The newly won increases of \$4.10

per hour over five years do not apply to part-timers hired after the strike's end. Since UPS's extremely high turnover rate is expected to continue, only a small fraction of the newly hired part-time work force will get much above \$10 per hour during the next five years.

So by the new contract's end, tens of thousands of UPS part-timers will still be working at the lower end of the company's multi-tier wage scale. Involuntary part-time work, with pay that doesn't support a "full-time life," is a gross injustice in and of itself. But compounding the misery of that injustice is UPS's rejection of the concept of *equal pay for equal work*.

Some UPS workers wear T-shirts with a legend that reads, "UPS Runs the Tightest Slave Ship in the Shipping Business." What they mean is that UPS is a sweatshop programmed and frequently reprogrammed by so-called industrial engineers. Under the new agreement the company must negotiate worker protections for future increases in the weight of packages and cargo. But with that exception the settlement is silent on working conditions that cry out for radical revamping, as evidenced by a UPS injury rate two and a half times the industry norm.

The *New York Times* reported in 1995 that individual UPS drivers on average delivered 34 percent more packages per day than Fed Ex drivers. An inside worker on the package-sorting belts may be required to handle up to 1,200 packages an hour (20 per minute). The company says these packages average 10 pounds each. That's six tons an hour for \$8.50-\$10 an hour. No wonder that at least 10,000 back injuries were reported by UPS in 1996, contributing to the extremely high rate of turnover.

### Solidarity Was Key to Victory

Unless I'm mistaken, the strike is likely to be discussed, analyzed, and drawn upon as a source of strategic and tactical lessons for a long time, just as the P-9 strike of 1985 and the Pittston strike of 1989 continue to be. Therefore, I'm resisting the urge to touch on all the interesting aspects of the strike. Since there will be other opportunities to add my two cents to the discussion, I'll just close with this perspective: the workers' 15-day picket-line confrontation with UPS was primarily rooted in the corporation's successful drive (with the help of old guard officials) to convert their once full-time work force into today's largely part-time one. While Carey adroitly out-generated UPS, perhaps winning more than the union's firepower entitled him to get, he no doubt understands better than anyone that the settlement is no more than a truce that may end before the ink is dry on the new agreement.

Despite the labor bureaucracy's mantra that strikes don't work in this so-called new age of "globalization and the end of work," the plain fact is that 185,000 workers' unflinching support for the strike paralyzed UPS from the first day. In the end, the strike confirmed a well-settled truth: Solidarity is the road to a triumphant future for all workers. □

August 22, 1997

# Beginning of UPS Strike

by Charles Walker

*This article, though finished the day the strike began, provides useful background information.*

Their offer is another wolf in sheep's clothing... when you read the fine print the protections our members need are not there.

— Teamsters President Ron Carey

As of Monday, August 4, the Teamsters were battling United Parcel Service (UPS) on coast-to-coast picket lines. UPS gave the union a take-it-or-leave-it offer on July 30, the day before the contract's expiration. The next morning, the company again thumbed its nose at the union, refusing to return to the bargaining table. Then, just minutes before the contract expired, UPS did a turnaround, agreeing to return to negotiations. So on Friday, August 1, UPS Teamsters stayed on the job.

Negotiations continued through the weekend, but when UPS showed it wouldn't budge on the key issues, the union leadership set the strike deadline for Sunday midnight.

Some union insiders speculate that UPS is counting on government intervention to break the strike, despite the AFL-CIO's junior partnership with the Democratic Party. "UPS went to the White House July 22 to whine to Clinton for help," according to a local union newsletter. (The media reported that on the first day of the strike Clinton said he did not plan to intervene "at this time," but all sorts of business organizations, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers, kept pressuring Clinton to intervene.) Pro-company laws allow a U.S. president to stop a strike under certain conditions. Earlier this year Clinton used the rail labor law and the pretext of a "national emergency" pretext to end the American Airlines pilots strike.

In mid-July, after months of fruitless contract talks, rank-and-file Teamsters at UPS — by a 95 percent margin — authorized their international union to call a strike. Still, UPS negotiators dug in their heels, demanded union concessions, and refused to even talk about the union's issues. So a week later, Teamsters President Ron Carey notified 206 local unions to begin preparations for a work stoppage. Pilots at UPS, represented by the Independent Pilots Association, gave a written pledge to cease all deliveries if the Teamsters hit the bricks.

## The Fight for Full-Time Jobs

The conflict is primarily rooted in the corporation's successful drive to convert its formerly full-time work force into today's largely part-time work force with two-tier wages and few, if any, benefits for part-timers on the lower tier. The part-timers are the major source of UPS's rising super-profits, which soared to \$1.15 billion in 1996 — an all-time company record.

No wonder UPS told Carey: "We're married to part-time work," after the Teamsters demanded that base wage scales for all part-timers be raised and that thousands of part-timers be given far greater opportunity for full-time work. (The Teamsters want 10,000 new full-time jobs over the five-year contract; UPS is offering only 1,000, fewer than were created during the past five years.) "We can't let big companies," says Carey, "shift good jobs into lousy ones with low pay."

Although the Teamsters demands would not eliminate the two-tier wage scales, they would shift tens of millions of dollars from profits to wages, at the same time providing the dignity of a full-time job to thousands of part-timers and the hope of full-time work for the rest.

## Part-Time Jobs: An Old Guard Legacy

In the 1980s the Teamsters old guard gave UPS a green light to hire a part-time work force. Since then, full-timers' wages have increased to \$20 an hour, while for 15 years part-timers' wages have been virtually frozen at \$8-10 an hour. Today the cheaper part-timers make up 60 percent of the 185,000-strong work force, up from 50 percent four years ago.

At the bargaining table, UPS says it wants to change still more full-time jobs into part-time ones, as well as eliminate many full-time union jobs by having its highway drivers become self-employed subcontractors not subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The company's measly wage offer would increase the hourly rate by \$1.50 an hour over five years for full-timers and part-timers with four years seniority. All others would get an even stingier 75 cents an hour — except new hires, whose rate would remain frozen at the 1982 scale of \$8.00 an hour. Only 25 percent of the

part-timers would qualify for a raise — because of the extremely high employee turnover. UPS has an injury rate two-and-a-half times higher than the industry average.

## UPS Wants Vote on Its "Final Offer"

The company wants the union to submit UPS's so-called "final offer" to the members for a vote. UPS hopes that a majority of the members might be blinded by a signing bonus of \$3,060 for full-timers and \$1530 for part-timers.

Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), a militant rank-and-file caucus allied with Carey, says that UPS workers will not be bought off by the so-called bonus. "This is no time to compromise away our goals. It took major strikes to build our unions and win us wages, benefits and dignity. Our generation has benefited because those before us had the courage and foresight to draw the line. Now its our turn."

Under the union's constitution the members have a right to vote by secret ballot on any national contract, but a company cannot dictate when to take a vote.

## A Strike That Will Set a Pattern

The Teamsters is the nation's largest, most strategically placed, private-sector union. UPS with a \$20 billion yearly volume dominates the national small-package delivery market. So any settlement will impact the nation's economy. For example, the outcome of the conflict with UPS is likely to set the stage for next year's negotiations for the national Master Freight Contract. In turn, the national UPS contract and the national freight contract are the pacesetters for the nation's freight and warehouse industries.

Further, any settlement with UPS is sure to provide ammunition in the internal political fight that has marked the union since before Carey won the Teamsters presidency in 1991. If a new contract fails to meaningfully increase full-time work opportunities and lift the scanty income for the part-timers — who include many minority and women workers — Carey's old-guard opposition is sure to hold him solely responsible. A poor settlement will tend to demoralize not only UPS workers but also freight workers, who, with their next contract in mind, will measure the union's power and resolve by the UPS contract terms Carey ultimately recommends.

A poor settlement, then, would tend to open the door to the return of the old guard to the international union in the 2001 elections, if not before. And at stake is TDU's goal of continuing the democratic reform

## Teamsters "Draw a Line in the Sand" on Two-Tier Wages

### New York Times on "Battle of Titans" — Teamsters vs. UPS

In a front-page article August 5 the *New York Times* surprisingly gave its readers a fairly accurate account of the central issues and overall significance of the UPS strike. It called the strike a battle between "2 Titans." A subhead added: "Resurgent Labor Takes On 'New Economy' In Fight Over Part-Time Workers at U.P.S."

As the *Times's* labor reporter Steven Greenhouse put it, the strike "stems from the inevitable clash of two powerful forces in the nation's economy: the revitalized labor movement's opposition to the use of part-time workers and corporate America's insistence that it needs such workers to remain competitive."

#### Biggest Strike in the '90s

Greenhouse stated that the strike involved the largest number of workers of any strike in this decade.

"Even before the 185,000 drivers, loaders and sorters walked out," he reported, "the teamsters' union drew a line in the sand over the issue of part-time workers."

Greenhouse explained that "of the 46,000 unionized jobs that the company...created since 1993, only 8,000 have been full-time. The part-time jobs pay \$9 an hour, on average after two years, while full-time jobs pay \$19.95 an hour."

Greenhouse acknowledged that the U.S. corporate economy and UPS profits have been booming, but didn't mention that UPS profits last year were over \$1 billion. These profits were the result of paying less than half price for more than half of UPS's labor.

#### Hidden Downsizing

Greenhouse quoted a University of California professor: "Over the last five years, part-time work has shifted from being an occasional strategy to being a way of life at U.P.S....That's why there is the anger right

now. For U.P.S. workers it represents, in effect, a hidden downsizing."

"There are high stakes, indeed, in this clash," Greenhouse wrote. "The showdown pits one of the most powerful unions against the nation's largest shipping company."

Greenhouse acknowledged that this is "one of the *rare instances* [emphasis added] when a union has walked out over a two-tier wage system, a system that many unions regret having accepted in the 1980's." The *Times* article did not explain that Carey's old guard predecessors were the ones who had accepted the two-tier system.

#### High Stakes

Greenhouse correctly described the high stakes in this battle:

If management retains the right to create as many lower-paid part-time jobs as it wants, employers everywhere are most likely to feel emboldened to rely on part-timers and other cost-cutting techniques that unions detest.

If the teamsters limit the use of part-timers at United Parcel, that could not only encourage other unions to confront managements over part-timers, but also enable the labor movement to trumpet a little louder that it is alive and kicking.

The *Times* quoted an economist from the Economic Policy Institute, who spelled it out this way:

You have a company that is a textbook example of the new economy, a service sector industry that's highly computerized, that's based on information, organization and smarts. If this kind of company cannot offer workers middle-class wages, if it pays \$8.50 an hour instead of \$20, that's a bad omen for the future.

#### The Main Issue for Union Members

The *Times* article admitted that this is the main issue for the union members, not something manufactured by the union leadership.

(Later in the article Greenhouse quoted "some company executives" who were "speaking privately" so as not to be identified. These "company executives" suggested that Carey called the strike "to divert attention from a [fund-raising] scandal" connected with last fall's election of the union's top officers. See Charles Walker's article on that question on page 00.)

Greenhouse reports: "When the union polled United Parcel workers about the issues to focus on, the workers — three-fifths part-timers — not surprisingly told their bargainers to concentrate on turning more part-time jobs into full-time ones."

#### Throwaway Jobs

Greenhouse quoted Teamsters spokesman Rand Wilson:

U.P.S. wants throwaway jobs that no one can live on. It's time that somebody stood up to them and said: "This is not the right direction for America. This is not the right direction for our communities and for working families."

Our workers tell us their No. 1 priority is full-time jobs. People are cobbling together part-time jobs to make a living. They're working at U.P.S. and McDonald's. That's what they have to do to earn enough to support a family.

Greenhouse reported: "The union...has made clear for a year that the talks would focus on part-time work."

And he acknowledged: "For Mr. Carey, a longtime United Parcel driver in New York City, the dispute is...an opportunity to show the world that this is a new teamsters' union, one that is *willing to go toe to toe with employers, rather than make backroom deals with them.*" (Emphasis added.)

No wonder "some company executives" want to make an issue of the Teamsters election. They'd like to see the old guard back in office (behind their front man, Hoffa Junior) to make those backroom deals and abandon more union members to those lower-paid, part-time throwaway jobs.

of the union. In short, the UPS settlement could lead to the democratic reformers' greatest setback or their largest advance ever.

#### First Full National Strike Against UPS

There's never been a fully national strike against UPS. On February 7, 1994, Carey called a national health and safety strike after UPS was caught forcing individual workers to lift packages weighing more than 70 pounds and up to 150 pounds, a clear contract violation. However, a ma-

majority of rank-and-filers were told to keep working. They were kept from striking by local and regional Teamster officials embittered by their earlier stunning defeat by Carey in the Teamsters first-ever rank-and-file election of international union officers.

Now once again Carey faces the prospect of having to take on UPS and at the same time battle a mutinous section of union officials. Field reports by Teamsters international representatives state that some local unions were not organizing

work-site distribution of international union flyers informing the members of the status of the negotiations and were failing to organize rallies to put force behind the union's demands.

In response, Carey reminded the local officers of his constitutional power to put in trusteeship those local unions that refuse "to fully implement and carry forward the policy and plans of the Teamsters National Negotiating Committee with an emphasis on membership involvement and participation."

## Strike Prospects

A strike would cost the union over \$10 million a week because it would pay each striker \$55 a week in strike benefits that commence at the end of a strike's second week. The Teamsters treasury is hurting, partly because Carey has sanctioned so many strikes since he took office and partly because the old guard took \$34 million from the strike fund before Carey came into office.

UPS may have figured that Carey would not endanger the union's finances by taking the company on. But when UPS asked for a contract extension in late July, Carey turned down the extension request. Then for good measure, he rejected a UPS request for a ten-day notice before striking.

If Carey can hold off the federal government and the old-guard opposition, the relationship of forces need not compel the union to accept a status quo agreement, let alone a concessionary settlement. Even a partial strike can easily hurt UPS. The company moves most of its cargo through huge distribution hubs, many of them located at big city airports where union consciousness tends to be higher than at the rural centers or in the so-called right-to-work states.

Just striking some of the major hubs would disrupt the minutely choreographed UPS network and drain the corporation of millions of dollars of income each hour of each day. And Carey can count on the enthusiastic support of a work force driven by supervisors to lift,

load, and deliver 12 million packages every day more vigorously than the workday before. As Michelle Johnston, 40, a Denver part-time worker, told the press, "They don't really think about working men and women. They're more concerned about profits."

IBT Vice President John Riojas, a reformer and former UPS driver, who is also a member of the national bargaining committee, says that UPS has "to understand that we're not going to settle for another 'OK' contract. I want this to be the year UPS Teamsters remember as a turning point for our union and our future." Only because the ranks have gained the right to directly elect their highest leadership are Riojas's militant sentiments influencing the union's bargaining policy. □

August 4, 1997

# Teamsters, Strikes, and Democracy

by Charles Walker

The [UPS] strike appears to fly in the face of conventional wisdom that job insecurity is keeping workers from demanding more money and benefits.

— *Wall Street Journal*

**D**uring the UPS strike I visited the picket lines of six locals. Teamster picket lines were made up mainly of workers under thirty. The strikers, for the most part, had never been on a picket line, never followed a truck, never shouted at a scab. But it seemed to me that they're very much like their grandparents and great-grandparents who turned the labor movement around in the 1930s.

When I talked with UPS strikers, or read strikers' comments as reported in the press, or watched scenes on TV of strikers clashing with scabs and cops, I was repeatedly reminded of how effective the Teamsters bureaucracy, along with the larger labor bureaucracy, has been in keeping a tight lid on the class struggle in this country. Mind you, I'm not saying the labor bureaucracy has abolished the class struggle. I'm just acknowledging how well it's done keeping it a one-sided class war that favors the bosses.

I want to share with you a couple of examples from the Teamsters' history that illustrate what the Teamsters bureaucrats had been up to for far too long.

## Bureaucrats Squashed Freight Strikes

In 1976, the Teamsters went out on the first national freight strike ever. You

might be surprised to know that the 1976 strike was not called by Jimmy Hoffa. It was called, or maybe I should say it was permitted, by Hoffa's successor, Frank Fitzsimmons. Fitzsimmons halted the strike after only two days. Wildcatters in Chicago and Los Angeles and a number of cities in between defied Fitzsimmons for several days, but finally they had to put down their picket signs.

During the years that followed, the freight drivers wanted to strike again — or more precisely, a majority of them voted down the "last, best, and final" offers from the trucking bosses. But they were undemocratically forced to stay on the job by the autocratic regimes at the head of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), who were supported by like-minded bureaucratic brethren in charge of the local unions.

UPS Teamsters didn't fare any better when, in 1987, then-President Jackie Presser recommended a new contract to the UPS workers. They voted it down by a 54 percent majority. But like the freight drivers, they were compelled to stay on the job for the duration of the bureaucratically imposed contract.

## TDU Won Part-Timers Right to Vote

The core issue in this year's UPS strike was the plight of the part-time worker versus the company. Unfortunately, the part-time workers have also had their democratic rights trampled on by the union. Until the late 1970s Teamsters who were

classified as part-timers were not allowed to vote on their contracts, no matter the length of their seniority. One of the earliest and greatest accomplishments of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) was taking on the bureaucracy and winning the right to vote for part-timers.

## Union Democracy and Election of Carey

National strikes are now on the Teamsters agenda. That's because of the rebirth of democracy in the union and because Carey controls the union's master contract negotiations, not the local or regional officials. Three years ago, in 1994, the Teamsters struck the national freight industry for 24 days. The same year they had a safety and health strike at UPS. In 1995, the Teamsters fought a successful 32-day national strike against Ryder Corp., then the nation's largest carhaul company, which controlled one-third of the market. Now we've witnessed the first truly national strike against UPS, which boasts of yearly profits exceeding \$1 billion.

Farrell Dobbs, the socialist who led great Teamsters organizing drives and strikes during the 1930s, wrote in 1975 of the need "to remove the IBT bureaucrats from office, establish democratic procedures within the union, and make it a fitting instrument to serve the workers' cause."

The UPS strike is just the latest, and not the last, confirmation of Dobbs's belief that the rank and file's militancy would flourish given a democratic leadership. □

August 24, 1997

# Government Election Officer Upsets Teamsters Election

by Charles Walker

"We're rolling up our sleeves to turn back the old guard for the third time in six years."

— Carey campaigner

Three days after the Teamsters rank and file wrested a strike victory from UPS, the court-appointed federal election officer, Barbara Quindel, overturned the democratic election of Teamsters President Ron Carey, giving the old-guard bureaucracy another shot at recapturing the international union and its treasury.

Until the old guard lost control of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) in 1991 they treated the dues money as their personal piggy bank, giving themselves multiple salaries, extravagant pensions, costly jets, and offshore condos. They have never forgiven Carey for stripping them of \$15 million a year that now is spent on organizing, contract campaigns, and members' education.

This article briefly describes Quindel's "findings of fact," alleged violations, her proposal for a rerun election, and the early reactions of the Carey forces, including the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), as well as the Hoffa Junior camp.

## Background: The "Consent Decree"

In 1989, the Executive Board of the IBT, then run by the old guard, entered into an agreement with the federal government. Known as the Consent Decree, the agreement provided for greater governmental jurisdiction than that provided by U.S. labor law. In turn, the government dropped its labor-racketeering charges against members of the Executive Board.

The Consent decree mandated court-supervised rank-and-file elections for the top officers of the international union, which has 1.45 million members, including approximately 185,000 Canadians. Ron Carey and his entire slate were elected in 1991, beating two rival old-guard slates. In 1996, Carey beat a unified old-guard slate headed by James Hoffa Junior, son of the near-legendary Teamsters leader Jimmy Hoffa.

Quindel, the election officer, reported that Carey received 51.71 percent of the

votes to Hoffa Junior's 48.28 percent, a margin of nearly 4 percent. But she declined to "certify" Carey's election pending the outcome of election appeals by the Hoffa slate. Carey, 20 members of his slate, and 5 members of the Hoffa slate were nevertheless permitted to take office and were inaugurated in March 1997.

After months of investigation Quindel finally ruled that she would not certify Carey's election because of her finding that "non-IBT members made \$221,000 in improper contributions to Teamsters for a Corruption Free Union (TCFU), a fundraising committee of the Carey campaign." TCFU was set up to receive election donations from non-Teamsters, which is legal, provided donations are not knowingly or unknowingly accepted from unions or employers, including non-Teamsters employers.

Quindel said that the alleged improper donations came from "employers" or were solicited by "employers." She also said that IBT money was funneled to vendors and consultants, who then paid the funds to the TCFU. The "employers" were consultants or lawyers associated with the consultants. (See related background article elsewhere in this issue.) Several consultants also raised monies from "political donors who cared about the 1996 Congressional elections. The idea would be to convince these donors that by contributing to Mr. Carey's campaign, they could insure that the IBT under Mr. Carey's direction would assist the get-out-the-vote...efforts of certain Congressional candidates favored by the donors." Quindel called the consultants' plan a "contribution swap scheme."

## No Cover-Up

Since the initial facts about the sources of TCFU funds were provided to the election officer as part of the requirement for periodic campaign financial reports, Quindel can't claim that Carey tried to cover up anything. In fact, she said that the "investigation had not disclosed any evidence that Mr. Carey or any member of his slate knew of or participated in the various improper fundraising schemes."

Further, Carey ordered all the challenged funds to be immediately returned and ordered his staff to cooperate fully with the investigation. Carey discharged two consultants, one being his campaign manager. Nevertheless, Quindel ruled that the TCFU funds "may" have given Carey his victory, since TCFU monies paid for 40 percent of a last-minute mailing urging members to vote. Of 486,300 votes cast, Carey won by 15,918, as counted by Quindel.

In an apparent contradiction to her ruling against Carey, Quindel said "no one can question that this campaign was as open and competitive as any undertaken in an American labor union in recent history."

## Hoffa Junior Attack

The Hoffa Junior camp has launched a many-sided attack on Carey. First, they are challenging Quindel's decision. They want Carey disqualified and Hoffa installed as Teamsters president. They have allies on the *Wall Street Journal* and the Moonie-owned *Washington Times* who are publishing editorials and articles that read like Hoffa Junior press releases. "Junior" is courting Republican lawmakers, pressing them to help him into office. He is also working the other side of the aisle, calling for former Democratic Party President Jimmy Carter to monitor the proposed election rerun. (How "impartial" would Carter be? This is the man who, as president, went to court to try to break a United Mine Workers strike.)

Hoffa Junior has even called for full government takeover of the union, an idea some ruling class circles discussed during the elder Hoffa's heyday. Imagine what an obstacle UPS workers would have faced to their successful strike if their union had been taken over by the government.

## Carey Camp: "An Opportunity to Unite the Union"

The Carey forces are not going to challenge Quindel's ruling. Instead the Carey team sees the rerun election as "an opportunity to unite the union, once and for all." But Carey's partisans in the local unions are boiling over the governments' intrusion into their struggle against the old-guard bureaucracy.

In Los Angeles, 750 rank-and-file UPS workers unanimously adopted a resolution supporting Carey's candidacy. A Nevada local union has reportedly switched to the Carey side. No one is more ready to take on the old-guard machine than TDU, which says: "TDU members are ready to lead a grassroots campaign."



One TDU leader said, "This is our chance to drive a stake in the heart of the old guard. We're going to put corruption, cronyism, and Junior's lies and divisiveness to rest once and for all. We're going to turn out an even bigger vote for Carey this time."

### Possible Advantages for Rank and File

Quindel's plan for a rerun election and rules that would govern the election must be approved by Judge David Edelstein of Manhattan U.S. District Court. The proposed rules seem to make it easier for rank-and-file campaigners to overcome the institutional advantages enjoyed by the local and regional officialdom, which mainly supports Hoffa Junior. For one thing, Quindel set a cap of \$5,000 that a candidate may contribute. All others are limited to \$1,000 donations.

Also, all donations must be accounted for and reported. This last rule stems from the Hoffa Junior campaign's reporting as much as \$2 million from individual donations under \$100. The old rule did not require identifying contributors of small amounts, which the Hoffa Junior camp exploited.

The financial caps alone would seem to dictate that a rerun must be won on the ground, at the work sites. Clearly there's little financial room for consultants,

unionwide mailings, glossy flyers, and the like. Those items cost a total of \$7 million in the 1996 campaign, according to records submitted by both sides and tabulated by Quindel, the election officer.

In fact, it's most likely that there will be an advantage to the side that can best hand-deliver its message to the work site. That's because neither slate is likely to be able to afford the \$700,000 cost of a unionwide mailing. In that case the only unionwide election mailing will be a special edition of the union's magazine dedicated to the election and supervised by the election officer.

### Still Many Uncertainties

There are many question marks over Quindel's ruling and proposal. As mentioned, Judge Edelstein could overrule completely or modify her rules and proposals. For another, the *New York Times* carried a story saying that, according to undisclosed sources, Quindel may resign and not supervise the rerun election she proposed. That might cause a postponement until a new election officer is recruited.

Moreover, the head of a congressional appropriations committee that must approve funding for the election has said he opposes funding at this time. Under the Consent Decree, the union was to pay for the costs of the 1991 election and the government was to pay for the following election in 1996, which reportedly cost \$22 million.

Also, there's a continuing grand jury investigation into criminal charges pertaining to the consultants. So far, two consultants have been indicted. The IBT's director of governmental affairs, or chief lobbyist, resigned rather than abide by Carey's orders to cooperate with the investigation.

Finally, it's hard not to conclude that the pending congressional investigations into the financial ties between President Clinton, the Democratic Party, and the AFL-CIO will probably involve the Teamsters as well. That would allow the corporate media to spin a pro-Hoffa story during the campaign period, which could formally begin as early as September 19 and conclude in December, with ballots to be counted in January 1998.

### Carey's Popularity High

If there is a rerun, the old guard will find that Carey's popularity with the ranks is higher since last year's vote and continues to rise as the importance of the UPS strike victory sinks in. Already, some of Hoffa Junior's supporters see the handwriting on the wall. In California, one Hoffa-ite officer told the press, "I've probably talked to 40-50 local union officers since this [election] decision came down. Most of them are looking for a place to hide for the next three months. It's been such a draining experience — not only the last three months, but the last five years." □

August 31, 1997

# Why Teamsters Face New Election Campaign

by Charles Walker

*We print this modified version of a mid-July article for its background information, which helps shed light on the rapidly changing events in and around the Teamsters union.*

The old guard officials who support Junior Hoffa are in bed with UPS management on every issue — pensions, justice for part-timers, subcontracting — you name it.

— Shop Steward, Local 87,  
Bakersfield, California

**B**efore 1997 is over, the Teamsters union may be battling United Parcel Service (UPS) on picket lines across the nation while simultaneously conducting new elections for some, if not all, of its highest officers.

UPS negotiators had been stalling for months. This may signal the company's expectation that if the federal election officer were to order a rerun of the 1996 Teamsters election, and if a James Hoffa

Junior majority were to win such a rerun, then once again the old guard would be in a position to give UPS a concessionary contract.

As of the first full week of the UPS strike the federal election officer had not yet announced her fateful decision.

### Campaign Funds Controversy

This article takes up the prickly controversy regarding illegal campaign contributions to Teamsters President Ron Carey — the problem that may lead to a rerun of the international union's election. A separate article looks at some key elements shaping the Teamsters' confrontation with UPS. (See "The UPS Strike" elsewhere in this issue.)

At one time it was thought that if Carey won a second term, some old guard leaders at various levels of the union's hierarchy would figure the game was up and retire on their fat pensions. But soon after Carey's 1996 electoral victory over Hoffa the mainstream media reported that Carey was "embroiled in a campaign finance controversy." The *New York Times* said "a federal grand jury in New York City is investigating a \$95,000 contribution that a Massachusetts woman made to his [Carey's] campaign. Hoffa's lawyers asserted that the donation was suspect because it coincided with a Teamsters payment of more than \$100,000 to a telemarketing company owned by the woman's husband." The press revelations



Carey's leadership was key to mobilizing ranks for victory.

and subsequent developments gave new hope to Carey's opponents.

In brief, the Carey campaign immediately returned the questionable donation. Carey denied knowledge of any wrongdoing and said he would cooperate fully with the investigation. The owner of the telemarketing firm reportedly admitted overcharging the union and having his wife donate \$95,000 to Teamsters for a Corruption Free Union, part of the Carey campaign organization.

The telemarketer is said to be cooperating with the FBI, who arrested a Washington, D.C., political consultant on mail fraud tied to the \$95,000. *Labor Notes*, the progressive labor monthly, reports that "Carey campaign manager Jere Nash, a professional campaign consultant, is claiming attorney-client privilege to withhold information from federal prosecutors. As a result, the [Carey] campaign has severed its association with Nash." Reportedly, the \$95,000 was used for a last-minute campaign mailing, which Hoffa Junior claims tipped the close election to Carey.

The election officer also is investigating Hoffa's allegations. She has the authority to overturn the election. However, first she would have to determine that there was a violation of the election rules. Then she must rule that Carey won

unfairly, since it is customary to allow disputed election results to stand if violation did not involve enough votes to affect the election's outcome. The controversial donation was less than 2 percent of the declared expenses of both camps, and Hoffa Junior outspent Carey two to one.

#### TDU's View

TDU argues that the election wasn't won by political consultants or by mailings. TDU says the election "was won on the ground" by Carey supporters campaigning at the work sites. Actually, TDU may be too modest. After Carey's 1991 election TDU maintained its day-in, day-out involvement in local union election campaigns, local and national contract fights, contract grievance beefs, and worker education about rights on the job and in the union. It seems almost self-evident that the reform group's ongoing grassroots activities helped Carey far more than its formal campaigning for the Carey slate.

#### Hoffa Campaign Violations

The election officer may rule that there were offsetting violations by the Hoffa campaigners, whom she ordered to return over \$150,000 illegally obtained from local unions. Recently a Detroit federal grand jury subpoenaed an audit of a Detroit local's finances, a local headed by

Hoffa's primary old guard backer, Larry Brennan. The suspicion is that Brennan and others gave themselves "bonuses" to finance Hoffa's campaign. The election officer's decisions are appealable to federal judge David N. Edelstein, a curmudgeonly 86-year-old. Since 1992 he has approved numerous suspensions and expulsion of Teamsters officials charged with perjury, embezzlement, or receiving employers' payoffs. No matter what the election officer decides, at least one side will appeal her decision, delaying the final outcome for weeks, if not months.

A longtime union supporter of democratic reform writes in *Labor Notes* (also the July issue) that the donations controversy "demonstrates why unions should be very careful about outside contractors and consultants...too many national union officers and headquarters staffers have become hopelessly dependent on the high-priced services of these and other outfits," which he rightly labels "hustlers." He notes that the hustlers weaken unions with their sycophantic toadying-up to officers. Worse yet, they displace would-be union activists. He charges that the hustlers are a "direct pipeline to the Democrats. As such, they have divided loyalties and little commitment to any form of independent political action by labor... they run both union *and* political campaigns, facilitating the massive flow of money from labor clients to politicians."

#### Boot Out the Parasites — and the Democrats

The parasitic relationship of the "lawyers, pollsters, financial advisers, media experts, economic researchers, political operatives, direct mail specialists, focus group organizers and telemarketers" on the international unions is bad enough. But the larger danger is the hustlers' class collaborationist outlook, which suits today's business unionists so well. The *Labor Notes* commentator claims that one consulting firm "practically runs the new AFL-CIO." No wonder it sometimes seems as if there's a near-fusion of organized labor's higher echelons and the hierarchy of the Democratic National Committee and its satellite agencies.

The *Labor Notes* critic rightly calls for booting the consultants, etc., out of the unions' headquarters. But that's not likely to happen until labor dumps the Democratic Party as well. □

July 19, 1997

# EuroMarch for Jobs

by Christophe Aguiton and Robert Cremieux

*Christophe Aguiton co-ordinated the EuroMarch secretariat. He works for the new French postal-telecom union SUD, and is a member of the AC! unemployment campaign. Robert Cremieux is a member of France's National Movement of Unemployed and Precarious (MNCP). This article is from the July 15 issue of International Viewpoint.*

The Marches against Unemployment, job insecurity, and marginalization set off on 14 April, and converged in Amsterdam two months later. Their success, even their existence, in all parts of Europe, is an unprecedented event. From Luxembourg to Finland, march organization committees were established. These brought together whatever unemployed organizations existed locally, and a current of trade union support, mainly dominated by the organized left.

During the marches, 1,000 meetings between unemployed and working people were held across Europe. The passage of a march was usually an important moment for joint activity by local groups working against unemployment and exclusion. In Paris, the National Bank was briefly occupied.

The marches had an impact outside the borders of the European Union. Committees were set up in Switzerland and Norway, and one of the marches was launched in Sarajevo and Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina. As well as eight Bosnian marchers, the final gathering in Amsterdam included delegations from Turkey, Albania, Arab-speaking North Africa, and even the Americas!

The march and rally in Amsterdam on June 14 is the most important all-European demonstration to date. The march for jobs organized in Brussels earlier this year, to protest the relocation of the Renault-Vilvorde plant to Spain, was larger (70,000 participants). But almost all came from Belgium itself, and neighboring France. In contrast, the EuroMarch demonstration in Amsterdam included thousands of French, Belgians, and Germans, hundreds of Greeks, Spaniards, Danes, Swedes, and British, and over 100 Finns.

This unprecedented breadth of participation illustrates the growing consciousness of the importance of European-wide negotiations between the governments. After left electoral victories in Italy, Britain, and France, and a growing concern about social issues in Germany, the EU's largest, richest and most populous mem-

ber state, everything *ought* to be open for rediscussion. But as always, social questions have passed into the background, while European leaders debate the extension of the single (common) market for goods and services.

A commitment to social progress in Europe would mean tearing up not only the Maastricht Treaty, which fixes the criteria for European Monetary Union (EMU), but also the Stability Pact signed in Dublin at the end of last year. This second agreement locks in the economic convergence criteria, even after EMU, confining participating economies in a neo-liberal straitjacket for years to come.

Another policy in Europe is possible! A policy prioritizing employment, and facilitating a coordinated reduction in the working week. This would give the unemployed and marginalized the chance to work, at a decent salary. It could reverse the growing job insecurity in European countries. This is the real European debate for the months to come.

Inevitably, European governments will be more interested in the practical steps to take as the new single currency is introduced in early 1988. They will discuss which countries can and should adopt the "euro" and decide whether or not to soften the criteria for participation, so as to allow Spain and maybe Italy to participate.

This debate on European Monetary Union will continue to dominate the continent's newspapers. The Italian and Spanish governments consider a block on their participation as an insult. The French Socialist Party won the recent election on the basis of a call for softer convergence criteria, and the participation of the south European countries. Meanwhile, in Germany, the suggestion to revalue the country's gold reserves, so as to "magically" reduce the budget deficit, has provoked a serious confrontation between Chancellor Kohl and the influential Bundesbank.

The EuroMarch organizing committees took a clear stand on these issues. The Maastricht Treaty convergence criteria are

unacceptable. They are arguments to justify severe cuts in social budgets all over the European Union: even in countries that will not be in the "first round" of EMU.

The social movement for "a different Europe" laid the basis for alternative priorities during the June 1996 Counter-Summit in Florence, Italy. Associations and trade union currents there initiated what became the EuroMarch committees, which finally met in Brussels in February this year. Over 500 militants from across the continent widened the "Florence demands," establishing a number of areas of broad agreement between the social movements in the different countries.

There is, for example, general agreement around demands for immediate measures against social marginalization, and ensuring that the unemployed have decent living conditions. In most countries, the participants fully support campaigns to prevent the eviction of the unemployed from their homes, the disconnection of their gas, water, or electricity. The tendency is to recognize a series of fundamental rights, and demand that resources be found so as to ensure all can benefit from housing, education, health care, and so on.

There is also general agreement on the main demands, which everyone recognizes must center on the sustained reduction in the unemployment rate. There must be massive job-creation programs, particularly in sectors like health and education, where there are massive, unsatisfied social needs. And the working week should be cut, right across Europe. Without reducing the earning power of working people!

There is agreement on these issues, despite the real differences in political culture and national priorities across Europe. In Britain, there is no minimum wage or legal limit on the number of hours you can be asked to work. While British EuroMarchers are obviously in favor of a reduction in the workweek, they preferred to stress the importance of a decent income and full employment. In other words, a reversal of the reforms of the Thatcher years.

Meanwhile, German unemployed groups are most concerned about "forced labor" — new regulations forcing the unemployed to accept any job offered, whatever the conditions, or lose part of their unemployment benefits. In western Germany, mass unemployment is a recent phenomena, and a larger part of the population believes that those without work are not really looking, compared to most other countries. *Continued on page 14*

# Cárdenas and the PRD: Between Promises to Capital and the Hopes of the People

by Dan La Botz

*The following article is excerpted from the July 16 issue of Mexican Labor News and Analysis (MLNA). The MLNA is produced in collaboration with the Authentic Labor Front (Frente Auténtico del Trabajo, or FAT) of Mexico and with the United Electrical Workers (UE) of the United States and is published the 2nd and 16th of every month.*

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**M**exico has had a political earthquake that shifts the balance of forces in the country.

The victory of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and his Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in the Mexico City mayoral election, and the stunning defeats for the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in the congress have changed the Mexican political landscape.

Cárdenas's victory in the Mexico City mayoral election already makes him almost inevitably the PRD candidate for president, and front-runner against all comers.

For almost 70 years, since its foundation in 1929 the state-party, the PRI, has dominated Mexican politics. There were decades when no other party won a single important office in the country. The PRI held power through fear, favors, and fraud, and when necessary through terror, for more than half a century.

But Mexico's one-party-state now appears to have given way to a new pluralistic political paradigm. In this election, with few exceptions, Mexicans voted without intimidation or coercion, and without fraud in the count after the election. The July election was a victory for parliamentary democracy.

By the millions Mexicans went to the polls on July 6 and voted against the economic crisis and against the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, and for the opposition either in the form of the left-center Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) or the conservative National Action Party (PAN).

Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo, U.S. President Bill Clinton, political leaders of all the major Mexican parties, Mexican bankers and industrialists, political commentators, and academic analysts all proclaimed this election a victory for democracy in Mexico. It was, perhaps, the

first democratic election since that of Francisco I. Madero, a leader of the Mexican Revolution, in 1911.

But while this is a victory for democracy, for the center-left PRD, and for Cárdenas, it is also a political shift which guarantees greater political stability for international capital and its investments in Mexico.

### What Kind of Democracy and For Whom?

This victory for electoral democracy only begins a broader process of democratization. Mexicans, especially poor Mexicans in rural areas in the southern states, do not enjoy civil liberties. The Mexican police and military still engage in kidnapping, torture, and murder of political opponents and social activists.

The economic situation remains critical. Perhaps 25 percent of all Mexicans are unemployed or underemployed. Mexicans are still among the lowest paid workers in the world, most earning between three and ten dollars per day. Millions, especially among the elderly and infants, suffer from malnutrition.

What does Cárdenas's election mean for the majority of Mexicans who are working class people? What will Cárdenas's and the PRD's victory mean for the labor movement and for other social movements in Mexico?

We begin first with the election results in Mexico City and nationally, and with the situation in Chiapas, before turning to political analysis.

### Cárdenas and the PRD in Mexico City: An Overwhelming Victory

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas won the election for mayor of Mexico City (held on July 6), while the PRD nationally succeeded in

becoming the second most important political party in the Mexican Congress.

In Mexico City, Cárdenas won 47.11 percent of the votes, while Alfredo del Mazo of the long-dominant PRI received only 25.08 percent, and Carlos Castillo Peraza of the conservative National Action Party (PAN) won 15.26 percent.

Not only did Cárdenas win the mayoral election, but his party also carried 38 out of 40 "majority wins" seats in the Legislative Assembly. Adding the proportional representation seats, the PRD will have 38 of 66 seats in the Mexico City Legislative Assembly, while the PRI will have 12; the PAN, 10; the Mexican Ecological Green Party (PVEM), 4; the Workers Party (PT), 1; and the Cardenist Party (which has nothing to do with Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas), 1. The PRD can be expected to win the support of the PVEM's 4 delegates on most matters.

Thus Cárdenas will become mayor on January 1, 1998, with better than an absolute majority in Mexico City's legislature, and should be able to pass any measure he puts forward. Whether or not the PRI-dominated federal government will give him the funds to run the city remains to be seen.

### Protests in Chiapas Prevent Voting in Some Areas; EZLN Abstains

The one area of Mexico where the election had an altogether different quality was Chiapas. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), through its Subcomandante Marcos, had announced that its members and supporters in Chiapas would not vote because of the continued military occupation of the area; because of on-going attacks by "white guards" who beat, rape, and murder indigenous activists; and because of the failure of the government to fulfill the San Andres Larrainzar agreements.

Not only did the EZLN not vote, but in many areas protestors made it impossible for the National Electoral Institute (IFE) to put up voting booths. Some voting booths and other materials were burned. Out of 3,520 voting booths to be installed, only 2,910 were installed in Chiapas. Some 35 percent of the electorate either did not or could not vote.

The Civic Alliance (Alianza Cívica — AC), which engaged in election watching, also reported serious violations of voters' rights in many locations in Chiapas.

In addition to the problems in Chiapas, the PRD contends that the PRI may have stolen the election in Campeche. Tens of thousands of PRD and PAN followers have marched in Campeche demanding that the election be overturned.

### **A Turning Point Election: Zedillo Holds Out Hand of Cooperation**

The Mexico City mayoral election of 1997 and the national legislative elections will go down in history as a turning point in the Mexican political system. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which by various names has ruled Mexico since 1929, both lost control of Mexico City and lost its majority in the lower house.

The PRI must now for the first time share some of its power with the left-center Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and with the conservative National Action Party (PAN). Such power sharing is simply unprecedented in Mexico, and this represents a genuine step toward political democracy.

President Ernesto Zedillo appeared on national television the night of July 6, before any official statistics were available, and standing before a portrait of Benito Juárez, told millions of viewers, "I want to very sincerely congratulate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas for [his] victory..."

Zedillo then went on to say, "I desire for him the greatest successes in his difficult responsibilities and I offer to him from now on that he can count on the unshakable will of the government of the Republic in order to establish a relationship of respectful collaboration, for the benefit always of the interests of the inhabitants of the Federal District."

On July 14 Zedillo met with Cárdenas, and with smiles and a handshake posed before the cameras. Zedillo's reaction to the election of Cárdenas represented an about-face by the PRI government. A state-party which had squashed all of its opponents in the past, including Cárdenas

on two previous occasion, held out the hand of cooperation.

Zedillo told the Mexican people that they had begun a great "democratic fiesta." Zedillo and the PRI, naturally, took credit for having brought democracy to Mexico.

### **Victory Received Happily By International Capital**

International capital reacted very favorably to Cárdenas's victory. The Mexican Stock Market (the BMV) continued its record-breaking rally on July 7. "The financial market reacted positively to the results of the election," said one analyst.

The International Monetary Fund's managing director Stanley Fischer, expressed his confidence on July 8 that as a result of the elections, there would be no change in Mexico's economic program. Merrill Lynch announced its confidence in the Mexican economy on July 10.

"This has to be very positive and healthy and is going to generate confidence in Mexico," Hugh Pace, president of Goodyear Mexico told the *Wall Street Journal* shortly after the election. "The question isn't which candidate won. The fact is that Mexico is more democratic today than it was yesterday. What that means for foreign investment is that those who bet on Mexico won."

Even Mexico's conservative capitalists in the Entrepreneurs Coordinating Council (CCE), rather like the U.S. Business Round Table, welcomed the election results. José Alfred Satos Asseo, the president of one of Mexico's national business chambers said, "We awaken with a new Mexico, strengthened by democracy. We hope that all the changes that we are experiencing are going to lead to a Mexico which is more free, more just, where civil society has much more to say."

Why should the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and Mexican and international capital apparently be so delighted with the victory of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and the PRD in the elections?

### **The Enormity of the Crisis**

The PRI has simply not been very effective since the end of President Carlos Salinas's term of office. The January 1994 Chiapas uprising led by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) provoked a national political crisis, followed in December 1994 by the devaluation of the peso, and the "tequila effect" which threatened the international banking system.

Those two events were followed by appearance of a second guerrilla organization, the People's Revolutionary Army

(EPR) and the subsequent militarization of several Mexican states — Chiapas, Tabasco, Guerrero, Oaxaca. In addition military-style conflicts between and among drug dealers, the police, and the army led to the militarization of northern border states such as Chihuahua.

Taken altogether, the PRI appeared by 1997 to be leading Mexico — the neighbor of the United States and one of its most important economic partners — into an enormous crisis. The U.S. could not permit Mexico to become a Colombia.

At the same time, business cannot permit Mexico to become a Peru: they do not want either another Sendero or another Fujimori. The banks and multinational corporations, international capital, big business, call it what you will, do not like disorder. Political and social disturbances threaten the orderly operation of banks and corporations and jeopardize investment.

The rising level of discord and disturbances in Mexico — social, economic, and political — led international capital, and the United States government which acts as its agent in Mexico, to understand that the Institutional Revolutionary Party's seventy-year-old regime had exhausted itself and no longer served to keep things in order. So things would have to change.

Top leaders of the PRI, also perceived that their ability to control the old system was breaking down. In fact the PRI's authority had been breaking down ever so slowly since the 1968 army massacre of students at Tlatelolco, the 1985 earthquake, and the 1988 presidential election, which was actually won by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Despite enormous repression — like the killing of 500 PRD activists between 1989 and 1997 and the militarization of several states — the PRI was losing its grip.

Bankers and businessmen, the U.S. government, and the PRI came to the conclusion separately and together that the time had come for a new political system in Mexico. The PRI would have to give up its one-party rule in Mexico, not in order to bring about democracy but in order to protect capital.

No doubt U.S. capital would have preferred a two-party system with power-sharing between the PRI and the PAN. But the National Action Party (PAN) which had been a junior partner to the PRI during the Salinas and Zedillo years, had lost its credibility among many of the Mexican people. Because it had participated in Zedillo's cabinet, the PAN was seen in sharing responsibility for the crisis. Consequently the PRD, not the PAN, became

the principal benefactor of the new power-sharing arrangement.

The U.S. government and the multinational corporations might have used their usual tools to stop Cárdenas, threatening a massive withdrawal of capital, a campaign of red-baiting, allegations that this election would contribute to instability, or linking Cárdenas to the EZLN and EPR. The U.S. government and business did not do so because they became convinced that Cárdenas is safe.

### **The PRD — Reasonable, Respectable**

During the last few years, the PRD took several steps which were meant to gain more confidence from bankers, businessmen, and the U.S. government.

To win the confidence of international capital, the PRD proclaimed its acceptance of capitalism and even neoliberalism. In May in New York, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas told an assembly of bankers that he was prepared to follow the Chilean model. New York financiers reported that that discussion was key in swinging capital to Cárdenas.

Andrés Manuel López Obrador, president of the PRD, met with the Mexican Coordinating Council of Entrepreneurs at the Industrialists Club on June 11 and told bankers and businessmen, "We are not advocates of a moratorium [on paying the foreign debt], nor is our economic program the extreme opposite of the government's. We are not talking about a night and day change. It is only a question of getting rid of some of the sharp edges of neoliberalism and giving it a social orientation."

Cárdenas and the PRD succeeded in convincing the important players — the international bankers and the U.S. government above all — that they could be trusted. The U.S. government and the banks then put pressure on Zedillo and the PRI to accept political power sharing.

### **The PRD and the Social Movements**

The reason that Cárdenas and the PRD had to work so hard to convince the powers-that-be that they were really reformist is that they have a reputation for being really radical. The reputation is not without some justification.

When it was founded in 1989, the PRD was a merger between two tendencies: a group from the PRI and a group from the Mexican Communist Party tradition. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and the Democratic Current of the PRI merged with the Unified Socialist Party of Mexico (PSUM). Cárdenas

brought his own radical base in the form of militant peasants from Michoacán. The PSUM brought to the marriage not only the Communist Party's reformist tradition, but also former guerrilla groups and other more radical tendencies.

Since that time, the PRD has attracted many movement activists. Among those elected in July, for example, were three leaders of the debtors movement, El Barzón; Patria Jimenez, a lesbian activist; two members of the Broad Front for the Creation of a National Liberation Movement (FAC-MLN); a leader of the Tepoztlán struggle against the creation in that town of a private golf course; and a former candidate for secretary general of the National Teachers Union (el SNTE).

One of the two FAC-MLN leaders elected to congress was Benito Mirón, an adviser to the Mexico City bus drivers of Route-100 (SUTAUR), an independent union which spent over a year in a desperate struggle with the PRI government of Mexico City.

### **The PRD — A Populist Party**

How then are we to characterize the PRD? What kind of party is it that on the one hand makes promises to capital, and on the other hand includes among its legislators, radical leaders of the debtors movement and the labor movement? The PRD is what a political scientist might call in somewhat European terms, a radical, democratic, petty-bourgeois party. That is, a political party with ties to the radical middle class movements and to labor.

At the same time the PRD is a Latin American populist party, a party which represents and makes concessions to popular movements of the middle class, labor and the peasantry, but at the same time remains a traditional political party. While Cárdenas has been an advocate of democracy and economic reform, he is also something of a traditional Caudillo. Someone called him the Caudillo whose charisma is that he has no charisma. In any case he remains a leader who stands somewhat above his party, somewhat independent of it.

The PRD, then, is not precisely a party of capital such as the Democratic or Republican Party in the United States, nor is it exactly a Social Democratic Party along the European model (despite its membership in the Socialist International). The PRD, with its origins in the PRI, is a rather too traditional Mexican political party at the center-left of the spectrum. While Cárdenas and the PRD genuinely want more democracy, social

reforms, and an improvement in the economic life of working people, they do not have a radical program for economic change. Whether they will be pushed to the left by their followers remains to be seen.

### **PRD Victory Raises Expectations of Labor**

The victory of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas for Mexico City mayor raises the hopes and expectations of many poor and working class people. Workers will be encouraged by Cárdenas's victory to push forward their demands upon their employers and the state. But the state will be Cárdenas, at least in Mexico City.

The PRD has never had much of a strategy toward labor. But during this election, things began to change. For example, a group of executive, legislative, and judicial employees of the Federal District placed an ad in newspapers on July 2 expressing their support for Cárdenas, "because he has been the only candidate who has solidarized himself with our struggle, has listened to us and has made our demands his..." The group urged all workers and union members to vote for Cárdenas and the PRD. Many other workers felt the same, voted for Cárdenas, and now expect things to change.

### **"Official Unions" in Crisis**

The combination of the economic crisis and now the PRD election victory have worked to create a serious problem for the bureaucracy of Mexico's PRI-supported unions, the "official unions." The death last month of 97-year old Fidel Velazquez, who had headed the CTM for fifty years, combined with the victory of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, creates serious problems for the CTM, which has always had its strongest base in Mexico City.

The PRI through the Congress of Labor (CT) and the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) and other federations (CROM, CROC, FSTSE) controls most of Mexico's workers and their votes. The CTM has dominated the Mexican labor movement since its foundation in 1936 and plays the leading role in the so-called Congress of Labor.

But after the economic crisis began in December 1994, a division opened within the Congress of Labor between the CTM and the Federation of Unions of Firms of Goods and Services (FESEBES), led by Francisco Hernandez Juarez, head of the telephone workers union (STRM). Former President Carlos Salinas de Gortari had promoted Hernandez Juarez and FESEBES as the advocates of a "new

unionism" based on cooperation with management, improved quality, and flexible contracts.

Hernandez Juarez and FESEBES took the initiative to convoke the Forum of Unionism Before the Nation, or Foro, by holding a public forum on unemployment on September 4, 1995. Out of such forums came a group of about 25 unions, including some independent or democratic unions not belonging to the CT. This Forum, or Foro, group of unions, began to call for more democracy within the labor movement, thus leading to differences with Fidel Velazquez and the CTM.

In addition to the CTM/CT and the Foro group of unions there also exists a third labor federation, the May First Inter-Union Group. The May First group is a radical organization of labor unions, leftist groups, and community organizations which came together during the struggle of the Mexico City bus drivers to stop the privatization of Route 100 and the destruction of its independent union (SUTAU).

Veteran CTM official Leonardo Alcaine Rodriguez, who succeeded Velazquez, continues in his unconditional support of the PRI and his authoritarian approach to the federation. He is being challenged by Juan S. Millan, another long-time CTM leader who advocates dialogue with the Foro group of unions and even the May-First Coalition.

The real problem is the absence of significant working class action. Strikes throughout Mexico are at an all-time low. Only the National Coordinating Committee (la CNTE) of the teachers union (el SNTE), carries out militant mass mobilization of its members. Without some upheaval from below, it is hard to imagine significant change in the Mexican unions.

Cárdenas's election, however, may provide just the sense of hope which sets some workers moving in a dual struggle to both democratize their unions and to create organizations capable of fighting for higher wages. Workers in Mexico need more than anything else, a victory in some struggle against their employers and the state. With such a victory the picture could change rapidly.

However, if workers begin to move, inspired by Cárdenas's victory and a new more democratic political situation, they may begin making economic demands which even Cárdenas will not be willing or able to meet. What happens when Cárdenas's victory inspires worker resistance which comes into conflict with Cárde-

nas's promises to bankers, industrialists, and the U.S. government?

### **Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the PRD, and the Left**

The Mexican left finds itself in great confusion, unable to sort out the meaning of the last ten tumultuous years. What is the left's view of the state? Of political parties? Of the PRD? How does the left intend to build its political power in order to change society?

Many of these questions on which the left had clear views ten years ago now appear incredibly complicated to Mexican leftists, in part because they no longer have any clear principles on which to make decisions. If we review the last ten or fifteen years of the left's history, we can see why this is the case.

When Carlos Salinas de Gortari was elected president in 1988, he and his brother Raúl began to draw various leftist groups, mostly Maoists, into their National Solidarity Program (PRONASOL) and then either into the PRI or into the puppet Workers Party (PT). So a good part of the left joined the establishment.

In 1988 most of the Communist left joined the National Democratic Front (FDN) supporting the campaign of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Many, perhaps most Mexican people saw the 1988 election as a contest between the PRI's dictatorship and the possibility of democracy. Leftist groups which tried to resist the tide were destroyed. For example, the Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) ran Rosario Ibarra de Piedra for their presidential candidate for the second time, and she received virtually no support.

Then, in 1989, when Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas organized the Party of the Democratic Revolution, former Communists, former Castroite guerrillas, some Maoists, and even some Trotskyists joined. Most of the left in Mexico dissolved itself into the new center-left PRD, and distinctive leftist parties more or less disappeared.

The crisis of the left deepened, however, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. "Real existing socialism," as they sometimes called it, had ceased to be real, and so had the left. Disoriented, many former Communists and other leftists lost a clear sense of political identity and purpose.

### **The Chiapas Rebellion and the New Left**

The Chiapas Uprising of January 1994, led by the Zapatista Army of National

Liberation (EZLN) created a new left in Mexico. Because it arose as an armed movement outside of the state and the legal, parliamentary parties, and because it took its stand with the poorest and most oppressed people in Mexico, that is, the Mayan Indians of Chiapas, the EZLN enjoyed enormous moral authority.

Many leftists who had become disillusioned and dissatisfied, since the collapse of the old left and since the failures of the PRD, rallied to the EZLN. Even more important, many Indians, peasants, and workers, and above all many young middle class students, who had never had any political experience now supported the EZLN. Thus the Chiapas Rebellion and the EZLN created a "new left" outside of the political parties.

Without going into all the details, after the National Democratic Convention (CND) held in August 1994, this new left split into two factions. These factions became the Zapatista Front for National Liberation (FZLN), which claims 10,000 members throughout Mexico, and the Broad Front for the Creation of a National Liberation Movement (FAC-MLN), a coalition of scores of poor people's organizations.

The FAC-MLN became sympathetic toward Mexico's second major guerrilla organization, the Peoples Revolution Army (EPR), a more traditional Guevarist guerrilla group. So today there are two guerrilla armies, EZLN and EPR, each of which is linked to a social/political movement, respectively the FZLN and FAC-MLN. The EPR virtually endorsed Cárdenas and the PRD, and thus despite its armed organization entered into mainstream politics.

What is the new left's political analysis of Cárdenas and the PRD? The weakness of this new left is that both factions, the EZLN-FZLN and the EPR/FAC-MLN, tend to talk often in moral rather than analytical and political terms about the questions of political parties and electoralism. The EZLN-FZLN criticizes the PRD for its political maneuvering, for its corruption, and for its failure to consistently oppose neo-liberalism. Subcomandante Marcos and the EZLN, for example, seldom if ever argue the class character of the PRD, that is that it is a middle-class, populist party, and not a party which represents working-class people and their interests.

The strength of the EZLN is that it continues to talk about the need for organization from below to force changes in the political system. When Cárdenas and the PRD have become the establishment, Marcos and the EZLN-FZLN will still be

the opposition. The EZLN remains the most important group on the new left, and what it says and does in the next few months could be very important for defining the Mexican left for the next decade. What the EZLN will say and do remains unclear. The EZLN remains, as Marcos has put it, in a stage of "indefinición política," which he recognizes cannot last forever.

### What Next?

The election of July 6 represents an historic turning point in Mexican politics. The one-party state is yielding to parlia-

mentary democracy and political power sharing, an important part — if only a small part — of creating a democracy. The Mexican people dealt a blow against the "perfect dictatorship" of the Institutional Revolutionary Party. The vote for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and the PRD was an expression of the hopes and aspirations of many ordinary Mexican working people for a society with democracy and with economic opportunity.

But at the same time, Cárdenas and the PRD made it clear to international business, the U.S. government, and the Institu-

tional Revolutionary Party that they intend to guarantee political stability and the interests of capital. This contradiction between the hopes of the working people and the PRD's responsibility to capital and the Mexican state provides the principal dynamic of the new situation. When the working people's needs and desires come into conflict with Cárdenas's promises to capital — and that could be in a year or a decade — Mexico will move beyond parliamentary democracy to the question of working class independence, which implies the long-term question of socialism. □

## Euromarch for Jobs

*Continued from page 9*

Obviously, there is no fundamental contradiction between the priorities of the British and German unemployed movements. But it takes time to establish a common platform.

The second "great debate" in the Euro-March campaign was over the nature of the European integration project. Participants from Denmark, and from the EU's newest members, Sweden and Finland, see the European project as a handicap to popular aspirations. They insist that movements like the EuroMarches should make no demands leading to the reinforcement of the European Union's institutions (such as European legislation on collective bargaining).

In other continental countries, many Euro-Marchers consider that the struggle for "a different Europe" should take the path of elaboration of pan-European demands. If satisfied, such demands would expand the existing European Union structures, particularly in the social field.

There is no quick solution to this differentiation. But the form that popular mobilizations take in the coming months and years will have a clear influence in the strategic debate. If mobilizations remain essentially within the national framework, then this is the level at which people will perceive the political and social confrontation. But if it is possible to develop pan-European struggles, then it will be easier to put forward collective demands, thus

elaborating another strategy for "really building Europe."

If Europe is to develop in the direction we want, we need pan-European social movements. It may even be that such movements are essential for any type of European construction. A Europe built only on a free market of merchandise, services, and capital, and reinforced only by a bureaucratic technostructure in Brussels, would probably crack at the first real shock. Imagine a second French public sector strike, like the one in November-December 1995. But this time confronting decisions made by the European Commission and the new monetary authority in Frankfurt, Germany, rather than the French state. In such a situation, the French government would surely withdraw from the common monetary mechanisms, just as Britain and Italy withdrew from the European Monetary System (EMS) a few years ago. This shows how fragile the European construction still is.

A European identity can only be built through common struggles, and common protests. In this sense, 1997 will probably be remembered as the year when truly European mobilizations emerged. Previous pan-European initiatives, like the coordinated railway strikes in 1992, have been few in number, and usually confined to a specific professional group. The impact on public opinion has been very slight.

In contrast, the first half of 1997 has seen a succession of events. First came the protests against Renault's decision to

close its car factory in Vilvorde, Belgium, in favor of a lower-wage site in Spain. The vibrant protest of Renault workers struck a chord in public opinion, mainly in Belgium and France, but also further afield. Then the European Trade Union Confederation [a pressure group of national trade union leaders] organized an EU-wide day of protest on May 28. Finally, the EuroMarches assembled 50,000 Europeans in Amsterdam to protest against unemployment, job security, and marginalization.

These challenges to the neo-liberal and technocratic management of European integration have forced the question of social measures on a European scale onto center stage politically. And they have made credible the idea of pan-European political mobilization.

For the EuroMarch network, the priority now is to develop a horizontal network which can support trans-European mobilizations. Not to compete with the existing structures — the European Trade Union Confederation and the European Network of Unemployed (ENU) But to reinforce them. ENU, for example, contains unemployed groups with very different practices.

EuroMarchers have learned to respect these differences, to learn from diversity, and to build a coherent, pluralist campaign. The march on Amsterdam also helped consolidate national federations of unemployed organizations in countries like Italy where they did not previously exist. □



# Despite Reduced Majority, Liberals "Stay the Course"

by Barry Weisleder

*This article was scheduled to appear in the Labor Day issue of Socialist Action (Canada). Barry Weisleder is the editor of Socialist Action newspaper and is president of Local 595 of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.*

The *Toronto Star* headline, just days after the June 2 Canadian federal election, said it all: "Liberals to tackle child poverty — later." "Fiscal problems must be fixed first, PM says."

Clearly the sting of an electoral setback isn't enough to deflect the ruling Liberals from continuing to execute massive cuts to social expenditures and public sector jobs. The new Cabinet selected by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, with right wingers in all the sensitive economic portfolios, led by Finance Minister Paul Martin, indicates no change in the anti-worker austerity agenda. The fact that this would be the case regardless which party formed the government offers little consolation. From the standpoint of the working class, the political choices ranged only from bad to worse.

The gross opportunism of the "early" election call almost cost the overconfident Liberals their hold on government. But the preoccupation of political leaders and the capitalist media with image, over issues, militated against there being any focus for popular discontent.

In various ways, voters across the Canadian state expressed disenchantment with cutbacks, disappointment in the electoral campaign, and disgust with the anti-Québec bigotry expressed in Reform Party advertisements. Mass anxiety about eroding health care standards and high unemployment, however, was drowned in demagoguery about "national unity" and debt management.

The New Democratic Party, which is linked to sections of the labor movement in English Canada, raised jobs as a key question, but offered no useful answers. The NDP didn't even attempt to pose a governmental alternative, as indicated by its feeble slogan "Wake Up the Liberals."

**Liberals Dodge the Ballot Bullet**  
Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's federal Liberal Party was reduced from 41.4% of the vote and 177 seats in Parliament in 1993, to 38% of the vote and 155 seats — out of 301 in the House of Commons.

That the Liberals were able to hold on to a slim majority of 4 seats, despite cutting over \$14 billion from expenditures over the course of three federal budgets, is mostly due to the fact that the more right-wing parties, Reform and Progressive Conservative, advocated even more severe cuts. Thus we can say that although the electorate didn't turn left, a majority consciously voted against the most right-wing parties.

Opinion polls show clearly that the siren song of tax cuts (for the rich) and "reduction of government" seems to have already reached the limit of its mass appeal. The Liberals, aware of this, postured (however hypocritically) as "protectors of the role of government."

The Reform Party vote remained at 19%. The Conservatives achieved a 3% increase in their share of the vote up to 19%, largely on the strength of Tory Leader Jean Charest's youthful image and his repudiation of the Reform Party ads.

Nevertheless, Reform was able to capture 60 seats, and put a lock on "official opposition" status, because its vote was more concentrated (i.e., in the western provinces). Tory support was more dispersed, resulting in only 20 seats, those being mostly in Atlantic Canada and Québec.

### NDP Vote Up a Little

The New Democratic Party vote rose from an historic low of 7% in 1993 to a still very modest 11%. But this was enough to more than double its seat total to 21. The biggest gains for the NDP came in the Atlantic provinces, where the party's support at the polls surged by over 300%. Why there? Apparently, the recent wave of union-led militant protests against corporate mismanagement of the fishery, unemployment insurance cuts, and school closings translated into support for the NDP — identified as a pro-working class party, despite its abject failure to fight for class alternatives to corporate power and growing social misery. Also the fact that Leader Alexa McDonough hails from

Nova Scotia helped considerably in taking the NDP from 0 to 6 seats, and from 6.8% to 30% of the vote in that coastal province.

Notwithstanding its breakthrough in the East, the NDP has yet to regain its overall traditional electoral base — usually about 20%. The slow and very incomplete recovery from the disastrous 1990–95 Ontario NDP government led by Bob Rae, which trampled union collective agreements and trashed the public sector, was still quite evident in the party's campaign.

Targeting only a few dozen ridings, the NDP attracted few enthusiastic workers and displayed little imagination. And little wonder, given a pro-business platform which sought to balance state "debt reduction" with modest "re-investment" in social programs and altogether abandoned the fight to rescind the so-called "free trade" agreements. Those agreements entrench privatization and deregulation of the capitalist economy.

### Bloc Québécois Vote Falls

The pro-independence party, the Bloc Québécois saw its vote in that province (it does not run candidates outside Québec) plummet from 49% to 38%, and its seat total fall from 54 to 44, thus losing its previous position as the largest opposition party in the House.

The BQ is closely and justifiably identified with the sovereignist Parti Québécois provincial government, whose expenditure cuts rival those of right-wing Ontario Tory Premier Mike Harris. Québec unions are overwhelmingly pro-sovereignty, yet they have understandably taken their distance from the PQ government of Premier Lucien Bouchard (former BQ Leader). This plus the inept performance of the Bloc's new leader Gilles Duceppe meant a drop in support was taken for granted. What's actually surprising, though, is the persisting strength of the BQ — testimony to the power, especially in the francophone working class, of the national liberation struggle.

The PQ is under considerable internal pressure to hold another referendum on Québec sovereignty before mid-2000. Despite years of large and bitter protests against PQ social cuts, there is little discussion in the unions about breaking definitively from the capitalist BQ/PQ and forming a labor party that would fight for Québec independence and a workers' agenda. The NDP, at 2% of the vote in Québec, is marginal — seen as a hostile, Anglo-outsider force which saved its harshest criticisms for the Bloc, despite the glaring similarity of their economic policies in the campaign.

The Reform Party openly advocates partition of Québec, to be enforced by the

army, to keep Anglo ridings and northern native territory in Canada, in the event of Québec secession. The other parties like to call such talk “extremism” (the NDP’s McDonough warned of “civil war,” then sheepishly retreated), but none of the major parties absolutely rules out partition.

The unity of the English Canadian parties, including the NDP, against Québec’s national aspirations, tends to entrench this line-up which suppresses class identity on both sides, and the Canadian ruling class uses it to smother social issues under a thick layer of chauvinist “national unity” mantras.

### Capitalism Offers Little Choice

A casual observer might think that the proliferation of parties in Parliament reflects a greater diversity of political options. The reality is that the differences between the parties are tactical or illusory, and in no sense very wide. They all embrace the so-called exigencies of “global competitiveness” — reliance on a less regulated private sector, and defense of the capitalist state against the demands of the Québécois and aboriginal peoples.

Political difference in the so-called mainstream is not over basic direction (the Corporate Agenda); it is rather about the speed, intensity, and explicitness of the attack. The population, especially the working class and the poor, naturally does not welcome its further deprivation and degradation. But Capital has nothing else to offer.

The “restructuring” of Capital is global in scope, necessitated by the decline in the rate of profit and the demands of world competition. Since cooperation and democratic planning are not an option for big business, war against the working class to drive down wages and benefits is the only way to sustain the private profit system.

But Capital finds it more and more difficult to persuade people that the political poison being served up is good medicine for society’s ills. How to sell this prescription is the question. Capitalist parties differ mainly over the packaging, not the contents. The NDP leadership, seeing no alternative to capitalism, clings to the vain hope of “humanizing” a destructive and dying social system. Defending the indefensible thus undermines the very *raison d’être* of the party — self-organization of the working class and the advancement of our interests independent of the interests of Capital.

### Much Ado About ‘Regionalism’

The picture of the new Parliament that emerged on election night — five official

parties, each respectively drawing its sitting MPs predominantly from only one of the regions of the country — had bourgeois political commentators wringing their hands. “A house divided along regional lines,” “Confederation coming apart at the seams,” etc., they moaned.

There’s no denying the reality of sharp regional tensions. But let’s be clear: neither Western nor Atlantic alienation jeopardizes the state. The Québec national question, on the other hand, is much more than a “regional” issue, and it does indeed threaten the federation and the stability of capitalist rule, which is why the ruling class and its labor lieutenants are united against “separatism.”

“Regionalism” is exaggerated to diminish Québec. The truth is that all the major parties drew support from all regions across English Canada. So why the gross distortion of the popular vote when it comes to representation in Parliament? Under the British-based, “first-past-the-post” electoral system, the candidate with the plurality in each constituency wins the seat — even if s/he garners only, for example, 30% of the votes cast, and the nearest rival gets 29%, and others divide up the rest. Thus, depending on how the vote splits in a given part of the country, strongly supported parties can be shut out from seats. In Ontario, for example, the Tories with 19% of the votes in that province captured only one seat. Reform also with 19% there, won zero seats.

Likewise, the NDP with 11% got no seats. The Liberals, with 49% of the ballots took all but two of the 103 seats at stake in Ontario. And that skewed harvest determined the overall election result.

### Proportional Representation and Bourgeois Democracy

There is an alternative to such gross electoral distortion. By giving each party a share of the seats equivalent to their share of the popular vote (proportional representation (PR) — a system common in Europe and around the world), this problem could be remedied. Parties would simply publish a list of their representatives in each province, sending to Parliament the number that corresponds to their share of the vote.

But Canada’s rulers, who are accustomed to a three-party system, are loath to agree to PR because it would entrench a more diverse multiparty system and destabilize government. Left-wing radicals might even find a platform in Parliament.

Precisely because PR would increase democracy, give minority political currents

a voice, and make capitalist governments more susceptible to the demands of the masses, socialists favor and fight for PR. But the growing crisis of the global economic system makes capitalism and democracy less and less compatible, thus stiffening the resistance of capitalists to PR.

Have no illusions that such a change would transform bourgeois democracy or the state. It would simply improve the conditions of struggle for those fighting for revolutionary transformation of class society. And that’s a good enough reason to support such a democratic reform.

### Back to the Streets

Many people regarded the election as an artificial and unwelcome distraction. This is reflected in the voter turnout, 67%, the lowest for a federal election in decades. Liberal Party opportunism, and the tendency of most parties to put constitutional posturing in place of effective policies for job creation and meeting human needs, fed public cynicism enormously.

But the campaign was instructive in an unintended way: it demonstrated, once again, that capitalist elections solve nothing; they only reflect the level of the class struggle.

The fact that almost no change was registered through the election process indicates that the level of the class struggle is decidedly low. This is not because workers are unwilling to fight the bosses’ agenda. Days of Action general strikes in six Ontario cities have demonstrated the opposite over the past 19 months. It is rather because of the lack of leadership on the part of the full-time officials who dominate the labor movement.

The Canadian Labour Congress’s cross-country protest on May 3 was a farce — due mainly to the lack of serious commitment and effort by the brass. Most private sector union leaders remain wedded to a perspective of strictly electoral action — the sheer idiocy of which was again on full display on June 2.

As more workers are coming to realize, the real fight begins in the work places and in the streets. Following the example of workers in the Atlantic provinces (not to mention France, South Korea, and Italy), we should escalate the struggle against all the measures of the bourgeois offensive. To avoid lasting defeat of the workers’ movement, which is at risk in the current situation, mass protests and general strikes are needed to replace the corporate agenda with a Workers’ Agenda.

Parliament will then be sure to sit up and take notice. □

## **First Weeks of New Congo Government**

*From International Viewpoint (IV), monthly publication of the Fourth International.*

*Before becoming health minister, Dr. J.B. Sondji was director of Kinshasa Hospital. He is a leader of the Patriotic Front (Front Patriotique), the main radical left party in Kinshasa. Dr. Sondji was interviewed in Kinshasa by telephone on June 1, 1997, by Albert Mathieu. A longer, French version of this interview is available on request. (To subscribe to IV, see inside back cover.)*

**Question:** What has happened to the remains of the repressive forces of the Mobutu regime?

**Answer:** Most have been disarmed and have surrendered their arms and uniforms. We have discovered an incredible quantity of weapons in Kinshasa, in barracks, at the university, and in private houses. The officers of the Alliance are puzzled. We wonder: why didn't Mobutu's soldiers defend the city, since they had all the military resources they could have needed? Many of Mobutu's troops fled to Congo-Brazzaville, contributing to the instability there. There will doubtless be some talk now about integrating part of Mobutu's armed forces into the new army, but it isn't planned for the moment.

**Q.:** What relationship do the Alliance troops have with the population?

**A.:** Generally, the relationship is good. These are young, but very disciplined soldiers. Obviously, there have been mistakes, like the much-publicized prohibition of miniskirts and hot pants. But these are isolated incidents, and the authorities have spoken on the radio to assure the population that there are no directives of this type, and that any victims of aggression from the Alliance troops should make a complaint in the offices which the new authorities are opening.

You have to understand that we still have 15,000 Alliance soldiers sleeping outdoors, because the former regime's demobilized troops and their families are occupying the barracks. We haven't expelled them, because there is nowhere for them to go. This is causing all kinds of logistical problems and, obviously, the occasional regrettable incident.

**Q.:** How will you select delegates to the June 1998 Constituent Assembly?

**A.:** We quickly realized that it would be impossible to organize a Constituent Assembly this summer, as we had promised. The democratic opposition's experience with the so-called Sovereign National Conference a few years ago

showed that, in a large country like this, you need time to organize any truly representative event. My own party, the Patriotic Front is pushing for a speedy clarification and publication of the government's plans for this Assembly.

**Q.:** Will the new Congo have a multi-party system? Or will political parties be suspended?

**A.:** For the moment, we have suspended party activities, like large street demonstrations. But the parties themselves have not been banned or suspended. The Patriotic Front functions normally, and we continue to have regular meetings with the membership. In areas where there is an office of the Alliance, we have held a couple of joint meetings, and there has been no interference.

The new government has clearly said that there is no plan to ban political parties. But certain interests are spreading rumors to the contrary. It must be clear that until the new authorities have mastered the situation, we must prevent these particular interests and the supporters of the previous regime from blocking the installation of the new regime.

**Q.:** What discussions led to the formation of the new government?

**A.:** I can't say. But I do know that our party, the Front Patriotique, was the first group which the Alliance contacted when it entered Kinshasa. [The Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberation of the Congo (French initials, AFDL) led the armed struggle that overthrew the Mobutu regime in Kinshasa on May 17.] Since most of the Alliance leaders didn't know Kinshasa, and the political "microcosm" here, we advised them that it would be premature to form a government in the first 72 hours. We suggested that they wait, and make a serious selection of the new members. In particular, we warned them of the interests grouped around Etienne Tshisekedi, and the danger that they might prevent us from managing the country.

Most of public opinion, including within Tshisekedi's own party, the UDPS, is divided in its judgment of the Alliance.

But most of the population is in favor of the changes which have taken place.

**Q.:** What are the first measures planned by the new government?

**A.:** First, a rapid improvement in the public transport system. Then measures to help the jobs situation. We have created a kind of "infobank" to try to match unemployed people who have skills with those who could employ them.

As health minister, I have been instructed to overhaul a number of medical establishments. In the first phase, I hope to establish six new centers, one in each province. I will also try to end the system whereby patients must buy their own medicines, outside the hospitals. This means supplying the hospitals with the necessary pharmaceutical products.

We are also determined to improve the security of the citizens and their property. In agriculture, we will take measures to improve the supply of food to the population.

And we will reform the currency since, at the moment, the Zaire monetary system has broken down, which makes exchanges difficult. The National Bank of South Africa will help us introduce the new currency.

**Q.:** The Alliance says it wants a "social market economy." What will this mean in policy terms?

**A.:** Look. The "social market economy" is a market economy which tries to take certain social aspects into account. It is a capitalist type of economy. We in the Patriotic Front oppose this orientation, just as we said in the Sovereign National Conference.

We think that, now that the Alliance dominates a national government composed of various tendencies, we should discuss and reconsider this conception of "social market economy." Let those who propose it, say exactly what they mean!

For the time being, it is hard to say what the Alliance really thinks, because they have been so preoccupied with organizing and carrying out the war. Only now are the fundamental questions being asked.

*Continued on page 24*

# Motown Surprises

by Frank Lovell

The two days of protest demonstrations in Detroit June 20–21 (billed as “Action Motown ’97”) turned out to be a continuous series of surprisingly massive and spirited events. None were more surprised by the presence and vocal participation of the tens of thousands of rank-and-file union members and community activists than were the radical supporters of the 2,000 fired newspaper workers in whose defense the demonstrations were organized. The two-year struggle of the Detroit newspaper workers to regain their jobs leading up to these demonstrations exemplifies a rising social consciousness in the working class and growing militancy in the union movement.

The stalemate between the fired Detroit newspaper workers and management, which began as a company-provoked strike on July 13, 1995, became a recognized lock-out. The two newspapers responsible, the *Detroit News* (owned by the Gannett chain) and the *Detroit Free Press* (a Knight-Ridder publication), are jointly operated. In 1989 these two corporations, pleading poverty, sought court approval to merge their printing operations, promising to maintain separate editorial policies representing different political interests and community needs. It soon became clear that these corporations had joined forces to reduce the work force, eliminate duplicate overhead costs, and eventually destroy the printing trades unions.

In the 1992 contract negotiations the unions were forced to give up jobs. At that time the losses amounted to a total of more than 500 jobs, given up without struggle by the Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions (MCNU), representing Teamsters, The Newspaper Guild (reporters, photographers, clerical and maintenance workers, etc.), the Typographical Union, and the Graphic Communications International Union.

In the 1995 round of negotiations the Detroit Newspaper Agency (DNA), representing joint management, was prepared to deal the death blow to the unions. Everything was in place to hire scabs and security guards. A strike was triggered, as planned, by unilaterally notifying Guild members at the *Detroit News* that “merit pay” would replace union wage scales.

This terminated all semblance of meaningful negotiations. The anticipated reflex response of the newspaper union council, MCNU, was to call a strike for which no preparations had been made by any of the unions involved.

The leadership was unable to deal with the scabs that almost immediately began filling the jobs of striking workers, nor did it have any way of closing down scab delivery of the papers. Almost half of the Guild membership stayed on the job or returned to work within a few days when it became clear that the papers were continuing to publish. The best the union leadership was capable of was to hold meetings and invoke Detroit’s union traditions, “the city of Reuther and Hoffa.” The leaders of the striking unions approved mass picketing and endorsed the idea of trying to stop delivery of the scab papers. But they proceeded as if the old labor-management collaboration of earlier times still prevailed. The DNA turned a deaf ear to their pleas for further negotiations.

## Early Support for Strikers

The union movement around the country was startled by the brazen anti-union action of these two corporations, Gannett and Knight-Ridder. In September 1995, less than two months after the strike started, top AFL-CIO officials showed up in Detroit to help mobilize mass demonstrations. A Labor Day rally, followed a few days later with mass picketing by 5,000 strikers and supporters, disrupted distribution of the scab papers.

This action was the culmination of regular Saturday night picketing and mass demonstrations at the scab printing facility in suburban Sterling Heights which started when the strike was called as traditional union support action, the aim being to stop delivery of the scab papers’ Sunday edition. Street skirmishes were regular occurrences.

The Sterling Heights police department was out every week in force, hired by DNA with the complicity of municipal office holders and other local politicians. The police used tear gas on the pickets and beat them with clubs, arresting some and hospitalizing others. But the massive show of union support and solidarity during the 1995 Labor Day events was differ-

ent from before. Community support was broader and became more outraged as police brutality continued.

In that major confrontation on the memorable Labor Day week of action the delivery trucks finally broke through the picket line but only with considerable damage. The following week the Sunday scab edition was taken out by helicopter. And following that the publishers got a court injunction limiting the number of pickets. The official leadership ordered all strikers and supporters to obey the injunction.

## Official Strike Strategy

New strike strategy was devised. The official strike leadership, constituted from the beginning as the MCNU and consisting entirely of entrenched elected officials, retained control of the situation. It was in a position to draw upon the resources of the AFL-CIO to pay strike benefits to those who had been fired, were unable to find suitable work, and willing to actively support the strike.

They were all skilled newspaper workers and before 1995 ended a union-sponsored weekly paper was on the streets of Detroit, *The Detroit Sunday Journal*. It carries mostly local news and commentary, makes occasional reference to international news, gives baseball scores and the results of other sports events, prints a TV guide, and keeps the public informed of developments in the newspaper strike.

The MCNU also announced the need for a “corporate campaign” that would expose and embarrass management at the scab papers and attack their supporters in the corporate and financial structure of this country. This strategy, whose alleged aim was to save the jobs of all strikers and win back union recognition, also called for renewed appeals to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to enforce established labor law that requires employers to abide by fair labor practices. Beyond this not much in the way of ideas or action was forthcoming from the MCNU.

## The General Climate and State of the Unions

It can be argued that if four or five years earlier the Detroit newspapers had fired their unionized work force and replaced it with trained scabs, protected by a small private army of Vance “security guards,” backed up by city police, and sanctioned by a legal system that protects corporate interests (given the general political climate and depressed state of the union movement at the time) not much would

have happened. The unions would have registered some protests and the papers would have continued publishing as usual.

It is true that there have been determined strike actions in the past several years when unions were in sharp decline. But throughout the 1980s and the first half of this decade, since the Reagan administration crushed the air traffic controllers strike (PATCO), several especially hard-fought and highly publicized strikes have been lost. These include Phelps-Dodge, Hormel, International Paper, Greyhound, Eastern Air Lines, and others.

The struggle against the Caterpillar corporation has seen an on-and-off series of strikes and job actions since early 1991. In April 1992 the striking Caterpillar workers returned to work without a contract after management threatened to hire scabs. The UAW at that time appealed to the NLRB. In June 1994 the union sanctioned strike action to pressure the government to enforce favorable NLRB rulings and to win a contract. Union-management negotiations continued during the strike and management continued production at all facilities in Decatur and Peoria, Illinois, and in other cities. Finally, after 18 months the strikers voted in December 1995 (at the urging of the UAW International leadership) to reject Caterpillar's "best offer" and return to work. Some had illusions that the government would intervene on their behalf, but that hasn't happened. Meantime union militants have been forced to retire with few pension rights. Many were fired.

### **Detroit Different from Caterpillar**

The Detroit newspaper strike, while appearing to have much in common with the earlier UAW strike at Caterpillar, is different. It is different because the times are different: the labor movement has regained some sense of its responsibility to the working class; the union bureaucracy has been jolted out of its complacent stupor; union members are seeking allies and demanding action of their leaders; some lessons of recent labor history are beginning to register in the consciousness of union members and their elected officials; a new social awareness and class identity seems to be permeating working class behavior; the national political climate has shifted from the overshadowing governmental stultification of the 1980s to popular awareness of the limits of government and the pervasiveness of corruption in high places.

This gradual shift in the relationship of class forces has contributed to the unpredictable course of this strike and can be expected to bring new surprises before this struggle against these newspaper corporations winds down or is brought to a victorious conclusion.

### **Change in the Air**

The fact that the central leaders of both factions in the struggle within the executive council of the AFL-CIO for control of the 1995 convention and the federation's future came to Detroit to demonstrate their support of the newspaper strike was a sure sign that change was in the air at the time.

It is hard to imagine that George Meany or Lane Kirkland as head of organized labor would have made such a gesture of strike support. They belonged to another time and reacted to the dominant social pressures of their day. In the Caterpillar strike UAW international president Owen Bieber, responsible at the time for strike strategy, went to Decatur and spoke at a mass demonstration against the anti-union corporation. But he brought only encouraging words to the strikers. When Thomas Donahue, then AFL-CIO president, went to Detroit he brought financial support to the official strike committee, and his running mate boasted about it at the AFL-CIO convention in their bid for reelection. And Sweeney, not to be outdone, promised not only money but more vital organizational support. And that has been forthcoming as promised.

When the local officials of the Detroit newspaper unions called off mass picketing in compliance with a court injunction in September 1995 some of the most active supporters of the strike until then thought the strike was doomed to defeat. But before the year was out the weekly newspaper, *Sunday Journal*, was launched in support of the strike; and union militants, unwilling to give up, were preparing to organize rank-and-file actions in support of the leadership's announced "new strategy" and put together their Unity/Victory Caucus for this purpose. They invited participation of strike supporters, limiting voting rights at their meetings to strikers. This was a departure from disparate or sporadic rank-and-file activity in most other strikes. This organized opposition union caucus, coalescing during the strike, was unusual. Nothing quite like this, with the influence it exerted, ever developed elsewhere in the recent history of strike activity.

As strike actions continued, largely symbolic, at the start of 1996 the newspaper publishers began work on a flanking attack against the unions. By mid-year they were prepared to file a lawsuit under the Racketeer Influence and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) against the Teamsters and other striking unions. To avoid this the union officials signed a "consent agreement" with the NLRB and the U.S. district court not to interfere with scab newspaper operations anywhere, thereby giving away union rights to picket or to participate in civil disobedience. This cowardly retreat prompted a layer of secondary union leaders, previously loyal to the do-nothing top leadership, to join the campaign for mass action.

### **Popular Sympathy**

The strikers were encouraged in their tenacious determination to keep their struggle alive by a constantly growing popular sympathy for their cause, fired in part by the arrogance of the newspaper publishers. Early in the strike a broad support group had been organized called Labor/Community/Religious Coalition. Similar support groups are often organized in strike situations. But the support movement in Detroit was different in that it was more substantial, having the solid backing of influential church congregations and some popular members of city government. And as the strike dragged on the support movement grew instead of withering away, as often happens. So this was another aspect of the Detroit newspaper strike that was different, reflecting the changing political climate.

### **The Struggle for a National March**

The militants and their allies had hoped to organize a massive demonstration in Detroit on the first anniversary of the strike, July 13, 1996. They were unable to find support in the union movement. But for the Labor Day demonstration top AFL-CIO officials came to Detroit, including federation president John Sweeney and Teamster president Ron Carey. Sweeney participated in a pre-Labor Day civil disobedience action and left town for other actions. Strikers and supporters rallied at the *Detroit News* building in downtown Detroit at the end of the official Labor Day march. They were determined to win support for a "National Day of Solidarity" in Detroit to focus attention on the corporate crimes of Gannett and Knight-Ridder in that city.

Throughout the rest of the year the militants continued to implement the "corporate campaign strategy," which consists of devising new and imaginative ways of harassing big shots in corporate management, hoping in this way to cut off some financial connections essential to the scab newspaper operations. In the process they exposed corporate greed and crime. These efforts produced the necessary experience for several teams of "Road Warriors" (corporate campaign troopers deployed effectively in earlier strikes, especially in the miners' strike against the Pittston coal company and in the Staley strike). These teams were assembled from the ranks of strikers who discovered speaking and organizing talents previously unknown to themselves, and were soon used effectively in tours around the country to bring the message of the Detroit newspaper strike to the union movement in places where this strike was news.

By year end the official strike leadership in Detroit and some international union presidents, particularly Morton Bahr of the Communications Workers of America (CWA), had decided that the strike was lost and should be packed up. They began talking about offering "unconditional return to work," as had been done in the Caterpillar strike. But this was not received kindly by the strikers, nor by their supporters.

During the year union activists and their supporters had reshuffled their combined forces to form a new organization called Action Coalition of Strikers and Supporters (ACOSS). And within some local unions opposition movements developed to challenge the incumbent officials, particularly in Typographical Union local 18 (a CWA affiliate), where the rebels succeeded eventually in displacing some of the bureaucratic hangers-on.

Toward the end of 1996 ACOSS launched a campaign to pressure the top AFL-CIO leadership to sponsor a national union march on Detroit and demand an end to strike breaking. This was countered in February 1997 by the official local strike leadership, backed by the top AFL-CIO officialdom, with an offer to the newspaper publishers to return to work unconditionally, the rationalization being that with this move "the NLRB will help us win."

Nevertheless, a decision was won at the winter meeting of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, February 17-19, to issue a call for a national labor mobilization in Detroit in June.

## March Preparations Not Highly Visible

This, then, is the background synopsis of the Detroit days of protest (Action Motown '97), June 20-21. This does not explain, however, why many local and national volunteer organizers of these actions were fearful that the turnout would disappoint their hopes. Mostly this was based on what they saw in their efforts around the country to get union endorsement and money for bus and air transportation. The teams of road warriors out of Detroit, for example, failed to get the formal endorsements and pledges of participation asked for from labor councils in several major cities they visited. Whatever the union movement was doing in response to the official letter of endorsement addressed to all AFL-CIO central labor bodies, signed by federation president John Sweeney, was not highly visible.

There was no broad publicity, no full-page advertisements in major capitalist newspapers, and no spot announcements on national radio and TV. Some strike supporters in Detroit and elsewhere got the impression that, as they said, "the bureaucrats are sabotaging the Detroit newspaper strike."

In the months after the winter meeting of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, leading up to the June days of protest, far more effort went into the planning of those events than anyone (including many leading activists) could know or fully appreciate because there was no formally elected "coordinating center." The organizational structure of the union movement went about the business of sending delegations in the way it usually does for officially sponsored events, nothing unusual about this one. The churches and community groups did their part by sending out calls around the country and inviting prominent representatives to bring messages and demonstrate solidarity.

The official local union body that remained formally in charge, the Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions, was committed to the "orderly conduct of these events." Accordingly it approved publicity in the *Sunday Journal* and authorized the drafting and printing of an 8-page brochure, which included a map of the parade route, mobilization points of several union contingents, location and phone numbers of union reception centers, a schedule of events (seven on Friday and nine on Saturday), a telephone "hot line" for information about the events, and other useful information.

The official slogan of the day was: "The Newspaper Workers' Struggle Continues for Justice and Fair Contracts — IT'S NOT OVER!" A UAW member and active supporter of the newspaper strike, writing in the radical magazine *Against The Current*, made the following observation on the lessons of his experience:

One is that the militancy of the rank and file does not automatically produce the degree of organization needed to wage a successful struggle. Another is that incumbent union officials, even if largely discredited, retain more power than we anticipated.

It should be added that the 13-million-member AFL-CIO organizational structure, however cumbersome, is capable of mobilizing far more troops than most radicals realize. And the corollary is that no other organization that seeks to represent the working class is capable of calling out more than a few score followers.

In Detroit and from around the country rank and file union activists, various radical groups, Labor Party chapters, and other strike supporters contributed in various ways to the buoyant spirit of the occasion. The June mobilization committee of ACOSS announced future action plans in a widely distributed 4-page handout that contained useful information on "Battle-ground Detroit — [how] Corporate America wages war on workers," and a schedule of the officially announced events plus a strikers benefit social and the Detroit Labor Party Open House.

## The Detroit Actions

The days of protest and mass demonstrations began as scheduled, promptly at noon on Friday, June 20, with a prayer vigil in front of the *Detroit News* building, scene of many other protests during the long struggle. But this prayer vigil was not simply a gathering of the faithful. It was attended by a big crowd of protesters, many from out of town. And so it was throughout the day, including at the open house and barbecue at the new headquarters for the newspaper unions.

The Friday night teach-in at Wayne State University in downtown Detroit was a fitting curtain raiser to the massive protest march on Saturday. Here was a foretaste of what was coming, a sense of the size and spirit of the anti-corporate pro-union demonstrations. The auditorium which held about 500 was packed to overflowing. Many who could not find room inside remained in the foyer to hear talks by Elaine Bernard of the Harvard Trade Union Program and Adolph Reed, Jr., a

professor at Northwestern University in Chicago. They were the keynote speakers. Both are advocates of the fledgling Labor Party based on the union movement, and Reed is a contributing editor of *Labor Party Press*, official publication of the Labor Party. These are not the type of speakers usually chosen by entrenched union officials to set the tone of union-sponsored events.

### Teach-In Sets the Tone

Elaine Bernard is a popular speaker at radical labor gatherings and socialist scholars conferences. She explains in terms that can be understood by working people that capitalist society is class structured, that the working class produces all social wealth, that the evils of capitalism are inherent in the system, that the greed and political corruption of the employing class is essential to the exploitation of the working class, and that only the workers through their own independent organizations (unions mainly) can transform society and create jobs and justice for all. Adolph Reed subscribes to the basic socialist concepts expounded by Bernard, and on this occasion explained further that in order to successfully fight the employers the workers must have their own political party, independent of the Republican and Democratic parties that are owned and controlled by the employers.

This teach-in was structured to allow for questions and discussion following the keynote speeches. But there was more discussion than questions, mostly by disgruntled observers of the newspapers strike who deplored the strategic mistakes of the union officials responsible. On this general subject Elaine Bernard responded that unions are by far the most democratic institutions in this country, and that those who disagree with official union policy should form political caucuses in their unions to change the policy.

Following this a panel that included a popular local politician, a respected religious leader, an academic, and a militant union leader spoke about the current stage of the lockout, excoriated corporate management, and brought an official announcement of a sweeping NLRB decision that happened to coincide with these mass demonstrations in support of the newspaper workers. This was the inspiring concluding note of the teach-in. "It's fabulous," said Maryann Mahaffey. She is the most popular politician in Detroit, president of the City Council and a staunch supporter of the victimized workers from the first day they were force out on strike.

The Reverend Edwin Rowe, likewise an early supporter of the workers, denounced conscienceless publishers and praised the 900 other local clerics who chose to become advocates of justice.

### Role of Teamsters Rep Zielinski

The last speaker on the panel was a young union leader, Mike Zielinski, an international representative of the Teamsters Union. It was left to him to announce the favorable NLRB decision and to speak about its contents and meaning. He displayed an early page proof of the special front cover of the June 22-28 *Sunday Journal* with the banner headline *GUILTY!* This would be ready for mass distribution to the tens of thousands who would march the next day.

It was clear that Zielinski was widely known and well liked. Before he began speaking when his turn came there were friendly calls from the audience and scattered applause. He spoke about some late-breaking developments and gave some details of the NLRB decision. But he warned that the decision has yet to be enforced. And he reminded the audience that the outlaw publishers will appeal the NLRB decision. In most cases appeals take years, and the case isn't heard until long after the strike is forgotten. Zielinski urged no faith in the NLRB to win back jobs for those fired and called for continuation of the mass action that will bring the employers to their knees.

Zielinski is one of a series of international organizers sent to Detroit by Teamster President Ron Carey to bolster the strike and direct the corporate campaign that has kept the spotlight of publicity on the rogue newspaper publishers. Zielinski's contribution demonstrated what a difference a professional full-time organizer, with a clear class-struggle outlook, can make in situations of this kind. It was generally recognized that future demonstrations will be better served with law on their side than in the past. So the teach-in adjourned amidst optimism for the next day's march and renewed confidence in the future.

### The March Itself

The big parade was bigger than anyone expected, a jubilant march of at least 60,000 from Detroit's baseball stadium to the riverfront plaza. (*The Detroit Journal* claimed more than 100,000.) The march was led by AFL-CIO president John Sweeney; the federation's Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka; International President Ron Carey of the Teamsters

union; Dr. Joseph Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Michigan AFL-CIO president Frank Garrison; Al Derey, chairman of the Metro Council of Newspaper Unions; UAW International Vice President Ernest Lofton; fired newspaper workers Florence Alexander and Sandra Davis, and other union activists.

They were followed by banner-waving crowds of tens of thousands of union members. Dozens and dozens of local unions brought contingents and carried their local banners. The auto workers union was represented by different districts and many locals. The teachers union also brought a large contingent, consisting of several locals. Nearly all AFL-CIO international unions were officially represented. The Labor Party contingent, made up of chapter members from California to Minneapolis to New York, was impressive. One of the memorable sights in the parade was the half-dozen or so huge truck tractors and trailers bearing signs from Teamster joint councils in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Massachusetts, and elsewhere. The overall impression of the parade could be stated this way: "Here is the labor movement, with its allies, on the march again."

In the plaza at the end of the march many speeches were made and large crowds stayed to listen. There was music and the singing of union songs, including various renditions of "Solidarity Forever." A special 8-page commemorative section of the *Detroit Sunday Journal* (June 29) quoted excerpts from the talks of influential union leaders, including Sweeney and Carey.

### Labor's Allies

An excerpt from Dr. Lowery's talk was a reminder that a new era is emerging and the union movement is making some necessary adjustments to attract its natural allies. He said, "We're moving from the anti-communist hysteria, cold-war era to an era in America as yet unborn. Civil rights, human rights, workers' rights, women's rights, children's rights, we will come together to ensure that this will not be an America where corporate greed can crush people and crush unions."

Linda Foley, international president of the Newspaper Guild, expressed a common sentiment. Addressing the newspaper executives, she said, "Yesterday's decision by the NLRB confirms what everybody at this rally knew: you are guilty. You can appeal that decision all the way to

*Continued on page 37*

# The Advantages of Taking a Bus to Detroit

by Pinky Cortez

**F**or the days of Action! Motown-97 (the weekend of June 20–22) I rode to Detroit from another Midwestern city together with two dozen other union members of a local that had chartered a bus. According to the organizers of the Detroit rally as of a week before the event, at least 105 buses like ours were scheduled to arrive in the city over the weekend. Besides the value of a good turnout for the strikers, the mobilization had positive effects for the people who traveled to Detroit. The strikers' experiences will have a wider audience outside of Detroit and activists around the country have been invigorated.

Take the bus I rode on for example. With the exception of one officer, the participants were rank and file, people who gave up a shift or two and a weekend to ride on a bus and sleep on the hard floor of a union hall in Detroit. Some of the people who rode hadn't been to a union meeting since the date they were sworn in; others were old activists who'd burned out and quit participating in the local a few years before. By going to the Detroit rally, they also began to take an active part in organizing their own local.

In preparation for the march, the local's officers and executive board made the financial commitment to provide a coach and food. The strikers' organization helped out with lodging and made the local's money stretch farther than it would have otherwise. Local leadership promoted the trip to Detroit in its newsletters, shop chair notifications, at union meetings, and in one-on-one contacts with the members.

## The Problem of Mobilizing the Ranks

Even though labor has the arguments, the logic, the economics, the politics, and the moral high ground to improve society, the task of activating a local's membership is difficult. A cause that has no validation in the corporate media and takes place far away blurs into the seemingly innumerable other causes that need people's attention. This question — how to motivate union members to get involved when they have no custom of involvement and are relatively comfortable — is central to the labor movement's need to be reactivated.

Rather than relying on arguments, statistics, or loyalty to the organization, an appeal to people's senses — the direct experience of being part of a massive rally, along with 125,000 other people in a righteous purpose — that may well prove to be the lasting effect and powerful proof that people need to become stronger union activists.

Being part of a mass demonstration taps into a common, spiritual power. The people on the coach took part in such an action, and it was invigorating, even "radicalizing." It's not possible for even the two most powerful newspaper chains in the country to spin the story otherwise for these participants.

## The Trip to Detroit

Our trip to Detroit started inauspiciously. Early on Friday morning 25 people showed up, though a fully loaded bus would have had room for 47 passengers. At the last minute a few people canceled and then a few more simply didn't show. After we started off for Detroit, I made a point of asking about a dozen why they were going. Some had very definite ideas and a lot of background knowledge on the strike; others knew very little, other than that the general idea was to help other working people and contest corporate power.

The two drivers of the coach were union members. That's the reason this particular bus company got the contract. One driver had a fair idea of why people were headed to Detroit while his partner had no clue. He said something to the effect: "I don't know anything about it. I don't get involved in that stuff. Don't want to." Hardly an encouraging statement of working class solidarity.

On the day-long ride some good things started to happen. People talked and got to know other folks in the local. Hours and hours of watching the interstate scenery pass by was good for conversation. Someone popped a copy of "American Dream" into the coach's VCR, a film on Local P-9's strike in Austin, Minnesota, against the Hormel meatpacking company. It inspired some great discussion, as most people hadn't seen it before and had little knowledge of that strike. It was only natural that people drew parallels to what was going on in Detroit.

## Good News on Arrival

We arrived in Detroit around 9 at night and found the Teamsters local on Trumbull Avenue where we would be staying. One of the two strikers who would be showing us around town that evening got on the bus and announced that an administrative law judge (ALJ) had just ruled that the companies (Gannett and Knight-Ridder) had committed unfair labor practices. This opened a deeper legal chasm for the company and improved the strikers' chances of getting back pay and reinstatement. The strikers were elated, and the members of the local on our bus were, too. We got copies of the strikers' newspaper, the Detroit *Sunday Journal*, with the headline reading "Guilty!" It described the judge's ruling.

In spite of the long ride, people really came to life. They understood that the event in which they were to participate had already had a definite impact, if it could prompt a decision that had sat on the back burner since testimony concluded eight months before.

We walked a couple of blocks to a bar across the street from the baseball park to catch the evening news, to see and hear what type of local coverage would be given to recent history's most important legal decision for the working class in the United States. Just about nothing. I think people were surprised at how little coverage the decision and the upcoming march got, and I could hear the rocks banging together.

## Detroit Strikers Tell Their Story

On Friday night, the union members and I learned a lot from listening to the two Detroit strikers who acted as our guides and hosts. From the strikers' sources inside the plants came reports of how the people who ripped off the strikers' jobs were now ripping off the plant upon the news of the ALJ's decision, taking tools and whatever wasn't nailed down. The strikers shared accounts about how the mercenary guards were structured and their modus operandi, security guard and police riots that hadn't made even the alternative press, the continued payoffs to the suburban police forces, the checks from the Auto Workers in support of the strikers, what the strikers had gone through, the divorces, the foreclosures,



the repossessions, the stunts the corporations have pulled, the overflow audience at the teach-in earlier that night, the signs that the next day would see a massive rally, and the victories the newspaper workers have had in the course of their struggle. There wasn't enough time to hear it all.

It seemed that the strikers were in a different state of mind. To the extent that material conditions are a precondition for life, they needed shelter, food, and clothing, but I sensed that they were "living large," living a commitment to an epic struggle. They had no money, no insurance, and had taken substantial material losses. They were in conflict with two of the wealthiest and most powerful corporations in the United States.

But they had courage and they had hope and they were fighting into their third year. It's an existence that's a step out from where most of us are at. Their mood influenced us. An important consequence of this rally was already taking place; the striker morale was building and so was ours.

### **A Visit to the Newspaper Plant**

About a dozen union members went with the strikers to the plant downtown. We encountered four people in their early twenties. They engaged a couple of our group in a quick conversation. A few other people out prowled around the plant.

"Commies," said the striker, like a tour guide pointing out the sites.

"They've been helpful, huh?"

"No."

"I thought that they'd be a help."

"They start shit on the strike line, and run to the back as soon as it gets going."

I guess there are things more fun than to have your head cracked when someone else starts the action.

Outside the entrance gate, I met a couple of guys in our union, from Baltimore. It turned out we knew people in common. A couple of squad cars were parked across the street. A press operator who the strikers knew — one of the returnees — came out for a smoke break and told us about how it was inside the plant. The press operator was glad to see the twenty or so people who were in town for the demonstration.

The scabs wouldn't come out for a break. The scabs, he said, hadn't given him a hard time, as he thought they would when he went back to work. He said he went home feeling drained for the first week, expecting trouble all the time, but

when he realized the scabs didn't want trouble with him, he relaxed.

He confirmed that the judge's decision had produced a rising tension inside the plant. He talked about how the company had provided cots and box lunches for the weekend. I could picture a scab reclining alongside a press, yelling to the foreman, pointing: "Hey, gimme another box lunch. I'm feeling spent."

A couple of women told the strikers that the cops had arrested one of their union brothers earlier in the evening. They mused as to which station the cops took him to. No one was visible outside the huge complex on the river, except the silhouette of a guard behind the smoked glass of the guard shack. When the press operator had to go back to work, he showed his pass at the gate to get in, and a couple of guards materialized, looking tense with their hands on walkie-talkies and clubs as they let him in. They looked afraid.

"Hey, let me in," said a striker. The guards retreated to the guardhouse.

We met up with our pals back at the bar and headed back up to the Teamsters local where we were staying. We stayed up and talked into the wee hours of the morning about what was going on, and what we had seen down at the plant. Finally we each found a niche in the large union hall and went to sleep. Rain began to fall.

### **Saturday Morning: To the Suburbs**

On Saturday morning, we gathered our sleeping bags and gear and packed it onto the bus in front of the Teamsters hall on Trumbull. It was muggy and overcast. The staging area around the hall was vacant except for a collection of semi-trucks with Teamster logos parked around the headquarters. We boarded our coach and headed out for breakfast and the scheduled action in Grosse Pointe Farms, a suburb northeast of Detroit. Someone in the restaurant noticed our union T-shirts, made the connection, and asked us if we were in town for the rally.

The sun started to work its way out while we were in the restaurant. It became a gorgeous day.

We got back on the bus. The excitement was building. Someone gave a briefing as to what was going to happen. It still was not clear what would happen, because most of us hadn't taken part in a demonstration before. The bus threaded through a residential neighborhood which looked pricy. It looked more than pricy. We arrived at the staging area, a church near a

commercial intersection with several score of curious Saturday morning shoppers, police, and rally marshals. Several hundred people were there when we arrived around 9:30 a.m. More coaches pulled up while we joined the group.

We walked together with a certain pride, of being together as a local, even if we didn't know each other prior to the rally and were still getting to know each other. We were proud of the people and the cause we were joining. We got into the crowd and mixed with the people, becoming part of the movement.

Our numbers grew. A few of the local's members had brought their cameras and they moved in and out of the crowd, intent on snapping shots of all the new things and people they were taking in. People were discovering that, in comparison, being part of a rally beat the heck out of attending a union meeting.

The low-key people from our group were shaking noisemakers, cans with pebbles taped over the opening. Other folks were getting picket signs and throwing them over their shoulders. After the speeches we proceeded to march, pleasantly psyched up. We were going to pay a visit to the home of Frank Vega, CEO of the Detroit News Agency, Inc.

Our dignified, strong, and silent members were now shouting chants and laughing. We were having fun. The people in the commercial strip were amused, checking us out. Someone would hand them the Frank Vega fact sheet, letting them know about their neighbor's penchant for drunk driving, anti-worker attitudes, and insider trading. I looked around and I guessed that there were at least a thousand people.

We made it to Frank's swank place and circled the boulevard island in front, chanting slogans for about an hour. Along the way, the neighbors grinned and took information sheets on the skullduggery of Vega and the Detroit News Agency. The security guards didn't look too stressed — what with the cops, marshals, and volunteer lawyers with "Legal" armbands making their work easy. More people spoke, including the Reverend Ed Rowe of the Central United Methodist Church downtown. People were enjoying themselves — enjoying the power of doing something right and en masse, in taking it to the otherwise anonymous suit, exposing him for all the misery he'd put people through.

### **The March**

Heading back to the city, we got caught up in traffic barricades. A huge chunk of the city would be taken up with the march.

Back at the staging area at the Teamsters hall, the neighborhood was transformed. Several hundred people had materialized. We took our "sticks" (our picket signs) and joined in, filtering down Trumbull. Two blocks closer to downtown, the hundreds became thousands. I looked back from the rise of the freeway bridge and saw thousands of people filling the street that we had just been walking, approaching from blocks back. By the stadium, thousands had become tens of thousands of people with colorful banners, picket signs, hats, and T-shirts.

We hooked up with people from the other locals of our union from around the country while waiting to begin marching. It was like old home week. I was impressed by all the participating locals, many in which I didn't know anyone.

The march started and we walked for a good couple of miles. At the intersection of Michigan and Trumbull, I looked northwest at the UAW contingent and was amazed. The people filled the street four or six lanes wide and went back for blocks. I couldn't see the end of the crowd. We were all looking around — at ourselves — the biggest labor rally for years. Folks were chanting and singing, and over this came the occasional boom of a scab newspaper box being kicked in, accompanied by cheers.

People in cars waved and honked their horns in support. The marshals walked alongside. Everyone was enjoying being around everyone else in this peaceful

march. The cops I met seemed easygoing, though I heard an account later about how several hundred marchers had to encourage three or four cops not to arrest someone for kicking in a newspaper box.

I heard other accounts about how the companies had attempted unsuccessfully to mar the event with violence, about how a couple of strikers recognized a Vance Security "A" squad member videotaping the march, dressed in a UAW T-shirt. The guard ran when confronted. One can imagine that the companies had bad intentions and that someday the guard's footage would make its way into an anti-union video dubbed over with a description of how violent union rallies are.

People smiled all day. They were orderly as they walked by the Free Press building, yelling encouragement to the scabs in the windows several stories up and to the security guards atop the building: "Jump!" At the march's ending point, Hart Plaza, wave after wave of people came in for the rally, carrying brightly colored banners and wearing shirts with their organizations' logos. For those so inclined, there was music and thankfully fewer speeches than what could've been, but the best part of the rally was the opportunity it afforded people to talk with one another. It was a great opportunity to meet the strikers or other new acquaintances and for people from the different locals of the same union to get to know each other.

## The Trip Back

The rally ended with a hard rain which thankfully held off until the early evening. Most people had already left. We took off in the bus for our home city, comparing notes about what we had seen and heard. It was early Sunday morning when we got back to our local, but people lingered to talk for an hour or more afterward. Discussions about this whole experience are continuing. In the weeks since the trip I've talked with three or four people who went on it, people I wouldn't have had occasion to talk with otherwise.

As a matter of fact, this afternoon I'm going to meet with a few people from the bus trip to talk about setting up a group inside the local to build more participation. Other members who didn't go to the rally have been curious about our experiences at the rally, and will think more carefully about making the next event sponsored by the local.

The reaction from participants has been universally positive. One member told me that we should do something like that here, and we commenced a long discussion about what we could do within the local to mobilize against a problem employer. It was a pie in the sky discussion, but great things grow from discussions. Besides eventually beating the corporations in Detroit, the Detroit win will also be cumulative, with a lot of personal triumphs building into something greater. We can already claim some of those small victories in our local, thanks to the Detroit strikers. □

July 13, 1997

## First Weeks of New Congo Government

*Continued from page 17*

**Q.:** Is the recent nationalization of the railways an indication of the Alliance's sensibilities? After all, the stations were being occupied by railway workers who had been sacked when the company was privatized!

**A.:** Absolutely. Generally speaking, the Alliance is quite left-wing — against privatizations, automatically suspicious of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and so on. But as I said, it is still too early to see how this standpoint will be translated into concrete policies.

**Q.:** Can the USA, France, and South Africa impose their priorities on the new Congo government?

**A.:** No, not at all. The general tendency is in the other direction: clear independence, coupled with a willingness to work with all foreign parties in the search of the best solutions to our problems. The French media are wrong to say that Congo is switching over to the "Anglo-Saxon" zone of influence. We are not a nation of amnesiacs. We remember perfectly well that the disastrous state of our country is due to Mobutu's role as valet of the Americans. After what we have just been through, we are hardly going to throw ourselves back into Washington's arms!

What we would like to see is the French people redefining their country's relationship with African countries. We are convinced that, in development questions, we

can find a series of mutually advantageous agreements.

**Q.:** What kind of solidarity can we offer?

**A.:** We face a massive, well-organized propaganda campaign, led mainly by part of the French oligarchy, frustrated at the loss of one of their most faithful servants. What we would like to do is develop direct relationships with the French population, which was never involved in that unjust policy of their leaders. We hope that you, the left, will organize popular and trade union mobilizations demanding the seizure of Mobutu's assets, and the cancellation of our country's foreign debts. And [establish] direct links with your counterparts in Congo! These type of activities would be very useful to us, but for the moment we lack the formal contacts. □

# Marching in the Streets

by Melanie Benson

*The author is a member of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005.*

A lot of discussions I've heard about why the world is the way it is center around the word "apathy" — by definition, lack of emotion or feeling; lack of interest in things generally found exciting, interesting, or moving; indifference. Its antonym, "ardor," means great warmth of feeling; fervor; zeal; passion.

The implication is, of course, that we the people generally deserve what we get from our institutions, our unions, or our governments because we simply don't care enough to get involved to change anything: We don't go to meetings, we don't vote, etc.

That argument completely misses the point: In most parts of the world, we working people care so much and work so hard just to feed ourselves and our families that we have little time or energy left over to do much else. When we do try to organize to improve our lives, our attempts are often met with brutality and repression because *somebody* benefits from having everyone else work so hard. Those who benefit are generally the people with money and leisure — mostly *money*.

An illuminating book by Michael Parenti (also the author of *Democracy for the Few*) is *Inventing Reality*. Parenti's thesis is that most educational institutions and most of the mass media are directly controlled by people with money who *invent* reality — rather than educate or report on reality — for their own benefit. Although his focus is on the United States, what he writes is undoubtedly true for other countries, as well.

Essentially, people with money own and/or control most of the ways the rest of us get information that we don't learn from our own experience. So it's no big surprise that we don't learn the *truth* about each other's cultures or histories or, for that matter, the truth about our *own* histories.

Take, for example, the recent Action Motown '97 in Detroit, Michigan, June 20–21, 1997. Did many of us read in the newspapers or see on TV that there were about 100,000 people marching in the streets of Detroit for justice for locked-out

newspaper workers at the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*? No? I wonder why not.

Why wouldn't the newspapers want to report an event like that? Certainly not because they'd make more money if their workers didn't belong to unions! I mean, people flew in on planes chartered in San Francisco, bussed in from the Midwest and the South and the East Coast from a bazillion different unions! But apparently this wasn't news — at least not news fit for the public, who might get ideas about sticking together and standing up for what's right.

Remember that old song "Stouthearted Men"? Of course it was a bit exclusionary (no women mentioned), but consider the times. We'll just change the words a little bit: "Give me some folks who are stouthearted folks who will fight for the rights they adore / Start me with ten who are stouthearted folks (OK, so it doesn't rhyme) and I'll soon give you ten thousand more / Oh, shoulder to shoulder and bolder and bolder they grow as they go to the fore / Then, there's nothing in the world can halt or mar a plan / When stouthearted folks can stick together folk to folk."

Clearly, we need some work on the lyrics and some inclusive music. But you get my point.

When us folks get out in large numbers we draw strength from each other. We see how many other people agree with what we're thinking and feeling.

At a pro-choice rally in Washington, D.C., in 1987, people saw banners reading "Catholic Nuns for Choice." In Watsonville, California, in May 1997, when 40,000 people marched and rallied for basic dignity and human rights for strawberry workers, who are mostly Mexican or Mexican American, one of the best chants was, "We didn't cross the border. The border crossed us!" At the Nile Care Center, a nursing home in Minneapolis, Minnesota, 800 people in town for an AFL-CIO Organizing Conference in July 1997 marched to get management to recognize the union after a decisive pro-union vote

that management was challenging. As a Nile worker reported, "One week we marched. The next week they capitulated. Public opinion is everything."

At Solidarity Day in Washington, D.C. in 1981, wave after wave of huge contingents from unions such as AFSCME and SEIU poured up out of the subways in their green and white or yellow and white T-shirts, jackets, and caps. The potential power of the union movement was never so visible.

At these events, everyone there sees the truth for a change: That unions aren't just made up of older white men who are only narrowly concerned for themselves; that they're vibrant, multi-cultural potential dynamos made up of women and men *and their extended families* marching side by side for what's right for everyone. No wonder the people who control the media don't want to report that accurately: They'd rather we felt isolated, powerless, sitting alone in front of our TVs, newspapers, or computer terminals trying to make sense out of this crazy world.

But then, instead of building on this sense of united purpose, union "leaders," movement "leaders," and especially politicians try to get all us excited, enthusiastic folks to funnel our energies into the dead end of electoral politics as we have known them: fatally uninspiring. As Michael Moore so aptly says in *Downsize This!* (an excellent book that everyone should read [reviewed by Tom Barrett in *BIDOM* #137]): "Who among us marches proudly into the voting booth thinking, I can't wait to vote for these great men and women of vision! No. Year after year, we drag our ass into some smelly elementary school gym and vote for 'the evil of two lessers.'"

Same thing with lobbying and letter-writing as ways to influence public policy. Talk about de-energizing! Compare the feelings you get at a huge demonstration or rally to the insecurity you feel sitting alone to write a letter to your congressman for example, about an issue of importance: Will my spelling and punctuation be right? He won't read it, anyway. Why can't I ever find a stamp or an envelope when I need one?

And when you lobby, you're on their turf, getting shuffled around by aides and assistants, made to feel small behind those big desks in those marble halls! No, if we're going to lobby, let's lobby in the lobby! Get the politicians to come out and listen to *us* — on *our* turf! Better yet, let's replace these politicians with people like ourselves, who work hard for a living and

*Continued on page 28*

# Lessons of the Struggle

by Peter Johnson

*This article is adapted from one printed in Workers Struggle, June 1997.*

1. Giant corporations like Gannett and Knight-Ridder more and more are attempting to break strikes and bust unions. In the 1950s and 1960s the world capitalist economy grew relatively rapidly. Corporations could tolerate unions, raise wages and benefits, pay taxes for expanding social services, and increase profits at the same time. Since the early 1970s the world capitalist economy has stagnated. Able to produce much more than they can profitably sell, corporations have demanded concessions, driven down wages and benefits, "downsized," outsourced, laid off millions of workers, forced millions of others into part-time work, speeded up those they kept, and demanded that governments cut taxes and social services. When unions get in the way, the companies try to break them.

Some of these attacks have been linked to "globalization" and have included threats to move operations to countries with weaker unions, lower wages and living standards, and more repressive governments. But mainly they have involved the old-fashioned methods of monopoly, new technology, restructuring, and the use of scabs and strikebreakers. This was the case at Hormel, Bridgestone-Firestone, Staley, Caterpillar, and now the Detroit newspapers.

2. Unions cannot defeat a giant corporation by conventional strikes limited to parts of its operations, even supplemented by "corporate campaigns." The company will shift production or continue it with scabs. If it loses money at the struck facility, it can get by on its cash reserves and operations elsewhere. The Hormel strike hit Hormel operations only in Austin, Minnesota. The Staley strike hit Tate & Lyle operations only in Decatur. The Detroit newspaper strike hit Gannett and Knight-Ridder operations only in Detroit.

All three strikes were lost. The Bridgestone-Firestone and Caterpillar strikes hit much more of the companies' operations, but the companies were still big enough to ride out the strikes. Even the relatively successful UAW strikes against General Motors are "exceptions that prove the rule." GM could "Caterpillar"

the UAW, but for the moment GM management finds it more profitable not to try.

3. Unions can defeat union-busting by the methods that built the CIO in the 1930s: mass picketing, sitdown strikes, flying squadrons, hot-cargoing, solidarity strikes, and general strikes. The early CIO was forced to use these militant tactics because General Motors, Ford, US Steel, Goodyear, General Electric, and other giant corporations did to their workers then what Hormel, Bridgestone-Firestone, Staley, Caterpillar, and Gannett and Knight-Ridder are doing to their workers today.

Applying these tactics to the Detroit newspaper strike, mass picketing would have blockaded the North Plant, Riverfront Plant, distribution centers, and newspaper offices. Sitdown strikes would have supplemented the mass picketing, if necessary. Flying squadrons would have intercepted trucks bringing papers from other locations, disabled vending machines, and "persuaded" distributors not to handle scab papers. Hot-cargoing ("secondary boycotts") would have prevented the newspapers from getting paper, ink, new equipment, replacement parts, water, gas, electricity, and telephone service. Solidarity strikes would have shut down Gannett and Knight-Ridder operations in other cities. Detroit-area and, if necessary, wider general strikes would have prevented the government from sending in the National Guard. The strike would have been over in a few days.

4. These methods have all been declared illegal under Taft-Hartley and other anti-labor laws. In the mid-1930s unions won the right to organize and strike on the picket lines and in the streets. The government partially sanctioned these rights under the National Labor Relations Act and other laws in order to keep the struggle within legal limits. Since then, the corporations and the government have eroded the right to organize and strike until today workers are almost as constrained as they were in the 1920s.

Key turning points were the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act and the 1959 Landrum-

Griffin Act, which outlawed solidarity strikes and mass picketing. Since then judges have become quite bold in issuing injunctions against unions, despite the 1932 Norris-LaGuardia Act supposedly limiting this. Police regularly attack picket lines even without injunctions. And the 1970 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act has replaced the Sherman Anti-Trust Act as the bosses' weapon of choice against union "conspiracies."

Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin were passed when the rate of unionization was the highest in U.S. history and corporations generally made concessions, rather than broke unions. The labor movement should not have accepted these laws then. But to obey them today would be suicidal. The anti-labor laws are unjust. They should be made unenforceable and "repealed" through militant mass action.

5. Most of the present union leaders are unwilling to lead the confrontations with the corporations and government necessary to win. All the major unions have retreated into "business unionism." The union bureaucracies run the unions like companies, providing members with collective bargaining, grievance representation, and other "services" — now even credit cards and special deals with HMOs — in return for a fee.

The top union officials are very much "labor lieutenants of capital," to use American labor and socialist leader Daniel De Leon's apt phrase from the turn of the last century. They are "of capital" in the sense that they regard capitalism — private property in the means of production, the market economy, and the bosses' laws — as sacrosanct. They are "lieutenants" in the sense that they ultimately serve the employers by helping to contain the class struggle. But they are "labor" lieutenants in that their service and livelihoods are based on their position as union leaders. They must preserve the unions and balance between the workers and the employers in order to be of service to the employers and live like lawyers.

In the Detroit newspaper strike, the Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions leaders collapsed as soon as a judge issued an injunction against mass picketing at the North Plant. They regarded their treasuries and their liberty to spend them as more important than winning the strike, although in the long run losing the strike may cost them far more than defying the injunction would have. Their superiors in the Teamsters, the Communications Workers of America

## Judge Denies Injunction Forcing Company to Rehire Locked-Out Workers

On August 14, Judge John Corbett O'Meara of the U.S. District Court in Detroit, a Democrat and a Clinton appointee, denied an NLRB motion for an injunction under section 10(j) of the National Labor Relations Act ordering the *Detroit News* and *Free Press* to reinstate locked-out newspaper workers. A 10(j) injunction, if upheld by the higher courts, would have forced Gannett and Knight-Ridder to reinstate the locked-out workers — other than those they accused of misconduct or said they didn't need — and to displace the scabs who had taken their jobs.

The NLRB will appeal O'Meara's decision, but the best chance for a 10(j) injunction was at the district court level. Now the legal proceedings are, unfortunately, right where Gannett and Knight-Ridder want them: tied up for years in motions, hearings, briefs, and appeals. The strategy the union leadership has been following since it imposed the unconditional offer to return to work last February has failed.

The Action Coalition of Strikers and Supporters (ACOSS) is discussing how to respond to the new situation. The corporate campaign against Gannett and Knight-

Ridder continues, with demonstrations, circulation and ad boycotts of the Detroit papers and the Gannett-owned *USA Today*, continued publication of the strikers' paper, the *Detroit Sunday Journal*, and protests at executives' houses. Most locked-out workers want to escalate these activities. Some want to defy the injunction limiting picketing at the North Plant, organize civil disobedience there and at Riverfront Plant, and build toward mass picketing and solidarity strikes.

This would require recreating the dynamic that won the June 21 demonstration. The rank-and-file activists would have to agree on a plan, mobilize the locked-out workers behind them, seek support in the labor movement and the community, and force the union officials at all levels to go along. A strikers' petition to begin large-scale civil disobedience might be a start. Such a turnaround would be difficult, but the rejection of the 10(j) injunction confirms that there is no other alternative likely to get the fired and locked-out workers back anytime soon. The discussion in ACOSS and among the strikers continues.

— Peter Johnson

(CWA), and AFL-CIO did not override them partly for the same reasons and partly because they live by the rules of bureaucratic "protocol." Relations within the union bureaucracy are like feudalism: The vassals give fealty, the lords give protection, and each more or less respects the others' domain.

6. The ranks need to take control of the unions and democratize them. The best of the union leaders hesitate to fight because they doubt the willingness of the ranks to fight. The worst of them refuse to fight because they see their interests as tied to those of the bosses. Most are in-between, refusing to fight but believing they are acting in the best interests of the labor movement.

Whatever the case, the ranks need to take control of the unions and fill the vacuum of leadership, locally and nationally, in order to win. The unions should be combat organizations of workers, not service organizations of bureaucrats.

The violations of union democracy in the Detroit newspaper strike were reprehensible. All the key decisions were made by the leaders without consulting the ranks. The Council leaders decided on their own to call the strike at an inopportune

time, to obey the injunction against mass picketing at the North Plant, to cancel even limited picketing at the Riverfront Plant and the distribution centers, to sign the consent agreement not to interfere with newspaper operations, and generally to surrender as soon as possible. They refused to permit mass meetings of strikers as soon as they realized that the meetings would vote to defy the injunction. The national Teamsters, CWA, and AFL-CIO leaders were not much better. While providing essential financial support, they refused to mobilize against Gannett and Knight-Ridder and then imposed the unconditional offer to return to work. Union democracy was the only way to counter this.

7. Union activists need to organize rank-and-file caucuses independent of the bureaucracy to win union democracy, elect a new leadership, and put in place a new strategy. Two rank-and-file caucuses were directly or indirectly involved in the Detroit newspaper strike, the Unity Victory Caucus (UVC) and Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU).

Launched by militant newspaper strikers in October 1995, the UVC represented the highest level of rank-and-file organi-

zation in the strike. Its program called for mass picketing to confront scabs and stop production and distribution of the *Detroit News* and *Free Press*, a one-day Detroit-area general strike to back off the police, a million-person labor march on Detroit, mass meetings of all strikers, and democratic decision-making regarding strike strategy. UVC supporters contested elections unsuccessfully in the Newspaper Guild and successfully in the Typographical local, although months after the UVC was defunct.

The UVC had considerable influence in the winter of 1995-96 and prevented the strike from being sold out then. But the UVC ultimately failed to establish itself as an alternative leadership in the striking unions. This was partly because workers were reluctant to switch horses in the middle of a stream, partly because the Council baited the UVC as "splitters and wreckers," and partly because UVC leaders repeatedly claimed they had "no strategic differences" with the Council and were "not an alternative leadership." This confused the membership. In a sense, the "unity" side of the UVC got in the way of the "victory" side.

TDU, the most successful rank-and-file caucus in the U.S. labor movement, was a force in the Teamsters union long before the strike. But there was a difficult situation inside the Teamsters right at the time of the strike, in 1995-96. The reform forces led by Teamsters President Ron Carey, in alliance with TDU, were engaged in a fierce battle to prevent the old guard bureaucrats behind James Hoffa Junior from regaining control of the International at the 1996 Teamsters convention or in the unionwide elections in the fall of 1996. This meant that the strikers got no visible help from TDU as an organization, although many TDUs were dedicated strike supporters.

This was very unfortunate. TDU might have played a key role, since the large majority of strikers were Teamsters, TDU has its headquarters in Detroit, and many TDU members were active in the strike. The reason for this lack of any major role in the Detroit strike was TDU's close relationship with Teamsters President Ron Carey. TDU accepted Carey's decision not to challenge the Teamsters old guard over the Detroit strike or to encumber himself with a potentially losing strike in Detroit, the home base of old guard presidential candidate Hoffa Junior.

The strike needed a rank-and-file caucus with the UVC's militant program and connection with the struggle, TDU's rela-

tively deep roots and national base, and a sense lacking in both of them that they were the necessary alternative leadership.

8. Rank-and-file caucuses should apply the method of the united front to the union bureaucracy: Make public demands on the leaders in full view of the ranks. It is very tempting to look at the local and national leaderships of the Detroit newspaper unions and the national leaderships of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) in the Hormel struggle, the United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU) in the Staley struggle, and the United Auto Workers (UAW) in the Caterpillar struggle and see just one reactionary mass not worth dealing with. But this would be a mistake.

There are important differences among union officials. For example, it mattered that AFL-CIO Vice President Rich Trumka told the Metro Council of Newspaper Unions that it would have to run a Pittston-style strike with mass picketing and workplace occupations stopping production to beat Gannett and Knight-Ridder, while almost every other union leader believed or pretended to believe that the Council's "corporate campaign" could win. It mattered that Carey seriously considered a national mobilization against Gannett and Knight-Ridder and hesitated until February 1997 before pulling the plug on the strike, while Bahr was ready to do it a year earlier. It mattered that Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) President Bob Wages promised to raise the strikers' appeal for a national march on Detroit at the February 1997 AFL-CIO Executive Council meeting. Militants can utilize such differences to advance the struggle.

More importantly, the militants faced a dilemma. They understood that mass action was needed to win the strike, but they lacked the resources and authority, even in their own unions, let alone in the

rest of the labor movement, to implement this strategy. The union officials lacked or opposed the strategy but had the resources and authority. The militants needed to overcome this contradiction. They could not do this by pretending they had no strategic differences with the leadership or attempting to ignore or denounce the leadership and call on workers to follow them. All these were tried in the Detroit newspaper strike and failed.

The only way forward was for the militant strikers to state clearly what was necessary to win the strike, to make public demands on the union leaders for these measures, and to organize to displace or replace any leaders who failed the test.

9. Strikes against particular employers need to link up with other struggles of the working class, both labor and community struggles. One important weakness of the Detroit newspaper strike was that it seemed to be a strike of mainly white workers defending relatively privileged jobs in a mainly Black city with high unemployment and cruel poverty. The companies tried to exploit this by recruiting Black scabs and playing up their efforts.

Detroit is a very segregated metropolitan area, with 25 percent of its population in mainly Black Detroit and 75 percent in the mainly white suburbs. Since the *Detroit News* and *Free Press* orient to the suburbs, the strike was somewhat tainted by association with their racist news coverage and employment practices. The most visible newspaper workers before the strike were the mainly white reporters, even though the large majority of workers were Teamsters, including many Black Teamsters. The strike had a lot to overcome to reach the Detroit Black community and did an inadequate job of it. Nonetheless, African Americans generally supported the strike, and the strikers went through a very visible process of growth around racial questions.

## Marching in the Streets

*Continued from page 25*

know what's needed to turn things around. Let's have a *labor* party.

There is absolutely no room in our vocabulary for words like apathy. We can overcome listlessness by enlisting each other, impassiveness with passion, unfeelingness with true feeling, and indifference

with making a difference. They *want* us to feel apathetic — so they try to invent that reality. It's up to us not to let that happen to ourselves or each other.

So, as we sang in Detroit, "We're marching in the streets. All we need is some MUSIC, sweet music. There'll be music everywhere. There'll be swinging

The Hormel and Staley strikes did a much better job of linking labor and community issues, partly because Austin and Decatur are smaller, more homogeneous cities, and partly because the local union officials there were much better than the Council. The Detroit newspaper strike could have benefited from more "community unionism," although community unionism is only a partial answer against corporations as large as Gannett and Knight-Ridder.

10. Strikes must become political to deal effectively with the police, courts, politicians, and union officials. Any major strike quickly becomes political. The strikers got their first lesson in strike politics in July and August 1995, fighting the police in front of the North Plant, and their second lesson in September 1995, when a judge issued an injunction limiting their picketing and their leaders obeyed it. Sweeney soon gave them another lesson when he refused to call a national march on Detroit partly because he regarded getting Clinton and the Democrats elected as more important than winning the strike. A confusing lesson was that local Democratic Party politicians like John Conyers and Maryann Mahaffey seemed more committed to the strike than Carey, Bahr, or Sweeney, yet Clinton and other Democrats clearly were not on the workers' side.

Many militant strikers began sorting all this out during the course of the strike. Most came to the conclusion that the police were not their friends, unjust laws should be defied, and the main problem was the relationship of forces. Many of them also joined the Labor Party, an important first step, since it meant breaking with the bosses' Democratic Party. A series of militant strikes and other struggles will be needed to draw out all the political lessons. But the Detroit newspaper strike showed participants, militant strikers and socialists alike, a glimpse of how this could happen. □

and swaying and music playing, and marching in the streets./ It doesn't matter what you wear just as long as you are there. So come on everyone grab a pal / Everywhere around the world / And we'll be marching, marching, marching in the streets!" □

# Labor Can Mobilize the Numbers Necessary to Win

by Peter Solenberger

The following commentary was posted by the author July 2, 1997, on the "labr.party" discussion conference of the Institute for Global Communications (IGC) computer network. His e-mail address is: pws@umich.edu

Dear brothers and sisters,

As a member of the Detroit Metro Chapter of the Labor Party and an active supporter of the Detroit newspaper strike since it began in July 1995, I want to add to the discussion of the strike on this conference. The discussion is quite relevant to building the Labor Party, because the Labor Party will become a mass party only under conditions in which (1) the unions are winning struggles like the Detroit newspaper strike; (2) union membership is expanding rapidly; (3) the Labor Party is seen by rank-and-file workers and at least a large minority of the elected union leadership as a necessary political expression of the struggle; and (4) the Black and Latino communities, women, lesbians and gay men, and youth look to the unions and the Labor Party as champions of their struggles and as organizations they want to join.

I have found the discussion of the Detroit newspaper strike on this conference quite interesting. I have not joined it before this, mainly because I wanted to put time and energy into the strike, rather than an Internet discussion of it. As we all know, an Internet discussion can devour a great deal of time. With the lull in strike activity after the June 20–21 Action Motown events, however, I want to say some of the things I have hesitated to say before.

The *Labor Party Press* has covered the Detroit newspaper strike sympathetically but superficially. Six socialist publications supporting the Labor Party have had enough connection with the strike to report it in depth. These include (in alphabetical order) *Against the Current*, *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, the *Organizer*, *People's Tribune*, *Socialism* (formerly *New Life*), and *Workers Struggle*. All six featured articles on the strike in their June issues. They demanded reinstatement of the fired and locked-out newspaper workers under union contracts and urged unionists, community activists, and all workers to come to the June 20–21 events in Detroit.

*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, *People's Tribune*, and *Socialism* limited them-

selves to solidarity statements, although they have had analytical articles in the past and may again in the future. *Against the Current*, the *Organizer*, and *Workers Struggle* took up some of the hard questions discussed on this conference since February, when the national leaderships of the striking unions imposed an unconditional offer to return to work on the strikers and then the AFL-CIO Executive Council agreed to Action Motown.

The main articles on the strike from the May-June 1997 *Against the Current* can be seen on the Web at <http://www.igc.apc.org/solidarity/>, and the main articles from the June 1997 *Organizer* can be seen at <http://www.igc.apc.org/workers/to/>. I will post two articles from *Workers Struggle*, "A Chronology of the Strike" and "Lessons of the Struggle," which are not yet on the Web. ["Lessons of the Struggle" is reprinted elsewhere in this issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.]

### Comments on Action Motown

Since all the articles were written before the Action Motown events, I want to add a few observations on the events. The June 20 teach-in had about 500 people, more than I had expected. Its tone was quite militant, and not just from the ranks. Even the union leaders sounded militant — deceptively so. Listening to Mike Zielinski (the only Teamster organizer with any credibility among militant strikers) call for "mass action against Gannett and Knight-Ridder everywhere," you might miss that he said everywhere except on the enjoined property of the *Detroit News* and *Free Press*.

The June 21 march and rally may have had as many as 50,000 people, also more than I had expected. I went with my parents to Detroit Labor Day rallies in the 1950s, on my own to the 1963 Detroit civil rights march, and later to anti-Vietnam War and other demonstrations in New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. Action Motown was much smaller than those. But it was much bigger than any strike solidarity or other political

demonstration in Detroit since the 1963 civil rights march. And it was at least ten times bigger than the September 2, 1995, rally which mass-picketed the Detroit News and Free Press printing plant in Sterling Heights.

Action Motown confirmed that the labor movement can still mobilize the numbers necessary to defeat union-busting corporations like Gannett and Knight-Ridder. Moreover, the top union leaders — from the Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions locally to Ron Carey, Morton Bahr, Rich Trumka, and John Sweeney nationally — made public commitments to the fired and locked-out workers which will be hard for them to back away from. June 20–21 did indeed provide a basis for continuing the struggle.

After posting the two *Workers Struggle* articles on the chronology and lessons of the strike, I want to take up three threads of discussion on this conference.

First, the question raised by Michael Eisenscher and Earl Silbar in response to an article on the Detroit newspaper strike by Jane Slaughter in the April 14 *Nation* and a never-published letter to the *Nation* by Malcolm Marts and Judy Wraight. As Michael put it, "Could the rank and file in Detroit or the movement of support across the country have acted differently to affect a better outcome?" Or as Earl put it, "Still, where's the outlook of developing the actual class fight on the ground?"

Second, I want to take up the role of OCAW President Bob Wages. Most militant Detroit newspaper strikers perceive him as their best and, at times, only ally on the AFL-CIO Executive Council. I know it's late, but I want to add my two cents.

Finally, I want to take up the recent exchange between Earl and Neil: Should militants make public demands on union leaders to call actions against the corporations and government? To me the answer is, self-evidently, "Yes." If the leaders agree, the fight against the corporations and government is strengthened. If they refuse, the militants are strengthened in their struggle to build an alternative leadership. □

July 2, 1997

# Revolutionary Vanguards in the United States During the 1930s

by Paul Le Blanc

*This article is based on a talk at a conference on working-class studies held at Youngstown University in Youngstown, Ohio, earlier this year.*

**T**he question, Where is the field of Working-Class Studies going? brings us to the more fundamental question: What is the purpose of what we are calling “working-class studies”? Are we seeking a way to market our intellectual products, forging new paths to employment and advancement for those of us specializing in what we hope will be a growth industry?

The promising field of socially-oriented labor history that arose in the 1960s — thanks to the very fine, pioneering work of E.P. Thompson, Herbert Gutman, and David Montgomery — certainly provided a means for some radical activists to pursue new careers in academe. With the right packaging, perhaps we might develop an even broader range of opportunity.

For many of us, our goals are even more ambitious. Filled with a passionate desire to make sense of reality for ourselves, we also hope our intellectual labors might contribute to the growth of a self-aware, self-confident working-class majority. And we hope to be of use in the effort to create a class-conscious labor movement. This involves not only unions, but also inclusive organizations embracing broad and multifaceted sectors of the entire working class, committed to genuinely democratic and therefore revolutionary social change. This is the approach toward Working Class Studies animating the collection that John Hinshaw and I have put together in our forthcoming book.

What I will offer here is a summary of my own contribution to that volume.

## Two Riddles

There are two riddles which I want to explore. The answers have practical implications for us today. The answer to the first riddle is suggested in this presentation. Perhaps the answer to the second riddle can be explored in the discussion period and suggests where some of working-class studies should go.

The 1930s have been seen as “The Turbulent Years” and as the decade of “Labor’s Giant Step,” in the words of Irving Bernstein and Art Preis. These are the titles of their classic histories about the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations and the heroic struggles of working people that resulted in the creation of the big unions which formed the base of the CIO. But some statistics almost seem to suggest that this was an optical illusion. That’s the first riddle.

It is irrefutable that enormous gains were made by U.S. workers, despite the effects of the devastating economic

Depression and the tyranny of the corporations. The growth of the CIO and the revival of the American Federation of Labor directly impacted on millions of people. The number of unionized employees more than tripled from 2.8 million in 1933 to 8.4 million in 1941. This yielded positive changes in wages, hours, working conditions, and dignity on the job, plus valuable social legislation and a deep transformation of the political climate, giving working people a greater measure of control over their world.

At the same time, another respected labor historian named Melvyn Dubofsky, combing through statistics on union organizing drives and strikes in the 1930s, observed that the overwhelming majority of working people during this period were simply not involved in these union struggles. He focused attention on two years of the most intense struggles — 1934 and 1937.

The year 1934 saw general strikes in three cities: Toledo, Ohio; San Francisco, California; and Minneapolis, Minnesota. In Toledo workers at the Auto-Lite Company, and their allies in the militant Unemployed League, battled the company and the National Guard, with the support of the city’s central labor council and under the leadership of A.J. Muste’s left-wing American Workers Party. In San Francisco longshoremen and other workers, following a left-wing leadership — especially militants of the Communist Party — were also backed by the city’s central labor council, fought company goons and local police, and here too confronted the National Guard. In Minneapolis and neighboring St. Paul, the radicals providing leadership to the workers’ battles were members of the Communist League of America, followers of Leon Trotsky. Here the city’s teamsters, supported by the central labor council and masses of unorganized and unemployed workers, and nearby small family farmers, faced down the city’s powerful employers, fought police, and — here too — their struggles brought in the National Guard.

The stunning union victories in these three cities generated the mass organizing drives of industrial workers and launched the CIO. The year 1937 saw the mass sit-down strikes and other militant working-class actions that conquered the mighty General Motors and United States Steel corporations by the CIO-sponsored United Auto Workers and Steel Workers Organizing Committee.



## Only a Minority in the Big Union Drives

The fact is, however, that in 1934 and in 1937, only about 7 percent of employed workers were involved in strikes. We have to ask what the other 93 percent of the labor force was doing during the great strike waves of 1934 and 1937, and throughout the decade.

Part of the explanation is suggested by the perceptive radical journalist Louis Adamic. He wrote: "I know, or have known, hundreds of unskilled workers, particularly in the smaller industries, whose apathy and resignation are something appalling. Where no union has appeared to rouse them, most of them are basically indifferent to the conditions they have to endure. Because certain conditions exist, they see no possibility of having them altered. There is a dead fatalism."

Adamic denied that capitalist oppression would naturally breed militant class consciousness. "The exploitation is outrageous, but the workers merely grumble," he wrote. "When unionization is suggested, they oppose it: it might lose them their jobs! Yet they hate their jobs. That hate expresses itself in subversive talk, sabotage, defeatism." Adamic added: "Most American workers have little or no conception of jobs outside their fields. They are unaware of the interdependence of the workers' functions, and so ignorant of their importance, the indispensability of their work. Many tend to deprecate their functions, if not orally, then to themselves and perform listlessly, as workers, as human beings...and the general public, as uninformed as they are concerning what makes the wheels go round, tends to agree with them."

## "Kinship-Occupational Clusters"

I think it may be useful, also, to look at some of the findings of a social historian named John Bodnar, who studied and interviewed some who come from what he calls "the masses of rank-and-file toilers who were reared in strong, family-based enclaves" of largely immigrant working class communities, plus many Blacks as well as some whites who migrated from the South. Particularly as mass production techniques were being developed by employers in the early decades of the twentieth century — largely to eliminate the power of potentially radicalizing skilled workers — recently arrived unskilled immigrant laborers were absorbed as mass-production workers, and often they found jobs in their workplaces for needy friends and relatives as well. Family and ethnic ties became intertwined with occupational patterns, creating what Bodnar calls "kinship-occupational clusters" in which "familial concerns were strongly reinforced." This cut across the competing ideologies of capitalist-oriented upward mobility through "rugged individualism" on the one hand and a revolutionary proletarian class-consciousness on the other. "Clearly," Bodnar writes, "family obligations dominated working-class predilections and may have exerted a moderating influence on individual expectations and the formulation of social and economic goals."

This family or kinship-focused orientation "muted individual inclinations and idealism in favor of group sur-

vival." While people in this situation might respond to union organizing drives under certain conditions, more often they would not be in a position to initiate militant class struggles.

## In the Vanguard Layer of the Working Class, Radicals and Union Militants

In a sense, the answer to the riddle we have posed is as obvious as the answer to the question of why the chicken crossed the road. A majority of workers did not engage in the big class battles of the 1930s because they did not feel able to. We can refer to the minority of workers who were actually involved in taking "labor's giant step" of the 1930s as a vanguard layer of the working class — those who, for a variety of reasons, were able to see themselves and their situation in a certain way, and were in a position to make certain life decisions, that enabled them to move forward before most of the others.

Within this vanguard layer, however, we find two different components. One has been a smaller network of working-class organizers identified by Staughton and Alice Lynd in their excellent book *Rank and File*. The Lynds write: "The rank and filers in this book felt... that there had to be basic social changes. They were both militant, in demanding changes within their unions and workplaces, and radical, in the sense that they tried to democratize the larger society. They imagined both a union and a society which were more just, more humane, more of a community." In fact, most of the veteran working class activists they interviewed had been members of Socialist, Communist, or Trotskyist organizations.

A different and larger component of the vanguard layer was made up of those who may have had brief flirtations with larger social visions, but were inclined to a more or less "pure and simple" trade unionism. Melvyn Dubofsky brings our attention to the dialectic between diverse working class militants and the larger rank and file. He writes: "more often than not, action by militant minorities (what some scholars have characterized as 'sparkplug unionism') precipitated a subsequent collective response." His portrait of a multi-layered working class is worth presenting at length:

Even the most strike-torn cities and regions had a significantly internally differentiated working class. At the top were the local cadres, the sparkplug unionists, the men and women fully conscious of their roles in a marketplace society that extolled individualism and rewarded collective strength. These individuals, ranging the political spectrum from Social Democrats to Communists, provided the leadership, militancy, and ideology that fostered industrial conflict and the emergence of mass-production unionism. Beneath them lay a substantial proportion of workers who could be transformed, by example, into militant strikers and unionists, and, in turn, themselves act as militant minorities. Below them were many first-and second-generation immigrant workers, as well as recent migrants from the American countryside, who remained embedded in a culture defined by traditional ties to family, kinship, church, and neighborhood club or tavern. Accustomed to

*Continued on page 62*

# Why the Labor Party?

by Deborah Bayer, RN

Reprinted from *California Nurse*

Last year the CNA PAC Board voted to contribute \$23,000 to the Founding Convention of the Labor Party. The E&GW Congress also voted to use \$20,000 to send a delegation to the Cleveland convention to represent both CNA and the SPCA (the CNA staff's union).

Why did the majority of the Congress and the Board choose to do this? Was this a good use of our members' money? What is the connection between the Labor Party and our current struggle for a

But to the one-half of one percent of the country's population who owns 70% of the wealth of America, the differences that are so apparent to us at work, that keep us apart, are hardly noticeable.

We live in a country where 25% of the nation's children live in poverty, and the infant mortality rate is the highest of any industrialized nation.

We live in a country where health care is considered a right only if you

rights of workers everywhere, and being part of a larger movement of social and economic justice.

I believed the labor movement in the United States had lost that conception of itself, to its own detriment and to the detriment of all of us who have suffered during the last 20 years, as union membership declined and the

## Join the

fair contract, a decent health care system, and a secure job?

The question of why CNA should be involved in the Labor Party really gets down to a deeper question, of what our relationship is with other workers in this country. In the hierarchical structure of American medicine, registered nurses are fairly well-placed. We are well paid as a profession, and we have managed to stake out a small area of jurisdictional autonomy. It might be tempting to think of ourselves as having a different agenda and a different set of needs than the cook offering up something that looks like fish as we file through the line in the cafeteria, or the environmental service worker emptying the trash.

have the means to pay for it.

We live in a country historically divided along racial and class lines, which impairs our ability to work together for the collective good, and is a sure setup for civil discord. We live in a democracy where the majority of those eligible don't bother to vote because they do not believe it will make a difference.

I supported our involvement with the Labor Party because for a long time I have been frustrated by the lack of a political party articulating my needs as a working person and my vision of what this society could be. As a union member I wanted to join up with other elements in organized labor who saw our role as defending, not just our individual members' rights, but the more historical context of representing the

power of workers to demand their share of the pie declined with it. I hoped that the Labor Party could be a beginning of the rejuvenation of the American labor movement, which is one of the few forces left in this country capable of standing up to the demands of big business.

Politics in America has degenerated to an argument over the details of how much to take away from the average working person, whether to remove all of our rights to collective bargaining, for example, or leave some, whether to eliminate capital gains taxes completely or reduce them a little. The Democrats and Republicans agree that the eight-hour day obstructs business "flexibility," but haven't agreed yet whether to retain the 40-hour work week as is or move to an 80-hour pay period.

Bill Clinton's proposal for "sweatshop free" labels on clothing (much

like dolphin-safe tuna) allows 14-year-old children to work for up to 60 hours a week with one day off at whatever prevailing wage is in that country, even if it isn't enough to buy food and decent shelter.

No one is asking the really important questions, like who owns the wealth of this country? And if profit is a good thing, are there still ground rules we can decide on that businesses will have to live by, like not profiting at the expense of human suffering and paying your workers a living wage? And isn't health care an essential service that any good government has an obligation to provide, much like fire protection, police, good sewage treatment plans, roads, and potable water?

A lot of creative alternatives exist that are never discussed by the two mainstream parties, but that the Labor Party could bring up. If there are

tional ecological and labor standards so we are not competing with child laborers or workers getting paid only a few pennies an hour.

We could eliminate the concept of the "working poor" by setting a minimum wage that is tied to a decent standard of living (by today's economy that would be approximately \$10 an hour). Or, we could adopt the concept of a maximum wage, which nobody needs anything more than, say \$2 million a year and any earnings above that will be taxed at 100 percent. These are ideas taken from the labor party platform, and they represent the kind of society we could choose to live in.

The Labor Party's first attempt to begin raising these issues on a grassroots level is a campaign for a Constitutional Amend-

to the government to adopt legislation to make that happen.

For the Labor Party to have any chance of success it will have to unite the increasingly beleaguered middle class with the most exploited elements in our society: with minority communities, with the unemployed and unorganized and low-paid workers, with the immigrants and the poor and those on welfare, and with those soon to be kicked off welfare, even though we all know there are not enough jobs.

But the base of support for the Labor Party must first come from the members of the unions involved in this effort. The Bylaws adopted at the Founding Convention stated that in order to participate on a

# Labor Party!

not enough jobs to go around, for example, we could shorten the work week to 32 hours with the same amount of pay as we now get for 40. We could send a portion of the workforce to school, much as the government did after World War II with the GI Bill. We could pay people well for taking care of children, to create high-quality day-care centers and schools. We could create a national healthcare system and a system of mass transportation. We could insist on trade policy and interna-

ment guaranteeing every adult in the United States a right to a job at a living wage. This is a novel idea, and it takes getting used to.

When I first heard it, I thought, well, how could that happen? But the more I thought about it and read the Labor Party literature, the more I thought, why not? Who owns our work if not us? I feel like I own my job because of the effort I've put into it, and if I was laid off tomorrow I'd feel I'd been robbed. A constitutional amendment would say we had a right to our work, much as the Civil Rights Act says we have a right to fair treatment, and it would be up

national level, each union must organize at least 10% of its membership to sign up as individual members. For CNA this constitutes about 2,000 nurses. Membership is \$20 a year.

I'm sure what I've written here today will raise a lot of discussion. But this is precisely the kind of discussion we need to have. What I learned in the one-day Kaiser strike was something I've known all along but never felt on as deep a level: the power of working people when we stick together. The Labor Party plans to do this by organizing a political base of working people committed to shifting the terms of political debate.

# The Cataclysm: World War II and the History of American Trotskyism

by Frank Lovell

**T**he history of the twentieth century is divided between the pre-World War II world and that which followed. It is true that the First World War wrought many changes, including the collapse of most of old Europe's dynasties and the accompanying loss of several crowned heads. Also the successful Russian revolution and its worldwide political repercussions were direct consequences of that war. But this only foreshadowed the second great conflagration which was many times more destructive and qualitatively different. It transformed the world in almost every respect. Regardless of what aspect of twentieth century life historians may choose to examine, they will soon discover that World War II was the great divide, like a chasm caused by an earthquake of unimaginable force. Today's desolate political scene can be understood and explained only in light of the causes and consequences of World War II.

## The Great Depression

Those still alive who lived in the U.S. and can remember the Great Depression sometimes recall those years (1929-1939) as "happy times" but only because those were the days of their youth. That decade was a time of severe unemployment, terrible suffering, mass migration, and hopelessness in the early years.

When the depression hit it seemed to many of its victims like a natural catastrophe, something about which little could be done and over which mere mortals could have no control. Preachers of the gospel were among the few beneficiaries. They and other peddlers of superstition and ignorance were quick to attribute the economic collapse to "divine retribution." Some said it was caused by "sun spots."

A more plausibly real natural catastrophe, caused largely by poor agricultural methods and ecological indifference, occurred simultaneously during part of the Great Depression: drought and wind storms on the North American plains devastated parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and other areas in the region which soon became known as "the dust bowl." This, combined with what some called the "economic dry spell," propelled large numbers of poor farmers westward. Entire families could be seen riding slow freight trains bound for the Pacific Coast states. California authorities established a "border patrol" to try and

keep the penniless "Okies" (the derogatory name attached to dust bowl victims) out of that state. This was only one aspect of the dislocation, human suffering, and despair that gripped the nation.

Millions of people in 1931 (two years into the depression) were jobless, homeless, and knew not where to turn for help. The destructive consequences were incalculable. Livestock perished, crops went unharvested for want of markets, machinery and warehouse inventories deteriorated. The markets for all commodities had dried up. Capitalism did not work. The system had failed to satisfy the basic needs of vast sectors of the population. The ruling class, the capitalists who owned all the means of production, began to realize that something had to be done to alleviate the suffering, otherwise social dislocation and restiveness would turn to revolution.

## American Trotskyism in the Depression

At that juncture the most politically conscious revolutionary group in the U.S. was the Communist League of America (CLA), expelled from the Communist Party in 1928 for "Trotskyism." The leader of this group was James P. Cannon, who later in his *History of American Trotskyism* described decisions and actions taken by the CLA in those crucial years. He explained that during the first five years of the CLA'S existence (1928-1933) "our small numbers, the general stagnation in the labor movement, and the complete domination of all radical movements by the Communist Party, imposed upon us the position of a faction of the Communist Party" (p. 118).

But by 1933 the political situation was different in this country and internationally, as Cannon noted.

The Comintern had been shattered by the debacle in Germany [Hitler's rise to power with no effective resistance by the Stalinized German CP and Communist International], and at the fringes of the Communist movement it [Stalin's Comintern] was losing its authority. Many people, previously deaf to anything we said, were awakening to an interest in our ideas and criticisms. On the other hand the masses who had remained dormant and stagnant during the first four years of the cataclysmic economic crisis, began to stir again.

Cannon also noted changes in the composition of the AFL unions.

Despite the great conservatism, the craft-mindedness and the corruption of the AFL leadership, we insisted at all times that the militants must not separate themselves from this main current of American unionism and must not set up artificial and ideal unions of their own which would be isolated from the mass. The task of the revolutionary militants, as we defined it, was to plunge into the labor movement as it existed and try to influence it from within.

The American Federation of Labor held a convention in October 1933. This convention, for the first time in many years, recorded a sweeping increase in membership as a result of the awakening of the workers, the strikes and organization campaigns which, nine times out of ten, were initiated from below. The workers were streaming into the various AFL unions without much encouragement or direction from the ossified bureaucracy (p. 121).

### Trotskyist Policy in the Trade Unions

This union policy of the CLA was not shared by most other radicals of the day. The Communist Party, then in its "Third Period," was trying to build "revolutionary unions" because the AFL was, as they said, a "social fascist" organization consisting of "company unions." What remained of the IWW was a few "revolutionary industrial unions" trying to win members away from the AFL craft unions and organize the unorganized industrial workers. It was the trade union policy of the CLA (later adopted by the CP) that guided the radical workers in AFL unions to victory in 1934 in the historic strikes in Minneapolis, Toledo, and San Francisco.

The CIO movement arose from the struggle within the old AFL to establish industrial unions, a struggle organized by a narrow segment of the union bureaucracy headed by John L. Lewis. This segment of the bureaucracy was impelled by and responding to the upsurge in the ranks exemplified by the three great strikes of 1934 mentioned above. The formative years of the CIO (roughly 1935–38) marked an exciting period for radicals in the unions, best described in Art Preis's history of the CIO, *Labor's Giant Step*.

But with the advent of World War II, whose first phase began in the late summer of 1939, just four years after the CIO began, a big change occurred in the composition of these new unions, in the social consciousness of the union leadership, and in the degree of government intervention in and regulation of the unions.

### Turn to War, Not Public Works, Ended Depression

The economic relief measures of the Roosevelt administration, the "New Deal," revived commodity production and helped restore stability in the monetary system (beginning with Roosevelt's declaration of a "bank holiday," which salvaged many shaky banks caught in the 1932 banking crisis), but the unemployment crisis was not solved. Young people were taken off city streets and out of some rural areas for training and rehabilitation in the Civilian Conservation Corps camps. And tens of thousands of manual workers, artists, and intellectuals were given work (most of it

essential to the industrial infrastructure) in the myriad works projects under the federal Public Works Administration, later the Works Progress Administration (PWA and WPA).

But all these government relief programs were continuously changing, insecure, and uncertain. Industrial jobs were scarce and usually temporary or seasonal. The best jobs were those under union contract, often not well protected. The economy never recovered under the "pump priming" of the first two Roosevelt administrations in the years 1932–1938. In 1938 there were still 10 million unemployed, down from 13 million in 1933.

In the second Roosevelt Administration serious preparation for war began. In 1936 federal war spending was \$929 million, a paltry sum by today's standard. By 1938 it exceeded \$1 billion, never again to dip below that figure (Preis, p. 74). Preparation for the rapid development of a huge war industry was under way. But this did not result immediately in new jobs for the unemployed. There was no appreciable change in the daily lives of working people. In 1938 jobs seemed to be getting harder to find, due mainly to WPA cutbacks.

### Trotsky's Observations of 1938–40

No one in those days understood the political tenor of the time as well as Leon Trotsky, who wrote daily from his refuge in Mexico on the most pressing social issues, especially the imminence of war. In 1938 he completed the draft of the *Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, the programmatic document upon which the Fourth International was founded later that year. (It bore the title *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*.)

In this document Trotsky sought to explain how the working class and the poor in all sectors of the world could protect against and eventually halt the war machine. "War," he wrote, "is a gigantic commercial enterprise, especially for the [arms] industry." (See the *Transitional Program*, 2nd edition, New York: Pathfinder, 1974, p. 91.) He inserted in the text of the *Transitional Program* a parenthetical reminder of his earlier anti-war declaration, *War and the Fourth International* (1934), which, he said, "preserves all its force today" (ibid., p. 88–9).

On the eve of World War II (July 23, 1939) Trotsky was interviewed by a group of American scholars (the Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America, headed by Professor Hubert Herring). They asked penetrating questions, among them: "What vitality has the stop-Hitler bloc? What course will Soviet Russia take in making an alliance with Britain and France? Do you consider it likely that Stalin may come to an understanding with Hitler?"

Trotsky's response was prophetic.

It depends not on only Stalin, but on Hitler. Stalin has proclaimed that he is ready to conclude an agreement with Hitler. Hitler up to now rejected his proposition. Possibly he will accept it. Hitler wishes to create for Germany a world-dominating position. The rationalizing formulas are only a mask, as for the French, British, and American empires

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# Teamsters President Ron Carey's Role in the Strike

by Charles Walker

If the Detroit newspaper strike is lost, who lost it? According to Jane Slaughter (*Nation*, April 14), the strike was lost shortly after it began, when "six Local presidents of the striking unions and their lawyer...submitted...to an injunction that ordered picketers away from the [papers' printing plants]." The injunction followed two weekends of militant picketing by "thousands of unionists...along with supporters — especially auto workers — [who] stayed up all night to block scab-driven trucks...It was a display of class solidarity not seen in Detroit in decades." Slaughter believes that AFL-CIO President John Sweeney should have intervened and attempted to convince "other unions — particularly the U.A.W., which is 450,000 strong in Michigan — to send successive waves of troops to fill the jails...Activists proposed these tactics; they were refused... [Sweeney failed to use] all his moral authority to call on union members to make Detroit a war zone."

Jane Slaughter, a socialist and longtime contributor to *Labor Notes*, didn't mention the leaders of the involved international unions, although they too, as a group, might have had enough "moral authority" to attempt to mobilize workers' support for a "Detroit war zone." Notably, she did not mention Ron Carey, who was elected president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) in 1991 and again in 1996 with the support of the militant rank-and-file caucus Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU).

### Criticism of Bahr and Carey

Two UAW local union officers from Detroit wrote a letter to the *Nation* (unpublished) approving Slaughter's article, but adding: "All of Slaughter's criticisms of Sweeney and [AFL-CIO Vice President] Trumka apply equally to CWA President Morton Bahr and Teamsters President Ron Carey."

They did not mention James Norton, president of the third, but much smaller, international union involved in the strike,

the GCIU (Graphic Communications International Union), although undoubtedly their criticism would apply to him too.

The two UAW officers' letter continued: "Carey was particularly disappointing. Rather than challenge the local Teamsters leadership, whose support he hoped to win for his reelection bid, he let the strikers bleed and then imposed an unconditional offer to return to work on them. Letting Gannett and Knight-Ridder drive the Teamsters out of the newspaper industry this way makes a mockery of Carey's claim to be a fighter, a defender of union democracy, and an organizer." (Emphasis added.)

I agree that Carey has earned criticism for not attempting to intensify the Detroit strike. But I can't agree that Carey had illusions about Detroit Teamsters officials ever supporting him — rather than James Hoffa, Junior. Detroit is an organizer center for the diehard old-guard elements. Michigan Teamsters chieftain Larry Brennan put Hoffa Junior on the payroll so that Junior would be constitutionally eligible to challenge Carey (under the terms of the union's constitution). If the Hoffa name has iconic value anywhere, it certainly does in Detroit. Not surprisingly, Hoffa beat Carey in seven of Detroit's nine Teamsters unions.

### Sources of Carey's Policy

I believe that Carey's Detroit policy stems from his strategic outlook, not his reelection aims.

When Carey was first urged to support a national mass march on Detroit, he asked: "What will we do the day after the march?" He correctly understands that a mere one-day event will not shift the relationship of forces, causing the employers to cave in. He also knows that routine strikes or symbolic strikes are largely futile. Carey often says, "It's not enough to just walk up and down outside the work site." He mistakenly believes that the answer to labor's string of lost strikes, and

to labor officials' fear of calling strikes, is to take on the bosses with corporate campaigns, member-to-member networks on the job, strong relations with community groups, and above all a game plan that includes the members, though not necessarily in a decision-making role.

Carey does not have a bureaucratic mind-set against strikes in general. In fact, before the end of his first term he had sanctioned so many strikes that the Teamsters strike fund was empty. (The strike fund would have lasted longer, but the old guard took \$34 million dollars out of it before Carey was sworn in in 1991.)

Carey has repeatedly used the strike weapon when he felt he had no alternative. In 1992 he struck UPS (United Parcel Service) over a single work-rule issue, *defying a court injunction*. In 1993 he led the first national freight strike in 18 years. Breaking with a longstanding practice of the international union, he allowed lengthy strikes to continue without pressuring the local unions to give in. For example, the Diamond Walnut strikers in California went out before Carey was elected in 1991, and six years later they are still out and being supported by their international union. When money was available, the IBT paid \$200 a week to each striker and has spent hundreds of thousands more publicizing the strike and the international boycott that continues to this day. Before Carey's time, the old-guard Teamster bosses' practice was to *prevent* strikes, to *end* those that couldn't be prevented, and certainly not to *finance* strikers until and unless the strikers themselves decide to give up.

### Rights and Wrongs in Carey's Outlook

Carey's dead wrong about corporate campaigns, etc., as a smart substitute for strikes or as anything more than a secondary adjunct to a strike. But he's right that labor's current strike strategy isn't working, especially when the corporate bosses are determined to break the unions, as is the case in Detroit. What Carey simply doesn't understand is the need for a strike strategy that, when necessary, aims "to create a political crisis," to borrow Jane Slaughter's shorthand formulation. Very briefly, that means that not only must the strikers' bosses be taken on but also that the strikers' allies must be mobilized to the maximum to take on the corporate and political allies of the strikers' bosses.

Slaughter believes, as do others, that masses of Detroit workers could have been mobilized to fight and, if necessary,

“fill the jails.” Unfortunately, we’ll never know, since the union leaders didn’t take even preliminary steps to test the sentiment for a knock-down, drag-out fight against the bosses, courts, and cops. That method of mass mobilization was the kind of thing that won strikes in 1934 — the Toledo Autolite strike, the Minneapolis Teamster strike, and the San Francisco longshoremen’s strike — as well as in 1937 in the Flint, Michigan, sit-down strike.

For those attempting to extend and widen democratic reform in the Teamsters union, it makes sense to recognize the limits of the Carey administration, and at the same time defend it from the old guard and the employers, as well as the government and, of course, the Democratic Party “friends of labor.”

Along with Carey’s restricted strike strategy and excessive reliance on corporate campaigns, democratic reformers must also acknowledge Carey’s flawed perception of the Teamsters officialdom. Carey seems to believe that bad officials are exactly that — just bad guys to be replaced with good guys. Carey doesn’t conceive of the officialdom as a self-perpetuating bureaucratic caste with careerist interests fundamentally at odds with the interests of the members, as proven when they scabbed during the 1994 UPS strike and connived with the employers during the 1994 freight strike. So while Carey has delivered historic body blows to the Teamsters bureaucracy — he stripped one whole echelon of \$15 million in multiple pensions, duplicate salaries, and other perks — he implicitly acts as if the bureaucracy were capable of

self-reform. Hence, he promotes the activation of the rank and file, but turns over the day-to-day task of mobilizing the membership to the local and regional officials who often have a stake in the continued *demobilization* of the ranks.

Nevertheless, Carey is amenable and responsive to rank-and-file influence and pressure like no previous Teamsters president. High on the list of Carey’s first-term accomplishments is the protection of honest local union election results. No longer do reformers routinely have to win the same election twice, before they’re allowed to take office. More importantly, there’s been a rise in rank-and-file vitality and activity since Carey’s first election. The Detroit strike experience does not mean that reformers should turn away from Carey. To my mind, Carey’s accomplishments entitle him to continued critical-minded patience — from all partisans of union democracy. □

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## Motown Surprises

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the Supreme Court and it won’t matter, because you have been judged in the court of public opinion and you are guilty.”

### Corporations Guilty in Court of Public Opinion

The local officials of the Detroit newspaper unions did not fail to pat themselves on the back for their “correct strategy” in appealing to the NLRB and agreeing not to interfere with the scab operations of the newspapers.

But Key Martin, local 3 of the New York Newspaper Guild, submitted a different opinion. “The unions are winning because of support in the streets,” he said. “That’s how you fight these court cases. They’re not apolitical. They respond to the pressure from the streets. And the fact that the strikers in this case have steadfastly stuck with it and not gone away or died, as Frank Vega (scab management) invited them to do, is of historic importance. You have stopped cold the two biggest media monopolies in this country,” Martin said, “and for that a tribute should be paid by every labor union in the country for the struggle the Detroit workers have put up.”

### After the March

Meetings of strikers and demonstrators following the march were an opportunity to exchange opinions and speculate about future developments. The Detroit Labor Party open house, held in a large meeting room at the Anchor Bar near the plaza where the march ended, was scheduled from 5 to 8 p.m., and Tony Mazzocchi, Labor Party national organizer, was expected to speak. But the room was too small and too noisy to accommodate even half the crowd that showed up. The organizers were pleased with the unexpectedly large turnout and recognized that this, too, was symptomatic of labor’s new awakening.

Along the line of march and at the plaza, while speeches were being made, leaflets were distributed announcing coming “Days of Action.” These were scheduled for July 11 through 13, a weekend action (Friday through Sunday) beginning with a mass rally at the *Detroit News* building and ending with a picnic for all participants. This developed into a larger demonstration than expected at the time it was planned, largely because details and publicity of the NLRB ruling were by this time generally known and widely discussed.

Congressman David Bonior was arrested at the offices of the Detroit News-papers Agency and the *Detroit News*,

along with a delegation of five others, at the Friday rally. They were demanding an interview with newspaper management to learn why the corporations were refusing to comply with the NLRB ruling, and refused to leave the property when management refused an interview and ordered them out.

The NLRB ruling was sweeping, ordering the newspapers to rehire all fired workers and negotiate a new contract with the unions representing them. William B. Gould, chairman of the NLRB wrote a separate opinion requesting a federal injunction ordering the corporations to comply. Hearings on the injunction were set for July 31 and August 1 before U.S. District Judge John O’Meara in Detroit. His decision can be appealed to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati. This process is expected to take less time than usual. And no one knows what the court decision or the final outcome of the newspaper stalemate will be. What is certain is that more surprises are in store, regardless of the court rulings.

[For information on one more surprise, Judge O’Meara’s denial of the injunction requested by the NLRB against the corporations, see above (p. 27), the sidebar by Peter Johnson, “Judge Denies Injunction Forcing Company to Rehire Locked-Out Workers.”] □

# Pittsburgh Labor Party Conference Draws Ninety — Where Do We Go from Here?

by Paul Le Blanc

*The following article is from the newsletter of the Metro Pittsburgh chapter of the Labor Party.*

**A** Metro Pittsburgh Labor Party conference in early June focused on democracy and dignity for working people. Organized under the banner "A Call for Economic Justice: Economic Realities and Community Development," it drew about ninety participants into a series of substantial and in-depth discussions of problems and struggles in both the national and local arenas, posing a challenge for future activity. There was ongoing fluctuation throughout the day as some conference participants had to leave and others came in for new sessions, but throughout the entire conference there was substantial and often vigorous involvement.

Taking place Saturday June 7, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., at the University of Pittsburgh's Frick Fine Arts Building, the conference offered major presentations by three prominent national speakers, with responses from local activists, plus smaller group discussions.

We have a record of 88 people who attended (a few latecomers didn't fill out registration forms), of whom 49 were Labor Party members, including members of both the Western Pennsylvania and the Metro Pittsburgh chapters and six guests from out of town. Men accounted for 55 of the participants, women for 33, with 10 African-Americans, and 25 union members in attendance. Eleven people indicated on their registration forms that they wish to join the Labor Party, and before the end of the day several (including some who didn't check the "want to join" line earlier) had decided to join.

Although most participants have yet to turn in the conference evaluation forms, the several that were returned showed positive and very thoughtful responses to the activities of the day. Especially valued were the local speakers who so effectively enhanced the comments of the national speakers, plus the smaller discussion groups.

## **A Program for Economic Justice**

In the morning, about 62 people attended the first session, "A Program for the Future: Economic Justice and the Labor Party", presented by Adolph Reed, Jr., a member of the Interim National Commit-

tee of the Labor Party and a professor of political science at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. Reed introduced listeners to the basic critical ideas and aspirations that guide the Labor Party, emphasizing the breadth and diversity of the working class (blue-collar, white-collar, and unemployed workers, women and men, various racial and ethnic backgrounds, etc.), and the necessity of mobilizing the potential power of this working-class majority to advance our common interests in the face of immensely powerful big business corporations that presently control the economic and political life of our country. He explained that the Labor Party's conception of politics views elections as only one — and neither the most immediate nor the most decisive — aspect of a strategy to bring power to the working class.

Rick Adams of the Alliance for Progressive Action, and Carol Lambiase of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America also offered remarks in this session. Rick noted that because both the Democratic and Republican parties are controlled by big business, efforts to build a Labor Party are more important than ever, but he also challenged the audience to think of how the analyses and goals of the Labor Party can be translated into terms — both verbally and in action — that the majority of people in the local area can understand and respond to. Carol explained the importance to her, as a trade unionist, of responding to the power of the big corporations politically — because with the growth of the global power of multinational corporations, efforts of union members to defend their rights through "unionism as usual" are all too often being outflanked and overwhelmed. The Labor Party must be developed as a tool to shift the balance in favor of the working-class majority.

## **An Injury to One is an Injury to All**

After lunch, about 65 attendees heard Mimi Abramovitz's presentation on "An Injury to One Is An Injury to All: Attacks on Workers and the Poor." A professor of social work at Hunter College, Abra-

movitz is a noted authority on poverty and welfare. She offered a fact-filled summary of the attacks being carried out on the poor under the banner of "welfare reform," going on to point out links between these attacks and attacks on women, people of color, and the working class as a whole. The elimination of an economic safety net, and the creation of cheaper-than-ever labor pools through "workfare," inevitably drives down the wage levels and living standards of all working people — while companies make bigger profits than ever.

Comments were also offered by Barney Oursler, Mon Valley Unemployed Committee, and Connie Mozee, Family Foundations. Focusing on the interconnections between the attacks on various disadvantaged and less powerful groups in society, Barney pointed to the rise of hate groups and the necessity of mobilizing in various ways — as thousands of Pittsburghers recently did — to oppose Ku Klux Klan, Nazi, and similar right-wing activities. Connie eloquently described how decisions made by the powerful have had devastating consequences in communities such as hers, [the Pittsburgh Black community,] and she challenged those who would like to see positive social change to go into such communities in order to listen to the people themselves about what they are experiencing, what they think, and what they need and want. Only social and political movements that do this will bring about meaningful changes.

## **Where Do We Go From Here?**

At the end of the afternoon, about 40 heard an important address on "Campaigns to Change the U.S. Political Reality" by Ed Bruno, New England Labor Party Organizer and the national coordinator of the 28th Amendment Campaign. Bruno noted that the Labor Party is not running candidates yet, but we do want to get ideas out into the political arena, which is why we've started a national campaign for a twenty-eight amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The wording of the proposed amendment reads: "Every person shall have the right to a job at a living wage." While the campaign is still in

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# I Don't See Civil Discourse — I See Civil War

by Bill Onasch

*The following remarks were part of a panel presentation at a day-long conference, "Social Security Crisis — Myth or Reality?" held June 7 in Kansas City. The conference was cosponsored by the Institute for Labor Studies (ILS); the Missouri AFL-CIO; the Greater Kansas City AFL-CIO; the [Kansas City area] Coalition of Union Retirees; American Federation of Government Employees Local 1336; and the Kansas City Area Labor Party. Other speakers at the event included: Duke McVey, president of the Missouri AFL-CIO; labor economist Peter Donahue; ILS director Judy Ancel; Javier Pérez, international vice-president, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU); Louie Wright, president of Firefighters Local 42; Bill Clause, acting president of AFGE Local 1336; and a representative of the Social Security Administration. Onasch is president of the Kansas City Area chapter of the Labor Party and vice-president of ATU Local 1287.*

**W**e've had lots of useful information presented by others today about the crisis facing Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. The task for this panel is to focus on what we can do about it.

The first thing we have to do, in my opinion, is to stop letting the bosses and bankers dictate the terms of the debate.

There is a growing trend in the media and in our schools, to look at life as if it were one big spread-sheet. Almost every aspect of our existence is now measured in terms of the bottom line. Are we being cost-effective? Are we being competitive?

You can't propose a new environmental standard just to prevent irreversible damage to our planet — you have to justify its cost in dollars. You can't enforce workplace health and safety standards on employers if you fail to show that they are cost-effective. It wouldn't be fair to ask a company to spend big bucks on safety just on the off-chance that it might save some workers' life, or prevent life-long disabilities. Managed care is coming to dominate the health care industry, erecting obstacles to medical services to protect its coffers from being raided by selfish sick people thinking only of their own health.

There's probably a lot of people convinced that when they get to that Pearly Gate on Judgment Day they'll be in competition with others to prove how effective they have been in inflating the Almighty's bottom line and that St Peter will punch them up on Excel before giving them the high sign.

We have to get away from this dehumanizing mindset. We are people — not assets or liabilities. We work to live — not live to work. We want to leave our children a sustainable planet, and a decent standard of living — not a balanced budget.

It is not the job of the labor movement to help shape the best fiscal policies for Wall Street. Our job is to protect and advance the interests of the working class — those that are working, those that are unemployed and would like to be work-

ing, and those who have retired after decades of hard work. This is the overwhelming majority of our nation and their voice has not yet been adequately heard in the debate. It's up to us to articulate those interests.

There's been a lot of talk recently about the need for civil discourse. Now my mother taught me to be polite. I say please and thank you, sir and ma'am, and in my daily interactions with fellow human beings try to treat them with the respect and courtesy that I would like to get from them. This approach acts as a lubricant on the inevitable frictions that develop when our egos compete for space. We do need more of that on a personal level in our society.

But when the monied interests gang up to attack the hard-won gains of working people; when they try to bust our unions; demand wage cuts and downsize and outsource us out of jobs; when they take food out of the mouths of poor children in the name of fiscal responsibility; and become so emboldened that they go after the most sacred part of our social contract — our Social Security; then I don't see civil discourse, *I see civil war.*

Now I want to tell the tape-recorder that I am of course speaking metaphorically and am not urging you to pick up the gun. While they're not using bullets — and neither should we — there is in fact a one-sided war going on right now. It's an escalation of the conflict that began to heat up on the picket lines twenty years ago. The picket line skirmishes continue but it's now also a war to destroy what's left of our social contract. If they win there will be no more entitlements, no more safety nets. If they prevail you can work at the bosses' pleasure, for whatever they choose to pay you — or you can go starve. That's the kind of new, improved, competitive America the rich and their political hirelings would like to see.

Like other aggressors before them they are not going to be appeased. The more civil we act the more brutal they become.

You can't debate on their terms because the terms they choose are stacked against us.

Truth is the first casualty of every war, this one included. We watched them do a number on welfare. They convinced a lot of ignorant and prejudiced people that welfare queens were drowning us in debt. The fact is welfare didn't amount to more than pocket change in the overall budget and it wasn't much more than pocket change for the recipients. But the White House, and both parties in congress, teamed up in an unconscionable attack on the poorest layer of our society, including millions of children.

That only whetted their appetite for more. They've saturated us with lies and distortions about Social Security. They've convinced many of the younger generation that there will be nothing left for them. We've heard the truth today. It's now up to us to take this truth back to the meetings of our unions, retirees, and community organizations. To get it out in our newsletters, and in letters to the daily papers. We need more public meetings, petition campaigns, demonstrations, and lobbying.

We have to send the message to the politicians that you're not going to fool us on this one like you did welfare, that you better keep your hands off our Social Security.

But we should do more than that. We should not only fight to hang on to what we have — we deserve more. The trends in our economy make Social Security more important than ever. The Labor Department predicts that a typical worker will now make at least five changes in employment over their working life. That means fewer and fewer will be vested in any kind of substantial employer pension plan. We should do like most other industrialized countries and make Social Security sufficient to give us a decent retirement without supplemental pensions.

American workers are very productive. Since Social Security was established a little over sixty years ago, productivity has grown by geometric proportions. Yet

we are working more hours than ever. And all the Social Security "reformers" want to bump up the normal retirement age to 69. For us males that would mean we would have an average of only three years of retirement before being summoned to that big audit up on high.

It's time we got a share in our increased productivity by reducing our hours of work and expanding our retirement. Many European countries now have a 35-hour work week, four or five weeks of paid vacation mandated by law, and a normal retirement age of sixty. Their employers and governments are not going broke.

## Pittsburgh Labor Party Conference Draws Ninety

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its earliest stages, it reveals what many opinion polls are also indicating: that many of the ideas that the Labor Party stands for (and that the major parties reject) are shared by large percentages, in some cases substantial majorities of the people.

What the Labor Party must do, Bruno argued, is to find ways to reach out and recruit increasing segments of this working-class majority in their own workplaces, organizations, and communities. In most cases, they won't come to our offices or conferences or meetings — we must organize meetings where they are. Efforts should be made to target a specific community, to get 10 percent of that community to sign a 28th amendment petition, and to recruit and hold a Labor Party organizing meeting in that community. If this happens in 15 communities around the country, in Bruno's view, it could transform the Labor Party and provide knowledge, insights, and resources for qualitative growth.

Valuable and critical discussion at the conclusion of Bruno's talk focused on when the Labor Party should begin to field candidates, what is the relationship of electoral activity to other political work, and how the orientation which he outlined might attract and sustain a mass base that could effectively struggle for the Labor Party program.

Among the most important features of the conference were the small-group discussions that took place in "break-out" groups: (1) Democratic Control of Government; (2) Urban Economy and Jobs; (3) Environment and Economic Renewal; (4) Privatization, Public Services, Social Security; (5) Struggles at the Workplace; and (6) Welfare, Workfare, Full Employment. Each discussion group was richly

And we should turn around the disgraceful treatment of Medicare. You remember last year's election campaign? The Democrats cynically attacked the Republicans for wanting to slash Medicare — which was true enough. But the fact is Clinton has proposed cuts in needed Medicare growth in every budget he has submitted and immediately after the election started to negotiate with the Republicans to give them almost all the cuts they wanted.

Despite the greed of the health care industry Medicare has been a great success story. Instead of chiseling away on the care we provide our retirees we should

endowed with informative resource people, plus alert and thoughtful participants. In a future issue of the newsletter we hope to be able to print some of the ideas and proposals coming from these discussions.

### Hard Work of Members and Others

There were shortcomings of the conference that can be identified. It would have been *very* good, many feel, to provide coffee — especially in the morning. It would also have been good to have discussion periods as part of the first two large sessions, not just the third. It was felt by some that not enough sustained effort went into drawing a higher percentage of union members to the conference. Some other friends that we were hoping to see were also unable to come. There was some disappointment that the brief "Labor Solidarity Observance" scheduled just before the lunch break — which was supposed to be a press conference — didn't quite materialize. Some cultural component might have enhanced the sense of enthusiasm and common purpose.

On the other hand, most participants felt that the conference was valuable for them and constituted a substantial success. Some good media work beforehand — especially through the weekly paper *In Pittsburgh* and the *New People* of the Thomas Merton Center — informed thousands of people in the Pittsburgh area of the conference and of the ideas of the Labor Party. The national speakers — especially Adolph Reed and Mimi Abramovitz — are well-known and attracted the attention of many conference participants as well as many more who were unable to come. At the conference itself, in addition to attractive conference packets, and a magnificent Labor

expand Medicare to include everybody. We should have universal quality health care as an entitlement for every American — just as all of other countries in the industrialized world guarantee the health care of their citizens.

I say the dog's been poked long enough. We're mad as hell and we shouldn't take it any more. We need to make Social Security the Gettysburg of this war on workers and after we win this one go on the offensive to get what should be rightfully ours. In this war we can't count on "friends of labor," we can only count on ourselves. But our cause is just and we are the majority. If we educate, agitate, and organize — we can win. □

Party banner (the use of which was donated by local artist-labor activist Bill Yund), there was an excellent and inexpensive lunch, there were excellent child care services and resources, plus a capable registration process — not to mention well-led and richly resourced discussion groups.

There were also participants themselves who made the conference what it was, with contributions ranging from on-the-spot financial donations (over \$137) to invaluable ideas, insights, information, and suggestions for future work. All this and more made the conference something that advanced the goals for which the Labor Party stands. About a dozen individual volunteers from the Metro Pittsburgh Labor Party devoted a special amount of work on the day of the conference to ensure this success.

It is important to realize that the conference was not simply an activity of the Labor Party alone. Among the co-sponsors of the event were: Health Care Workers District 1199-P, SEIU; United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America; United Faculty (University of Pittsburgh); Alliance for Progressive Action; Sociology Graduates Student Organization of the University of Pittsburgh; the Religious Task Force on the Economy; Social Action Committee, Allegheny Unitarian-Universalist Church; Campaign for a New Tomorrow; and the Thomas Merton Center. A substantial grant from the Three Rivers Community Fund also helped make the conference possible.

The question now is how can we build on this achievement, advancing struggles and carrying out the hard work of building the Labor Party in ways that will actually bring us closer to a genuine working-class democracy dedicated to social and economic justice for all. □

# Betty Shabazz: A Heroine in Her Own Right

by Joe Auciello

**B**etty Shabazz, widow of slain revolutionary Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz), succumbed to the third-degree burns that covered 80 percent of her body and died in New York City on June 23. New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani announced her death at City Hall. Labor Secretary Alexis Herman attended her memorial on behalf of President Clinton and there read a letter from the president that praised Dr. Shabazz as “a true heroine, a fine role model, and a valued friend.”

New York City’s medical examiner has ruled that her death, caused by a fire set by her 12-year-old grandson, Malcolm Shabazz, was a homicide. At the time of his arrest, her grandson was charged with juvenile delinquency. In Family Court Malcolm pleaded guilty to the juvenile equivalent of second-degree manslaughter and arson for setting the fire that caused his grandmother’s death.

Betty Shabazz is rightly celebrated as a woman who triumphed against tragedy, who instead of giving way to grief and despair at the murder of her husband, single-handedly raised six daughters while continuing her own education. At the time of Malcolm X’s death in 1965, she was without money, home, job, or college education. She returned to school, worked as a registered nurse after graduation, and went on to obtain further degrees. Earning a doctorate in education administration from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Dr. Shabazz served as an administrator at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn. Educational achievement for Black and minority youth was the special focus of her work.

## Courage in the Face of Assassination

For these reasons, the widow “of one of the greatest African-American leaders of history” (Amiri Baraka) was, in the words of Rev. Ray Hammond of Boston, “greatly loved and widely respected in the Black community because of the courage she showed in the face of assassination and in the years that followed.”

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), at its July convention, featured a tribute to Dr. Shabazz and announced it

would donate \$10,000 to a charity chosen by the Shabazz family.

In mourning the loss of Betty Shabazz, no one need exaggerate her role or influence in the Black liberation movement. While press accounts generally credited her as a defender of her husband’s political legacy, the reality contradicts the media’s oversimplified assessment. Betty Shabazz did not deepen or extend Malcolm X’s political and Black nationalist theories.

Certainly, Betty Shabazz defended her husband against the popular misconceptions that depicted him as a hater, a fanatic, a violent man who lived and died by the sword. She continued to reject the liberal pieties of racial integration which her husband had so firmly opposed. Dr. Shabazz spoke against this simple-minded moralizing, with little encouragement from other quarters, and she was right to do so. What support she did receive came from cothinkers in the Black nationalist movement and from revolutionaries organized at that time in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Young Socialist Alliance (YSA).

## Helped Publicize Malcolm’s Ideas

Her most significant political decision after her husband’s death was to assist in the publication of his many speeches that led to the books *Malcolm X Speaks*, *Malcolm X on Afro-American History*, and *By Any Means Necessary*, as well as numerous pamphlets. The *New York Times* obituary quoted Dr. Shabazz: “I’m private...But there were some public things I had to do, because of his [Malcolm X’s] commitment to the cause. I loved him, and he loved the people.” *Malcolm X Speaks* was reprinted by Grove Press and in that edition became, along with *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, a sourcebook for the 1960s radicalization, influencing the Trotskyists of the SWP and YSA, the New Left, and the Black Panthers. Without the cooperation of Betty Shabazz, her husband’s writings would never have circulated to the extent they did or exerted an influence that continues to the present day.

These efforts of Betty Shabazz (the editorial work of George Breitman and George Weissman in obtaining permis-

sions and preparing these works for publication must also be noted here) are all the more significant as she did not seem to share the direction Malcolm X was charting in what turned out to be the final period in his life. In public speeches, notably at New York’s Apollo Theatre in 1995, where she shared the platform with the Nation of Islam’s Louis Farrakhan, Dr. Shabazz was most concerned with asserting her husband’s rightful place as a leader and builder of the Nation of Islam. Her words were an implicit rebuke, to a largely Muslim audience, of Louis Farrakhan’s oft-repeated accusation that Malcolm X was a traitor. She defended Malcolm X as a man and as a leader of the Nation of Islam against those who would deny or denigrate his accomplishments for that organization. But having defended her husband’s name and character, she was unable or unwilling to defend his political direction after his break with Elijah Muhammad.

In 1964 Malcolm X attended the conference of the Organization of African Unity to urge African nations to bring the issue of what was then called “Negro rights” to the United Nations. Upon Malcolm’s return to the United States, his exploration of strategies for Black liberation and social change brought him increasingly into contact with Marxists and revolutionaries. The political course Malcolm X charted in his final months — documented in George Breitman’s book *The Last Year of Malcolm X* — was never mentioned in Dr. Shabazz’s speech at the Apollo, much less endorsed or updated for the present. Nor was the revolutionary solution to the oppression of Black people the topic of speeches she delivered at different events around the country. Dr. Shabazz was not the person who could develop that aspect of her husband’s legacy.

She continued his legacy in other ways, primarily by raising their six daughters. Four of the girls witnessed their father’s assassination in Harlem’s Audubon Ballroom in 1965. (Dr. Shabazz was then pregnant with twins.) When the fatal shots were fired, she pushed her children to the floor and shielded them as best she could with her own body. For the rest of her life she continued to shield and protect them. She also nurtured them with the belief that



Malcolm X's revolutionary message was not lost, thanks to Betty Shabazz and others.

prominent figures in the Nation of Islam were responsible for prompting, if not planning, their father's death. After all, Louis Farrakhan, then the minister of the Boston mosque, had said prior to the killing that Malcolm X was "worthy of death."

### Shabazz, Farrakhan, and the U.S. Government

Several years ago, in a television interview, Dr. Shabazz suggested that Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan played a role in organizing the assassination of her husband. (Farrakhan has since apologized for his inflammatory words against Malcolm and has stated that he had no part in organizing the murder of Malcolm X.) Dr. Shabazz's statement led to numerous unforeseen consequences that involved at least one of the Shabazz children.

Qubilah Shabazz seems to have been the most troubled of Malcolm X's daughters. Perhaps the childhood trauma caused by her father's murder stamped an indelible mark, contributing to her bouts with alcoholism and leaving her with psychological scars. She was, without doubt, an emotionally vulnerable person, easy prey

for a con man who used her, who set her up for a cash reward.

A U.S. government informant became her fiancé and, having gained her trust, tried to draw her into an alleged plot to assassinate Minister Louis Farrakhan, supposedly to avenge her father's death and to protect the safety of her mother. The scheme backfired, however, when Farrakhan denounced the government plot and made amends with the Shabazz family. This is what led Minister Farrakhan and Dr. Shabazz to share a platform at the Apollo Theatre and gave her an opportunity to address the Million Man March in October 1995.

Nonetheless, as a result of the government's attempt to use Qubilah for its own purposes, to exploit her lifelong grief, all of her troubles were deepened, leaving her less able to care for herself and her son. In addition to suffering from betrayal, humiliation, and the threat of jail, Qubilah Shabazz was required to undergo two years of psychiatric treatment, partly in Texas, where she relocated. Raising a child there became more difficult and finally impossible for her.

These stresses also fell on her son Malcolm, then a boy in grade school. He and his mother were separated for two years by a court order that placed him in a children's shelter. His return to his mother's home was stormy. He was truant from school; family quarrels required police intervention. As Qubilah realized she could not properly raise her son, Malcolm was sent to live with his grandmother, Betty Shabazz, in New York.

When he set the fire that took his grandmother's life, when he committed this terrible deed, what was the 12-year-old Malcolm thinking? Did he understand what he was doing? Or did the consequence of his action surpass his original intention? Some press accounts refer to Malcolm's schizophrenia and his reluc-

tance to take prescribed medication. A desire to return home to Texas is also cited. By setting a fire and getting into trouble, he apparently thought he might be sent back to his mother. An intention to harm his grandmother has not been reported or even suggested by the prosecution. By the terms of his plea, Malcolm admitted to setting the fire, but the question of his intentions did not become the subject of further interrogation in court.

### Grandson to be Confined

On July 15, Family Court Judge Howard Spitz heard a recommendation from a court-appointed psychiatrist that Malcolm receive considerable psychological counseling and be confined for two to three years to a secure placement under constant supervision.

In August, Judge Spitz sentenced Malcolm to a minimum of 18 months at a juvenile center in western Massachusetts. Defense attorneys Percy Sutton and David Dinkins expressed concern for the proper care of the boy as a human being with unusual abilities that might be stifled in the wrong place of confinement. (The young Malcolm speaks several languages.) They recommended a place in Virginia, but the judge, at the urging of government lawyers, sent him to a more "secure" facility. His case will be reviewed at the end of the 18-month period to determine whether he should remain in confinement. If so, his sentence would be reexamined every year. Malcolm Shabazz could be required to remain in confinement for another six years, until he reaches eighteen.

The story of Betty Shabazz's death by the action of her grandson is far more than a domestic tragedy. The United States government bears no small measure of blame. In particular, the FBI noted, analyzed, and exploited all of the weaknesses and troubles in Malcolm X's family. A willing informant was paid to discredit or attempt to harm Minister Farrakhan by inciting the emotionally fragile Qubilah Shabazz to violence. Stoking the fires of fratricidal conflict was primarily intended to injure Farrakhan politically, but he was not the only victim. Qubilah Shabazz and, no doubt, her son Malcolm sustained further emotional injury as a direct consequence of the government's schemes. As a result, a mother was less and less able to care for a child who was less and less able to control his own angry impulses.

The end of this string of suffering led to the death of Betty Shabazz. □

# Robert Franklin (“Rob”) Williams, 1925–1996

by Muhammad Ahmad

**R**obert F. Williams, known as “Rob,” was born February 26, 1925, in Monroe, North Carolina.

Robert Williams was raised on stories from his former-slave grandmother Ellen and tales of his grandfather Sikes Williams, also born into slavery, who stumped North Carolina for the Republican Party during Reconstruction and published a newspaper called “The People’s Voice.” Before she died, Ellen Williams gave young Robert the rifle which his grandfather had wielded against the terrorist “Red Shirts” who ravaged Southern blacks at the turn of the century.<sup>1</sup>

As a youth Rob Williams became radicalized by blatant racist Southern terror.

Williams came face to face with racism early on. As an 11-year-old in 1936, he saw a white policeman, Jesse Helms, Sr., beat an African-American woman to the ground. Williams watched in terror as North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms’s father hit the woman and “dragged her down the street to a nearby jailhouse, her dress over her head, the same way that a cave man would club and drag his prey.”<sup>2</sup>

In his mid-teens, Rob Williams organized a group called X-32 to throw stones at white men who drove nightly into town trying to assault African-American women.<sup>3</sup>

Later, Rob Williams was trained as a machinist in the National Youth Administration, where he organized a strike of workers at the age of 16.<sup>4</sup> During World War II, he went North to find work. He moved to Michigan, where he worked for a year at the Ford Motor Company as an automobile worker. Rob and his brother John Williams fought in the Detroit 1943 riot, when white mobs stormed through the streets and killed dozens of African-American citizens.<sup>5</sup>

Drafted into the army in 1944, Rob Williams served for 18 months, fighting for freedom in a segregated army. In the late 1940s Williams wrote a story in *The Daily Worker* entitled “Some Day I Am Going Back South.”<sup>6</sup> Williams returned to Monroe and in 1947 married Mabel Ola Robin-

son, a beautiful and brilliant 17-year-old whom he had known for several years and who shared his commitment to social justice and African-American liberation. In 1953 Williams joined the U.S. Marines before attending West Virginia State College, North Carolina, and Johnson C. Smith College in Charlotte, North Carolina. In 1955 as a husband and father of two sons (Robert F. Williams, Jr., and John C. Williams), he returned home with an honorable discharge from the U.S. Marine Corps.

Keenly aware of social injustice, Rob Williams joined the local NAACP and became its president. As president of the Monroe, North Carolina, NAACP branch he went into the bars and pool rooms to recruit members of the African-American working class. He was also a member of the Monroe Unitarian Fellowship and the Union County Human Relations Council. Facing armed harassment and intimidation of African American women by the KKK and denied justice in the courts, Williams began to advocate armed self-defense of the Monroe, NC, African American community. Members of the NAACP branch formed a rifle club, with a National Rifle Association charter, and protected their homes with rifles, machine guns, and sandbag fortifications.

The Monroe, NC, NAACP branch fought the KKK on numerous occasions with rifles and Molotov cocktails. From 1957 to 1961 the armed self-defense units militarily fought the racists. Because of his militancy, Rob Williams was stripped of his presidency of the branch by the national NAACP. But through Williams’s leadership, the Monroe branch had grown from a membership of 50 to 250.

## The Kissing Case

Williams attracted worldwide attention in 1958, when he took up the defense of two black Monroe boys accused of molesting a white girl.

David “Fuzzy” Simpson, 8, and James “Hanover” Thomson, 10, were convicted of molesting the 7-year-old girl after she kissed them on the cheek during a game

instigated by a white boy. Police nabbed the boys later that day as they pulled their wagon down Franklin Street. They were tossed into jail and held for six days without seeing or speaking to their parents.

The peck on the cheek set off a tempest. A white mob surrounded the jail. White supremacists fired shots into Fuzzy and Hanover’s homes. Six days later during a court hearing a judge sentenced the children to reform school near Rockingham indefinitely.

As head of the NAACP, Williams rushed to defend the children and masterminded a media blitz that landed the “kissing case” on the front page of newspapers from the *New York Post* to the *London News Chronicle*. He sent out press releases, called major newspapers and embarked on a national speaking tour.

The publicity sparked worldwide protests. Activists implored President Dwight Eisenhower to intervene. N.C. Gov. Luther Hodges received tens of thousands of letters beseeching him to release the boys. Finally he relented.

Three months after they were snatched off a Monroe sidewalk, Fuzzy and Hanover came home. And Williams became a hometown hero among African-Americans.<sup>7</sup>

## The Fight for Desegregation

Between 1960 and 1961 Williams organized demonstrations (peaceful pickets) to desegregate the city-owned, whites-only swimming pool. The African American community engaged in a struggle to use the local swimming pool that had been constructed with federal funds. Local white authorities would not allow integrated use, nor would they consent to separate use. When the African American community refused to give up and did not accept promises of construction of a pool at some undefined date in the future, the town government filled the pool with concrete rather than let the African American community use it.<sup>8</sup>

When the sit-in movement began among Southern African-American students, Rob Williams staged sit-ins at lunch counters, organized boycotts of department stores, and desegregated the local library. He was

1. Timothy B. Tyson, “Robert Franklin Williams: A Warrior for Freedom 1925–1996,” *Southern Exposure*, Winter 1996, p. 5.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

3. Darci McConnell, “The Father of Black Revolutionaries: While God Lay Sleeping, Robert F. Williams Changed Lives,” *The Grand Rapids Press*, Sunday, February 19, 1995, p. E2.

4. *Ibid.*, p. E2.

5. Timothy B. Tyson, “Robert Franklin Williams: A Warrior for Freedom 1925–1996,” *A Legacy of Resistance* (Detroit, Michigan: Robert Williams Tribute Committee, 1996), p. 47.

6. Stephanie Banchemo, “Hero or Renegade?,” *The Charlotte Observer*, Sunday, February 26, 1995, p. 10A.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Interview with Robert F. Williams, Cleveland, Ohio, 1994.

a candidate for mayor of the city of Monroe in 1960, running as an independent.

Also in 1960, Williams visited Cuba, met Fidel Castro, and became a member of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. He would even fly a Cuban flag in his backyard.<sup>9</sup> Rob Williams was a forerunner in the motion toward black political empowerment.

Rob Williams's physical and political stance on armed self-defense impacted upon Malcolm X, who then was a minister of the Nation of Islam. Minister Malcolm X on one occasion let Williams speak at Mosque No. 7 in New York to raise money for arms.

### Freedom Riders Come to Monroe

When the Freedom Rides began in 1961, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rob Williams — who had debated nonviolence vs. self-defense as a tactic or philosophy — agreed to test nonviolence in Monroe. It was Rob Williams's belief in the right of having peaceful demonstrations but using them in tactical flexibility with self-defense that led him to invite Freedom Riders to Monroe, North Carolina, in 1961 to test nonviolence. But when the Freedom Riders came to Monroe, white mobs numbering in the thousands attacked them.

The final confrontation came when the Black community came to the aid of non-violent freedom riders who were demonstrating in front of city hall. The demonstration had been attacked by a vicious mob who had beaten Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activist James Forman with a shotgun, splitting his head open. Unsuccessful efforts were made to rescue them and get them back to the Black community. Armed Black people set up defenses at the border between the white section of town and the Black community of Newton.<sup>10</sup>

A racial riot broke out as shots were fired. During the race riot a white couple wandered into the angry African American community. Their car was surrounded by African Americans from adjoining communities who had come to Newton for a showdown with the Klan. Rob Williams allowed the couple to take shelter in his home. Although the couple left unharmed, the local authorities pressed kidnapping charges against Williams. Receiving word that he would be held accountable for all the violence that was taking place and knowing the racists were preparing to kill him, Robert F. Williams, along with his

wife and two sons, left town.

Escaping a nationwide manhunt of at least 500 FBI agents, Rob Williams and his family were forced out of the country and into exile. His successful escape from "legal" racism was one of the early victories of the civil rights movement. Rob Williams's example of courageous struggle stimulated a young generation of activists to emulate his actions.

### Williams in Exile

Williams went to Cuba, where he was given political asylum by Fidel Castro and welcomed by the Cuban people. He was a personal friend of Ernesto "Che" Guevara. While living in Cuba for five years, Rob and Mabel Williams organized a radio program called "Radio Free Dixie." Radio Free Dixie brought the message of collective armed self-defense to the African American masses who were battling the racists in America's streets.

From exile in Havana Williams wrote the book *Negroes with Guns* (published 1962) about his experiences from 1957 to 1961. He also continued to publish his newsletter *The Crusader*, which called upon African Americans to unite with their allies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (the Third World) and with progressive whites in the United States and throughout the world. Appealing to all heads of state to make a call in support of the civil rights movement, Robert F. Williams was influential in the issuance by Chairman Mao Zedong of the People's Republic of China of a declaration of support to the cause of African American liberation.

As international chairman of the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM, 1964), Rob Williams traveled in Asia representing the African American freedom struggle. He moved to the People's Republic of China in 1966 and resided there during the height of the "Cultural Revolution." While there he met and talked with Chinese leaders and toured the country. He visited North Vietnam, met and talked with President Ho Chi Minh. He also broadcast antiwar messages to African American soldiers in South Vietnam from North Vietnam.

The example Rob Williams set in the African American Freedom movement inspired the formation in the South of groups such as the Deacons for Defense (1965) and the development of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which changed its policy

from nonviolence to armed self-defense in 1966. The Black Panther Party (BPP, 1966) and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW, 1969) considered Rob Williams the godfather of the armed self-defense movement.

While in China, Williams was elected President-in-Exile of the Detroit-based self-determinationist organization, the Republic of New Africa. Williams visited Africa and was imprisoned in Britain while trying to return to the U.S. In 1969 he returned to the U.S.A. and fought extradition from Michigan to North Carolina. He finally returned to North Carolina in 1976, after all charges against him had been dropped.

### Back in the U.S.A.

After returning to the United States he continued his political relations with the People's Republic of China, helping to establish an import-export trade agreement with China and paving the way for President Nixon's historic trip to that country in 1972. Rob Williams was a Fellow at the University of Michigan's Center for Chinese Studies. Williams also published an article on the "Cultural Revolution." He served as director of the Detroit East Side Citizens Abuse Clinic, where he was "too" successful in rehabilitating clients.

Rob Williams resided in Baldwin, Michigan, remaining active in the People's Association for Human Rights. In the late 1970s he traveled the country speaking for the U.S.-China People's Friendship Association.<sup>11</sup> Rob Williams also carried the message of African American unity wherever he went, and in the 1980s traveled again around the country fighting racial abuses wherever he found them. Robert Williams completed the first draft of his autobiography, *While God Lay Sleeping: The Autobiography of Robert F. Williams*.

Up until his untimely death, October 15, 1996, due to Hodgkins disease, Williams was planning to further escalate his leadership activities in the African American liberation movement, even at the age of 71.<sup>12</sup> His fighting spirit and leadership will be felt forever. Rob Williams's shining example as a courageous, sincere, scientific, spiritual, visionary, and honest freedom fighter will be honored. Robert F. Williams's insight and foresight is an inspiration for those who cherish the establishment of a people's democracy based on humanitarian principles. □

9. *Ibid.*

10. "Black Freedom Movement Loses Giant: Robert F. Williams of Monroe, N.C. Succumbs to Cancer," *Justice Speaks*, Volume 14, No. 3, p. 6.

11. "An Interview with Robert Williams," *Black News*, Volume 4, No. 7, May 1979, p. 16.

12. Conversation with Robert F. Williams, Baldwin, Michigan, 1995.

# Pipes Constructs a Caricature of Lenin

Richard Pipes, ed., *The Unknown Lenin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 204 pp., \$27.50.

reviewed by Joe Auciello

**T**he title *Unknown Lenin* is a misnomer. These previously unpublished notes, memos, telegrams, and documents contain nothing that was unknown about Lenin. What is true in this collection is consistent with Lenin's writings and conforms to the well-known accounts, memoirs, and biographies. What is not true, the slanders and falsifications, arrive already stale — old wine in old bottles.

Richard Pipes brings to this work a not-so-hidden agenda: to show Lenin as an unscrupulous, bloody tyrant, drunk with dogma, whose policies gave birth to the monstrosity of Stalinism. His editorial judgment of Lenin is characterized by unremitting hostility and breathtaking incomprehension.

Pipes does not make large claims for the book he compiled, and given his ideology, he cannot. For decades, bourgeois scholars have condemned Lenin as the evil fount of the "Soviet empire." Publishing documents that were held secretly in the Central Party Archive is intended to underscore that deeply cherished belief.

"These newly released materials... cast fresh light on Lenin's motives, attitudes and expectations... They reinforce the familiar image of Lenin, minus the retoucher's distortions. His policies, concealed behind a smokescreen of self-righteousness and defensiveness in his public pronouncements, appear, in his private communications, cynical and aggressive." As Pipes sees it, then, his purpose in editing these documents is to reveal the real Lenin, the man who actually lived, by rubbing clean the "retoucher's distortions" and clearing away the "smokescreen." Pipes, in short, claims he will tell the truth.

### Pipes's "Truth" about Lenin

And what is the "truth" about Lenin? For Pipes, "cynical and aggressive" policies are the least of Lenin's defects. He is a Marxist of no principles who "had lost faith in the commitment of the working class to revolution" at least fifteen years before the October Revolution of 1917 — that is how Pipes summarizes Lenin's theory of the revolutionary vanguard party,

first developed in *What Is to Be Done?* (1902).

Pipes presents Lenin as a bumbling political strategist, blinded by ideology and paranoia, with a "policeman's mentality," indifferent to the suffering of the Russian people. In Lenin's personality Pipes finds a "misanthrope" who has an "utter disregard for human life."

What's more, Lenin is held personally responsible for Stalin's rise to power, and he is therefore held complicit in Stalin's numerous crimes.

### No "Impartial Social Science" Here

Pipes has combed the Soviet archives to select and publish the documents which he believes will be the most damning of Lenin. In arranging this material Pipes has been less of a historian and more of a prosecuting attorney. Lenin would not have been surprised: "There can be no impartial social science in a society based on class struggle," as he said in the essay "Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism."

In the introduction and the editor's note preceding each document, Pipes pounces on a line or phrase in the text, often an unclear or vague reference, and invests it with meaning and certainty that cannot be justified by the words themselves. No matter. To the prosecuting attorney every word of Lenin's serves only to confirm his guilt.

### Lenin the "German Agent"

Here, for instance, Pipes announces his discovery of "the only known document in which Lenin explicitly refers to the German government's financing of Communist activities in 1918." The evidence, such as it is, consists of one line: "The Berliners will send some more money: if the scum delay, complain to me *formally*." (Emphasis in original.)

If Pipes is correct, then he has made an unprecedented discovery. Before the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks were accused of taking funds from the German government, the imperial government of Kaiser Wilhelm, while Russia was at war with Germany. These accusations of treason were used to jail Bolshevik leaders and at the time forced Lenin into hiding.

Ever since 1917 right-wing historians have repeated these charges *ad infinitum*, despite the lack of evidence. Trotsky devoted a chapter of his autobiography to refute a then-current version of the legend of German gold. Trotsky wondered why, if the accusations were true, no documentary evidence could be found in the files of the German government. It remains a pertinent question. There has been no need for Germany to suppress the truth on behalf of the Bolsheviks for the past 80 years.

Of course, a reader less biased than Pipes would point out that in the quoted document Lenin does not refer to the German government or any government official. Who the "Berliners" are is not at all certain, and an alternate interpretation (German Communists and/or sympathizers with the Russian revolution) is highly likely, even probable. Pipes ignores both the facts and the possibility of a different hypothesis. On the basis of this one ambiguous line he concludes: "This surely qualified [Lenin] as a German agent in the strict meaning of the word."

To concur with this declaration demands a leap of faith. To refer to "evidence" in this context is to distort the meaning of the words to fit a preconceived belief.

### Lenin and Terrorism

During the October Revolution the actual seizure of state power was a relatively peaceful, even anticlimactic event. Government officials and military officers who were arrested were often released on the basis of a promise not to take up arms against the new regime. Yet a year later many of these same individuals were fighting against the Bolsheviks, leading armies on the front, known as Whites, and encouraging rebellions behind the lines.

Russia, already devastated by the World War, was plunged into chaos as the country was turned into a battlefield. Bolshevik leaders became targets of assassination attempts, and some were killed. Lenin himself was shot. The country as a whole suffered from disease and starvation, exacerbated by a refusal of the better-off peasants to sell grain. The economy was on the verge of collapse. In short, counter-revolution struck, and the Bolsheviks struck back. The Red terror began.

Of these facts, Pipes is silent. Instead, he accuses Lenin of having no regard for human life and suggests that it is Lenin's personality flaws, his disregard for individual human beings, which accounts for the Red terror. This only repeats the standard academic account. Thirty years ago, Adam B. Ulam, Pipes's colleague at Harvard, claimed that Lenin's support for the terror "sprang from his own psychology" (*The Bolsheviks*, New York: Collier Books, 1965, p. 419).

Pipes quotes from the unpublished documents to show that Lenin ordered opponents of the revolution killed, that during the mass famine he called for the seizure of valuables from the Russian Orthodox Church, and that he demanded the execution of priests who resisted the expropriation. The discovery of these documents is, for Pipes, a signal event: proof positive of Lenin's evil design.

### Violence in Defense of the Revolution

In reply it should be noted, first, that Lenin's support for terror — and his reasons for it — are hardly unknown; they can readily be found in his previously published works. In his speech to the First Congress of the Communist International (1919) Lenin said, "We, of course, persecute Mensheviks, we even shoot them, when they wage war against us, fight against our Red Army and shoot our Red commanders. We responded to the bourgeois war with the proletarian war — there can be no other way."

Two months later, when socialist revolution erupted in Hungary, Lenin wrote, "Should vacillation manifest itself among the socialists who yesterday gave their support to you, to the dictatorship of the proletariat, or among the petty bourgeoisie, suppress it ruthlessly. In war the coward's legitimate fate is the bullet" ("Greetings to the Hungarian Workers"). In Lenin's published writings of this time such statements are not uncommon.

The more significant and unavoidable fact, the one which Pipes is reluctant to acknowledge, is that the Bolsheviks were fighting for the life of the revolution, surrounded on all sides in a terrible civil war. Their enemies, the White armies supported by the Western imperialist powers, were merciless and murderous. Captured Red soldiers and officers were clubbed, shot, or hanged. William Henry Chamberlin, a *Christian Science Monitor* reporter turned early historian of the Russian Revolution, described the White terror by quoting its leaders: "I had 370 Bolshevik

officers and non-commissioned officers shot on the spot," boasted General Wrangel. "It was necessary to exterminate without any mercy persons who were detected in cooperation with the Bolsheviks," explained a General Denisov. (See Chamberlin's *The Russian Revolution*, Vol. II, New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1965, p. 80.)

History, too, warned the Bolsheviks against leniency and moderation. All of the Bolshevik leaders well knew the fate of the first workers' government — the Paris Commune of 1871. In January 1918, Lenin began a speech to a Congress of Soviets by noting that the Russian workers' government had, at that point, lasted five days longer than the Paris Commune. Trotsky vividly recalled the fate of the defeated revolutionaries: "The Commune was drowned in blood" (Leon Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1961, p. 88). Thousands of Communards were slaughtered in mass executions by the victorious French bourgeoisie.

The White armies of Russia showed the same brutality toward the working and peasant classes. Had the White armies been victorious, they too would have made certain the revolution was "drowned in blood."

Urging the population to resist the reactionary offensive, Lenin expressed no doubt of the actual choices which faced Soviet Russia: "The most elementary thing...[is] that in a capitalist environment only the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat is possible... That is how the question stands, and not otherwise" ("All Out in the Fight Against Denikin!"). Chamberlin, using a different vocabulary, arrives at the same conclusion: "No government could have survived in Russia in those years without the use of terrorism" (ibid, p. 81).

### Pipes Ignores History

This information and analysis somehow escapes Pipes's notice. Yet if one hopes to understand Lenin's thinking, as shown both in the published works and these documents, then one must be willing to try and understand the times in which he lived and the problems he faced. Pipes has no such interest and makes no effort. His purpose is not to understand but to condemn.

In order to condemn Lenin, then, Pipes must ignore history and indulge in a dubious and simplistic syllogism: "Killing is bad. Lenin ordered people killed. Lenin is bad."

Yet the Bolsheviks did not choose terror as a consequence of the inhumane person-

ality of its chief leader. It was not at first a weapon they even wanted to wield. The policies and practices which constituted the terror were intended to be temporary. But while the Bolsheviks recognized the inescapable necessity of terror, they hardly celebrated the use of it. For this reason Trotsky would note about the suppression of the anti-Bolshevik rebellion at Kronstadt: "I am ready to recognize that civil war is no school of humanism." (See V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, *Kronstadt*, New York: Monad Press, 1979, p. 97.)

Abraham Lincoln, who was obliged to use harsh methods to defeat the slave-owners rebellion in the American civil war, would have agreed.

The Red terror and the civil war of which it was a part, was not required by Marxist theory or Bolshevik doctrine. Marxism does not demand the physical extermination of the former oppressing class. No theory of "class justice" requires large-scale executions. For this reason the Red terror did not begin until self-defense made it necessary. If there had been no reactionary uprising against the Soviet government, there would have been no terror.

### Lenin and Stalin

Pipes holds Lenin directly responsible for bringing Stalin to power and establishing the practices that Stalin later followed. This accusation is a crucial one in Pipes's brief against Lenin. Reviewers and scholars have also made much of this point. In the magazine *Commentary* (April 1997), one reads the following: "This book should settle, once and for all, the old argument about the relationship between Lenin's politics and the Stalinist horrors that were to come: the latter were no aberration, but a logical working out of the former." David Remnick, in the more liberal *New Yorker* (November 18, 1996), makes the same argument: "After reading *The Unknown Lenin* one would have to be delusional to think that... Stalinism was an aberration."

Pipes tries to insinuate that in the early years of the Bolshevik regime, Stalin was the number two man after Lenin. "There is much evidence of Lenin's reliance on Stalin, not only in running day-to-day government operations but also in setting major policy goals... it was Lenin personally who in April 1922 designated Stalin to occupy the newly created post of the party's general secretary" (*Unknown Lenin*, p. 9). (Others have reported that Kamenev or Zinoviev nominated Stalin and that Lenin had his doubts.)

For Pipes, Leninism led to Stalinism both philosophically and practically. The



actual historical record and, indeed, Pipes's own book, refute his conclusions on both counts.

First, referring only to the evidence in *The Unknown Lenin*, it is obvious that Lenin consulted on a wide variety of matters with his comrades on the Communist Party Central Committee — Stalin being one of many on that committee. Stalin's role is not especially prominent in the manner that Pipes maintains. Only a dozen of the 113 letters, telegrams, etc., in this collection are addressed to Stalin, or to Stalin and Kamenev. Often, letters to Stalin consist of instructions that Lenin wanted carried out. Nothing indicates that Stalin's collaboration was needed in "setting major policy goals."

### Lenin's Bloc with Trotsky against Stalin

Second, the writings of Lenin and Trotsky, widely known and easily available, contradict Pipes's contention of Lenin's reliance on Stalin. (See the 1975 Pathfinder Press collection, *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*.) Pipes is forced to acknowledge this evidence, though he tries to minimize it: "In the winter of 1922–1923... Lenin tried to form a tactical alliance with Trotsky against Stalin, Kamenev, and Zinoviev — an offer Trotsky tacitly rejected." The alliance Pipes refers to was more than merely tactical; it involved matters of political principle, matters in which Lenin and Trotsky were of one mind. It is simply untrue that Trotsky "rejected" the bloc with Lenin. Contrary to Pipes, there is much evidence of Lenin and Trotsky's collaboration against Stalin and others to defend their mutual views on issues like the monopoly of foreign trade, the right of self-determination for national minorities in the Soviet Union, and the problem of bureaucracy in the state and the party.

Late in 1922, when Lenin began to fear for the direction of the Bolshevik revolution, in part because of the behavior and functioning of Stalin, Lenin reached out to Trotsky and found in him an ally. This is the essential and incontrovertible point.

*The Unknown Lenin* contains letters that verify these well-known facts. Lenin wanted Trotsky appointed deputy chairman of the Council of People's Commissars — second to Lenin himself. Lenin also proposed that Trotsky and Kamenev, jointly, have authority to act on behalf of the Politburo between sessions of that body, a proposal which Trotsky "categorically refused." It was the rank, or office, that Trotsky rejected, not the program-

matic alliance with Lenin. Trotsky hoped that the political disputes could be resolved in the Central Committee without factional fighting and jockeying over position. Lenin, however, saw more clearly. Through a secretary he warned Trotsky, "Stalin will make a rotten compromise in order then to deceive." (See "On Lenin's Testament," in *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*, pp. 46–47; also see Leon Trotsky, *My Life*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970, p. 484.)

Lenin rightly feared that Stalin would cut a deal and renege on it when circumstances proved more favorable for him. Confronted with a new phenomenon — the growth of a counterrevolutionary bureaucratic tendency inside the Soviet Communist Party — Trotsky undoubtedly committed tactical errors which in hindsight he could have avoided. Having a different view from Lenin on how to tactically deal with the danger, Trotsky was inclined to temporize and negotiate with the other party leaders when he should have clearly and openly fought them. Trotsky hoped that a successful socialist revolution in Europe, coupled with a reawakening of the working class ranks of the party, would halt the process of bureaucratic deformation before it consolidated. Unfortunately, the defeat of the German revolution in 1923 dealt a severe setback to revolutionary possibilities in Europe, gave impetus to the nascent fascist movement there, and discouraged the ranks of the working class in the Soviet Union.

Later in exile, writing his autobiography, *My Life* (1930), Trotsky concluded that the bureaucracy had triumphed by 1923, the year that a set of strokes left Lenin physically incapacitated. (He had already been partially incapacitated through most of 1922.)

In the fall of 1923, while Lenin was still alive but unable to be active politically, Trotsky and his allies in the Bolshevik party leadership publicly challenged the authority and policies of the bureaucratically inclined majority of the Central Committee. But with Lenin incapacitated and a wave of discouragement within the Soviet party and working class over the defeat in Germany, the 1923 Opposition was unable to prevail. (Recent revelations show that the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition won a majority in the party voting in Moscow in late 1923, results that were suppressed and fraudulently reported by Stalin's bureaucratic machine centered around his post as general secretary.)

### Stalin Aided by Other Leaders, Not Lenin and Trotsky

Trotsky's tactical errors or disagreements with Lenin in the winter of 1922–23, and his early hesitant actions, seem minor lapses when compared to those prominent Bolsheviks — Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Bukharin, especially — who for several crucial years after Lenin's death supported most, if not all, of the measures that promoted the growth of the bureaucracy in the party and the state. (At the Twelfth Party Congress, in April 1923, Bukharin did speak out against Stalin on the national question, as did Rakovsky.) Only later, when it was too late, did Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Bukharin realize the danger they had helped to create. As Stephen F. Cohen, Bukharin's biographer, noted, "Part of the tragedy of the old Bolsheviks lay here: for seven years they fought among themselves over principles, while an intriguer [Stalin] gradually acquired the power to destroy them all." (*Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980, p. 157.)

Stalin's role as general secretary was, at first, a subordinate position, not the source of power that it became in subsequent years. Stalin was able to use his office for his benefit, to enhance his authority, appointing pliable men to important posts, removing more independent-minded ones. This maneuvering proceeded intensively while Lenin was sidelined with illness in 1922 and 1923. (He died in January 1924.) But Stalin's maneuvering to achieve sole power was no simple matter, and it was certainly not the inevitable result of Lenin's diktat.

Quite the contrary. In 1922, within a year of Stalin becoming general secretary, Lenin realized Stalin's designs and viewed them with alarm. In fact, in his "Testament" Lenin called for the removal of Stalin as general secretary.

### The Likelihood of Manufactured "Documents"

A certain caution is required when Pipes constructs an argument on the basis of recently discovered "evidence" from the party archives. It is well known that Stalin, and Stalin's underlings, rewrote history, doctored photographs, and forged documents. Even in the 1920s Trotsky exposed the "Stalin School of Falsification." The Stalinist machine's methods of falsification became especially monstrous and grotesque in the Moscow Trials of the 1930s. The documents included in *The Unknown Lenin* may also have been

altered to elevate the importance of Stalin or suit his needs in some other fashion.

The most prudent method of determining the validity of any interpretation based on these documents would be to examine the newly published material in light of previous scholarly research and the facts as they are generally known and acknowledged.

By itself, any single document is suspect. Pipes acknowledges this possibility in principle only to ignore it in practice. If anything in a document can be used to further his case, Pipes is only too willing to suspend doubt and accept it as genuine. On the basis of an ambiguous sentence in one document, Pipes tries to establish both a link between Lenin and the Nazis, and, furthermore, find in that supposed link a precedent for the Hitler-Stalin pact.

Some favorable reviewers, like the ex-Maoist Eugene Genovese (*New Republic*, October 14, 1996), hold that Pipes is reading too much into the documents and therefore brush aside his claims. But what should not be brushed aside is Pipes's intent. Readers should note that Pipes is as eager to establish a mutual identity between Lenin and Stalin as was Stalin himself.

Pipes's method is to present an ambiguity as a certainty and treat a supposition as proof. Then, this proof, such as it is, will be cited as a precedent for a policy that "shows" the essential identity between Lenin and Stalin. A less prejudiced historian would not proceed in this fashion and would not attempt to make the documents say exactly what he wished they would say.

### How Pipes Distorts the Record

Pipes is so determined to equate Lenin and Stalin that he must misinterpret and distort the historical record, including the very documents collected in this volume. In addition to elevating the importance of Lenin's relationship with Stalin, Pipes must also denigrate the role of other Bolshevik leaders, notably Trotsky. Lenin, he says, "began to lose confidence" in his "lieutenants." Citing documents from 1922, Pipes paraphrases notes from a speech by Lenin: "Trotsky, he declared, understood nothing of politics." On this basis Pipes concludes: "Trotsky entirely misrepresented his relationship with the Bolshevik leader... Lenin had little regard for Trotsky's judgment on any matter of substance." The notes to which Pipes refers were taken from a speech by Lenin during the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party [in 1921, not 1922] where he

reportedly said of Trotsky, "as for politics, he hasn't got a clue."

The context of this statement shows that Lenin was speaking of the moment, referring to issues in debate at the Congress and not making a conclusive judgment of Trotsky, though Pipes would wish it otherwise.

Lenin's regard for Trotsky can be demonstrated in numerous, substantive ways. Documents already cited in this book show that Lenin hoped Trotsky would assume a leading position on the Council of People's Commissars. Trotsky served as commissar of foreign affairs and negotiated the peace that took Russia out of World War I. As commissar of war during the crucial civil war years, Trotsky organized and led the Red Army. In his "Testament" of 1922, Lenin referred to Trotsky's "outstanding ability" and, despite some criticisms, praised him as the "most capable man" on the Central Committee. These expressions of confidence by Lenin contradict and supersede the comments that are contained in the notes of Lenin's alleged speech.

In fact, it is likely that Lenin never uttered the words attributed to him. A careful reading of the document from which this quote is taken shows it is a summary of Lenin's remarks written by a delegate named I. Barakhov. The identity of the writer is tucked away at the end of the book in a note where Pipes acknowledges, "There is no official transcript, and the speech is not recorded in the protocols [official record of proceedings] of the Tenth Party Congress." There is no evidence, then, to show that Lenin proofread this document or even knew of its existence. (Materials by and about Lenin were collected after his death and stored in party archives.) No one at this date can tell how well or how accurately I. Barakhov summarized Lenin's comments. To present a severe judgment of Trotsky on the basis of unsubstantiated remarks which contradict the published record, and further, on this basis to accuse Trotsky of misrepresentation, is simply prejudice disguised as scholarship.

### Valid and Invalid Criticisms of Lenin

To reject Pipes's fantastic accusations and historical distortions does not necessitate approval of all Lenin's decisions. One can, after all, try to learn from history. Years ago, the Marxist theoretician Ernest Mandel pointed to errors Lenin had made in the early 1920s. "After the end of the

Civil War and the beginning of the New Economic Policy, Lenin exaggerated the immediate danger that would arise out of loosening of discipline in the party, and underestimated the danger that suppression of civil liberties for non-Bolshevik Soviet tendencies, and reduction of internal democracy in the Bolshevik party, might hasten the process of bureaucratization he rightly feared. The root of this mistake lay precisely in a belief that the party autonomously defended the conquests of the proletariat. A few years later Lenin understood how mistaken this belief had been — but it was already too late to nip in the bud the danger of bureaucratization of the party apparatus." (See Ernest Mandel, "Trotsky's Marxism: An Anti-Critique," in Nicolas Krasso, ed., *Trotsky: The Great Debate Renewed*, St. Louis: New Critics Press, 1972, p. 55.)

Debates about Lenin and Bolshevism began during Lenin's lifetime, continued in the West after his death, and were renewed in the Soviet Union during glasnost. *The Unknown Lenin* will do little to affect those debates. As more archives are unsealed, as new material is published, arguments will be joined anew, but these are not likely to be any more conclusive. Lenin and his legacy will remain controversial topics.

### Lenin's Class-Struggle Legacy Will Survive

A historian working with unpublished documents will inevitably offer information and present hypotheses. Naturally, some speculation will always be necessary in trying to bridge gaps in the historical record. But a fair-minded historian will separate fact from even the most well-informed supposition. Pipes is not that historian. He repeatedly blurs the distinction between information and speculation, as he must if he is to cobble together an indictment of Lenin and Bolshevism. Otherwise, his interpretation of this collection of memos, memoranda, and marginalia does not amount to much.

Pipes claims, "The written legacy of Lenin... enjoyed the status of Holy Scripture in the Soviet Union." One need only consult the writings of General Volko-gonov to determine how little the Soviet leaders understood of Lenin and Marxism. Pipes himself also paints icons of Lenin. Only, in place of a red halo, he draws devil's horns. In its own way, this gesture is true enough, and fitting. To the class which Pipes represents, Lenin remains the irreconcilable archenemy who "will not serve." □

# Two Lives Affected by the Russian Revolution

by Michael Steven Smith

*Unrepentant Leftist: A Lawyer's Memoir*, by Victor Rabinowitz, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996.

*Back in Time: My Life, My Fate, My Epoch. The Memoirs of Nadezhda A. Joffe*, Translated from the Russian by Frederick S. Schoate. Oak Park, Michigan: Labor Publications Inc., 1995.

With the passing of John Abt, Leonard Boudin, Ernest Goodman (April 1996), Conrad Lynn, and William Kunstler, Victor Rabinowitz remains one of the last giants of his generation on the legal left. In his recently published memoir, *Unrepentant Leftist*, Rabinowitz tells of his long life's work, both legal and political. It is wonderfully anecdotal and well written, and since Rabinowitz is in his 80s, it covers most of the 20th century.

Rabinowitz grew up in Brooklyn, moving several times to better and better Jewish neighborhoods as his father, Louis Rabinowitz, an immigrant from Lithuania, grew more successful. Louis Rabinowitz was an intelligent, able machinist who held several patents on hook and eye tapes. He was a radical. He supported the left wing of the Socialist Party in America. Rabinowitz's mother also came from a radical family. Her parents were close to Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. Louis was a literate and cultured man who imparted his democratic values to his son. Victor went away to college and law school at the University of Michigan where he became an editor of the *Michigan Law Review* and an accomplished debater.

Victor came back to New York in 1935 and joined a business law firm where he did routine corporate work. Fortunately, he was able to escape to a labor law firm. The adage in law is that your "first job shapes your career." Rabinowitz's second job shaped his. That job was with the great Louis Boudin, a socialist theoretician and pioneer labor lawyer. By that time the large organizing drives of the CIO were over, but there was still much work to be done in defense of the unions, and Victor threw himself into this work with increasing skill and effectiveness.

## Rabinowitz and Boudin

He later formed a law firm with Leonard Boudin. The firm of Rabinowitz and Boudin (and later Michael Standard)

became one of the outstanding progressive law firms in America. To this day Rabinowitz is still of counsel to the firm and not inactive. The Rabinowitz and Boudin firm worked first defending the labor movement. (Victor was chief counsel to the union that represented the communication workers, especially the thousands in the telegraph industry.)

At the end of World War II and with the passage of the anti-Communist Taft-Hartley Act, the firm went on to defend many, many victims of the government witchhunt in the labor movement. Lawyers of the firm argued several cases before the Supreme Court of the United States, an extraordinary accomplishment for any lawyer.

After the Cuban revolution, the firm represented the Cuban government. (Victor had the chance to play chess twice with Che Guevara, losing both times.) With great skill Victor won the famous Sabatini case. The holding, which was later watered down, provided legal justification for Cuba to nationalize property owned by U.S. corporations.

## Defended Vietnam War Protestors

Victor was active in the movement against the U.S. government's war in Vietnam. His partner, Leonard Boudin, was chief counsel first to Dr. Spock in the famous draft card burning case and then to the Fort Jackson Eight, a case supporting free speech rights inside the military. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) was centrally involved in the military litigation. The firm, again with Boudin as chief counsel, went on to represent the SWP in its lawsuit against the FBI and other political police. The suit resulted in the only victory among a number of similar suits. Judge Thomas Griesa issued a ruling declaring that it was legal to be a socialist and advocate socialist ideas. He granted a quarter million dollar judgment against the FBI and enjoined the FBI from continuing its campaign of disruption and harassment against a legal political party.

Rabinowitz was also centrally involved in the work of the National Lawyers Guild, particularly in the 1960s and early '70s, when the group, which he had helped found, was active with the New

Left. He worked with people of the younger generation in passing on the leadership of the Guild.

Victor was the main attorney for the Communication Workers of America (CWA). He tells the story of the postwar strike for higher wages in 1947. His good friend was Joe Sealy, the head of the union. Many other union activists and their attorneys were close personal friends as well as political associates.

Those were heady days, when everything seemed possible — certainly a feeling that the next generation of '60s activists can identify with. He says in retrospect that those were the best days of his life, days of camaraderie in the party he belonged to (the Communist Party, which he joined in the late 1930s or early '40s and left in the early '60s).

## Experience in the Communist Party

Rabinowitz explains how people like himself, skillful, devoted, energetic, political activists, mothers, sons, fathers, friends, got caught up personally and politically in the Communist Party. It seemed in the 1940s, as he saw it, to be "the only game in town." It had about 75,000 members. By contrast, the Socialist Workers Party, which had about 2,000, seemed small and doctrinaire.

It wasn't that Rabinowitz had never read Trotsky. He had. And he knew about some of the major issues dividing Stalinists and Trotskyists. His anarchist uncle had given him a copy of Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, which he compared to the "Stalinist version of events." Nor was he unaware of the Moscow purge trials.

Rabinowitz joined the Communist Party after the Moscow trials. He was aware of them and read the transcripts of them. They "puzzled" him. He thought that it was "normal" for revolutions to be bloody, and he figured that he could still support the Soviet regime, drawing a parallel with Catholics who still remain members of the church despite the "bloody inquisition" and Americans who still supported their country despite the genocide against the Native Americans. He left the party in 1960 or 1961, he doesn't remember exactly, by simply stopping his attendance at meetings and stopping paying his dues.

*Continued on page 64*

# Pauline Caluya Will Always Be Our Comrade

by Ron Lare and Matt Siegfried



On August 25, 1997, Pauline Caluya, a member of the Trotskyist League (TL) and a supporter of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, died in a traffic accident as she rode her bicycle to work. A memorial display at the site of her death on Market Street in San Francisco has drawn written tributes and floral displays. It was included in the route of a 3,000-person "Critical Mass" demonstration by Bay Area bicyclists against the dangerous conditions in which they ride to and from work, or at work. In the last period of her cruelly short life, Pauline was involved in the attempt to unionize bicycle messengers in San Francisco.

Pauline participated in, and sometimes played a leading role in many anti-fascist demonstrations and abortion clinic defenses. Her spirit is captured in a memory in which an "Operation Rescue" speaker proclaimed, "The first people to legalize abortion were the Bolsheviks." Pauline immediately responded by leading clinic defenders in chanting "Bolsh-e-viks! Bolsh-e-viks!" Pauline and another comrade ran as socialists for student government office in Cincinnati.

Pauline was gifted with an infectious generosity of spirit, politically and personally. She communicated her inspired outlook easily to comrades and friends. However her own problems might weigh her down, she made our worst moments lighter.

To political study, as to much else, Pauline brought a gregarious enthusiasm, making it easy for others to learn with and from her, if they were willing to listen. Pauline had the simple yet profound gift of making it easier for others to ask questions. A Filipina comrade, Pauline pressed the importance of anti-imperialism. She was very active in TL internal and external studies.

In her search for an understanding of oppression, including the national oppression of Filipino people, she turned to Len-

in's "Imperialism" and argued for the importance of studying this work. She hoped to find time for diverse writing projects. When she found the time, she wrote very well.

Pauline had been an essential component of a vibrant TL local in Cincinnati consisting of, at one point, a dozen Trotskyists under the age of 25. Pauline's political life suffered from a problem common to all today's young U.S. revolutionaries. They have been left by older generations with broken bridges to mend to the past and the future of revolution. But she stood for the solution to this problem. She did what she could in her short life to promote revolutionary continuity in the U.S., with an emphasis on international revolution.

Pauline's genuine, extroverted interest in others made all the more powerful her protest against any sexism inside and outside our organization. She wrote well on this subject. Pauline's sometimes cheerful, sometimes angry, always penetrating insistence that men deal with her as an equal was a practical and theoretical inspiration to women and men comrades alike.

In a period in which youth do not come easily to revolutionary politics, Pauline came eagerly. In this, as in so much else, she was exceptional. □

## The Cataclysm: World War II and the History of American Trotskyism

*Continued from page 35*

democracy is only a mask. The real interest for Britain is India; for Germany, to seize India; for France it is to not lose the colonies; for Italy, to seize new colonies. The colonies do not have democracy. If Great Britain, for example, fights for democracy it would do well to start by giving India democracy. The very democratic English people do not give them democracy because they can exploit India only by dictatorial means. Germany wishes to crush France and Great Britain. Moscow is absolutely ready to give Hitler a free hand, because they know very well that if he is engaged in this destruction Russia will be free for years from attack from Germany. I am sure they would furnish raw materials to Germany during the war under the condition that Russia stand aside. Stalin does not wish a

military alliance with Hitler, but an agreement to remain neutral in the war. But Hitler is afraid the Soviet Union can become powerful enough to conquer, in one way or another, Rumania, Poland, and the Balkan states, during the time Germany would be engaged in a world war, and so approach directly the German frontier. That is why Hitler wished to have a preventive war with the Soviet Union, to crush the Soviet Union, and after that begin his war for world domination. Between these two possibilities, two variants, the Germans vacillate. What will be the final decision, I cannot foretell. I am not sure if Hitler himself knows today. Stalin does not know, because he hesitates and continues the discussions with Britain, and at the same time concludes economic and commercial agreements with Germany. He has, as the

Germans say, two irons in the fire. (*Leon Trotsky Speaks*, p. 304-5.)

Thus Trotsky anticipated and predicted the Stalin-Hitler pact, which was signed one month later, August 22, 1939. On September 1 Hitler's troops invaded Poland and World War II began.

### Trotsky Foresees the "American Century"

One other prediction by Trotsky on the eve of war should be noted. He was asked a final question by the American scholars who interviewed him: "What would be your advice to the United States as to its course in international affairs?"

Trotsky responded at length to this provocative question, making clear his opposition to U.S. imperialism, which he was

sure would be embroiled in the coming war. But beyond this he ventured to predict the war's outcome. The text of his response follows:

I must say that I do not feel competent to give advice to the Washington government because of the same political reason for which the Washington government finds it is not necessary to give me a visa. We are in a different social position from the Washington government. I could give advice to a government which had the same objectives as my own, not to a capitalistic government, and the government of the United States, in spite of the New Deal, is, in my opinion, an imperialistic and capitalistic government.

I can only say what a revolutionary government should do — a genuine workers' government in the United States. I believe the first thing would be to expropriate the Sixty Families. It would be a very good measure, not only from the national point of view, but from the point of view of settling world affairs—it would be a good example to the other nations. To nationalize the banks; to give, by radical social measures, work to the ten or twelve millions unemployed; to give material aid to the farmers to facilitate free cultivation. I believe that it would signify the rise of the national income of the United States from \$67 billions to \$200 or \$300 billions a year in the next years, because the following years we cannot foresee the tremendous rise of the material power of this powerful nation, and of course such a nation could be the genuine dictator of the world, but a very good one, and I am sure that in this case the fascist countries of Hitler and Mussolini, and all their poor and miserable people, would, in the last analysis, disappear from the historical scene if the United States, as the economic power, would find the political power to reorganize their very sick economic structure.

I do not see any other outcome, any other solution. We have during the last six or seven years, observed the New Deal politics. The New Deal provoked great hopes. I didn't share their hopes. I had, here in Mexico, a visit from some conservative senators, two years ago, and they asked me if we were still in favor of surgical revolutionary measures. I answered, I don't see any others, but if the New Deal succeeds, I am ready to abandon my revolutionary conception in favor of the New Deal conceptions. It did not succeed, and I dare to affirm that if Mr. Roosevelt were elected for the third term, the New Deal would not succeed in the third term.

But this powerful economic body of the United States, the most powerful in the world, is in a state of decomposition.

Nobody has indicated means how to stop this decomposition. A whole new structure must be made, and it cannot be realized as long as you have the Sixty Families. This is why I began with the advice to expropriate them.

Two years ago, when your Congress passed the neutrality laws, I had a discussion with some American politicians, and I expressed my astonishment about the fact that the most powerful nation in the world, with such creative power and technical genius, does not understand the world situation—that it is their wish to separate themselves from the world by a scrap of paper of the law of neutrality. If American capitalism survives, and it will survive for some time, we will have in the United States the most powerful imperialism and militarism in the world. We already see the beginning now.

Of course, this armament is, as a fact, creating a new situation. Armaments are also an enterprise. To stop the armaments now without a war would cause the greatest social crisis in the world — ten millions of unemployed. The crisis would be enough to provoke a revolution, and the fear of this revolution is also a reason to continue the armaments, and the armaments become an independent factor in history. It is necessary to utilize them. Your ruling class had the slogan "Open Door to China," but that signifies it — only by battleships, in hope of preventing the freedom of the Pacific Ocean by a tremendous fleet. I don't see any other means of defeating capitalistic Japan. Who is capable of doing this but the most powerful nation in the world? America will say we don't wish a German peace. Japan is supported by German arms. We do not wish an Italian, German, Japanese peace. We will impose our American peace because we are stronger. It signifies an explosion of American militarism and imperialism.

This is the dilemma, socialism or imperialism. Democracy does not answer this question. This is the advice I would give to the American government.

This statement is quoted in its entirety because it summarizes Trotsky's appreciation of the world political situation on the eve of World War II, far more perceptive than any other political figure of the time. Trotsky spoke in English, for which he apologized. The interview was taken in shorthand by one of his secretaries who transcribed it and made a copy for the group of American scholars who participated. It was first published in *Intercontinental Press*, September 8, 1969.

My purpose in including this lengthy quotation here is to give a sample of the advanced political understanding with which the Trotskyist movement was

armed in those days. This was a great advantage for the Socialist Workers Party in the education of its members and for the ideological and tactical preparation of its leadership to meet the wartime challenges soon to be faced. The demonstrable validity of Trotsky's historical insight was insufficient to prevent a near 40 percent split from the SWP led by defectors from Marxism (Burnham, Shachtman, and Abern), all three of them top leaders of the SWP prior to the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939. Nor could Trotsky's warnings of the war danger have any effect on the popular consciousness of the U.S. working masses. Their political thinking was conditioned almost entirely by their harsh life and valiant struggles in the depression years and by the pro-war propaganda of the Roosevelt administration and the mass media.

### American Trotskyism on the Eve of World War II

The daily activity of the SWP on the eve of World War II was mostly centered on the struggles of the working class, strike actions, unemployed demonstrations, defense of union gains, participation in union politics and union caucus formations, organizing new unions, recruiting new members to the party, and distributing party literature. The gathering war clouds cast their shadow over all our activity, but the impending war was not an obsession with us. We knew it was coming and we thought we were prepared to meet whatever challenges it might bring.

After the outbreak of war in Europe an Emergency Conference of the Fourth International, held in New York May 19–26, 1940, adopted a manifesto (written by Trotsky), "Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution." This lengthy manifesto stated "openly and clearly how it (the FI) views this war and its participants, how it evaluates the war policies of various labor organizations, and, most important, what is the way out to peace, freedom and plenty."

Its concluding sections succinctly outlined what to do: "The task which is posed by history is not to support one part of the imperialist system against another but to make an end of the system as a whole." It argued that workers must learn military arts: "All the great questions will be decided in the next epoch arms in hand." And it called for world revolution to end the slaughter and destruction and reorganize a peaceful world: "[We] carry on constant, persistent, tireless preparation of the revolution — in the factories, in the mills,

in the villages, in the barracks, at the front and in the fleet.”

### June 1940 Discussions with Trotsky: Military Policy

A small delegation of SWP leaders, headed by Cannon and Farrell Dobbs, met with Trotsky in Coyoacán, June 12–15, 1940. Other participants were Antoinette Konikow, Sam Gordon, Joseph Hansen, Charles Cornell, and Harold Robbins. The purpose was to begin to develop a wartime anti-war strategy for the SWP. Trotsky outlined his proposals. The following excerpts from exchanges between Cannon and Trotsky essentially express Trotsky's position:

T. The state is now organizing tremendous military machines with millions of men. No longer do we have just the small possibilities of defense guards but the wide possibilities given by the bourgeois state itself.

C. Can this take the form of resolutions to the trade unions? Do we demand military equipment, training, etc.? What about the possibility of confusing us with the patriots?

T. Partial confusion is inevitable, especially at the beginning. But we place our whole agitation on a class basis. We are against the bourgeois officers who treat you like cattle, who use you for cannon-fodder. We are concerned about the deaths of workers, unlike the bourgeois officers. We want workers' officers.

We can say to the workers: We are ready for revolution. But you aren't ready. But both of us want our own workers' officers in this situation. We want special workers' schools which will train us to be officers.

C. The New York Times just printed an editorial advocating universal military training. Do we agree with that?

T. Yes. That is correct — but under control of our own organizations.

C. Doesn't this line make a very sharp break with the pacifists such as Norman Thomas and the Keep America Out of War outfits? For a long time our agitation has been abstract. It was against war in general. Only revolution can stop war. Hence we favor universal training. The difficulty is to make clear that we are really against war. We need very clear and precise formulations.

It signifies too a re-education of our own movement. The youth has been impregnated with an anti-militarist and escapist attitude toward war. Already many have asked about going to Mexico in order to hide out. Our propaganda is not sufficiently separated from that of the pacifists. We say there must be no war! At the same time we say we can't avoid

war! There is a link missing somewhere. All questions will be solved with war. Mere opposition can't signify anything. But the problem which requires formulation is making ourselves distinct from the patriots.

Konikow: What about our slogans such as “not a cent for war”?

T. Suppose we had a senator. He would introduce a bill in favor of training camps for workers. He might ask 500 millions for it. At the same time he would vote against the military budget because it is controlled by class enemies. We can't expropriate the bourgeoisie at present, so we allow them to exploit the workers. But we try to protect the workers with trade unions. The courts are bourgeois but we don't boycott them as do the anarchists. We try to use them and fight within them. Likewise with parliaments. We are enemies of the bourgeoisie and its institutions, but we utilize them. War is a bourgeois institution, a thousand times more powerful than all the other bourgeois institutions. We accept it as a fact, like the bourgeois schools, and try to utilize it. Pacifists accept everything bourgeois but militarism. They accept the schools, the parliament, the courts, without question. Everything is good in peacetime. But militarism, which is just as much bourgeois as the rest? No, they draw back and say we don't want any of that. The Marxists try to utilize war like any other bourgeois institution. It is clear now that in the next period our opposition to militarism will constitute the base for our propaganda; our agitation will be for the training of the masses.

Our military transitional program is an agitational program. Our socialist revolutionary program is propaganda.

### June 1940 Discussions with Trotsky: Union Policy and Policy Toward CP

The other question discussed at these meetings was SWP fractions in the union movement, the party's trade union policy. In general the SWP had blocked with so-called progressives and militant activists against the Stalinists in all situations where the Stalinists sought influence or controlled the union apparatus, as in the Minneapolis Teamsters and in the auto and maritime industries. Trotsky argued that the war situation and the Stalinist opposition to war after the signing of the Stalin-Hitler Pact required a tactical change in the SWP's trade union policy. He argued for an aggressive appeal to Stalinist union members for united action against the war plans of the Roosevelt administration, and for endorsement of Browder (the CP candidate) for president

in the 1940 general election against Roosevelt. The following excerpts from the discussion are typical of the differences that developed between Trotsky and the others, articulated most decisively by Cannon.

T. Theoretically it is possible to support the Stalinist candidate. It is a way of approaching the Stalinist workers. We can say, yes, we know this candidate. But we will give critical support. We can repeat on a small scale what we would do if Lewis were nominated.

Theoretically it is not impossible. It would be very difficult it is true—but then it is only an analysis. They of course would say, we don't need your support. We would answer, we don't support you but the workers who support you. We warn them but go through the experience with them. These leaders will betray you. It is necessary to find an approach to the Stalinist party. Theoretically it is not impossible to support their candidate with very sharp warnings. It would seize them. What? How?...

The progressive elements oppose the Stalinists but we don't win many progressive elements. Everywhere we meet Stalinists. How to break the Stalinist party? The support of the progressives is not stable. It is found at the top of the union rather than as a rank and file current. Now with the war we will have these progressives against us. We need a stronger base in the ranks. There are small Tobins on whom we depend. They depend on the big Tobins. They on Roosevelt. This phase is inevitable. It opened the door for us in the trade unions. But it can become dangerous. We can't depend on those elements or their sentiments. We will lose them and isolate ourselves from the Stalinist workers. Now we have no attitude toward them. Burnham and Shachtman opposed an active attitude toward the Stalinists. They are not an accident but a crystallization of American workers abuse by Moscow. They represent a whole period from 1917 up to date. We can't move without them. The coincidence between their slogans and ours is transitory, but it can give us a bridge to these workers. The question must be examined. If persecutions should begin tomorrow, it would begin first against them, second against us. The honest, hard members will remain true. The progressives are a type in the leadership. The rank and file are disquieted, unconsciously revolutionary. (Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939–40, p. 263.)

C. They [the CP] will probably make a change before we return. We must exercise great caution in dealing with the Stalinists in order not to compromise ourselves. Yesterday's discussion took a one-sided channel regarding our rela-

tions in the unions, that we act only as attorneys for the progressive labor fakers. This is very false. Our objective is to create our own forces. The problem is how to begin. All sectarians are independent forces—in their own imagination. Your impression that the anti-Stalinists are rival labor fakers is not quite correct. It has that aspect, but it has other aspects too. Without opposition to the Stalinists we have no reason for existing in the unions. We start as oppositionists and become irreconcilable. Where small groups break their necks is that they scorn maneuvers and combinations and never consolidate anything. At the opposite extreme is the Lovestone group.

In the SUP (Sailors Union of the Pacific) we began without any members, the way we usually begin. Up to the time of the war it was hard to find more fruitful ground than the anti-Stalinist elements. We began with this idea, that it is impossible to play a role in the unions unless you have people in the unions. With a small party, the possibility to enter is the first essential. In the SUP we made combination with syndicalist elements. It was an exceptional situation, a small weak bureaucracy, most of whose policies were correct and which was against the Stalinists. It was incomprehensible that we could play any role except as an opposition to the Stalinists who were the most treacherous elements in the situation.

We formed a tactical bloc with the one possibility to enter the union freely. We were weak numerically, strong politically. The progressives grew, defeated the Stalinists. We grew too. We have fifty members and may possess soon fifty more. We followed a very careful policy — not to have sharp clashes which were not necessary anyway so far, so as not to bring about a premature split — not to let the main fight against the Stalinists be obscured.

The maritime unions are an important section in the field. Our first enemy there is the Stalinists. They are the big problem. In new unions such as the maritime, which in reality surged forward in 1934, shattering the old bureaucracy, the Stalinists came to the fore. The old-fashioned craft unionists cannot prevail against the Stalinists. The struggle for control is between us and the Stalinists. We have to be careful not to compromise this fight. We must be the classical intransigent force.

The Stalinists gained powerful positions in these unions, especially in the auto union. The Lovestoneites followed the policy outlined by Trotsky yesterday — attorneys for the labor fakers, especially in auto. They disappeared from the scene. We followed a more careful policy. We tried to exploit the differences between the Martin gang and the Stalin-

ists. For a while we were the left wing of the Martin outfit, but we extricated ourselves in the proper time. Auto is ostensibly CIO but in reality the Stalinists are in control. Now we are coming forward as the leading and inspiring circle in the rank and file that has no top leaders, that is anti-Stalinist, anti-Patriotic, anti-Lewis. We have every chance for success. We must not overlook the possibility that these chances developed from experiments in the past period to exploit differences between the union tops. If we had taken a sectarian attitude we would still be there.

In the food unions there was an inchoate opposition to the Stalinists. There were office-seekers, progressives, former CPers. We have only a few people. We must link ourselves with one or the other to come forward. Later we will be able to come forward. Two things can compromise us: One, confusion with the Stalinists. Two, a purist attitude. If we imagine ourselves a power, ignoring the differences between the reactionary wings, we will remain sterile. (Writings of Leon Trotsky p 269–71)

T. I would be very glad to hear even one single word from you on policy in regard to the presidential election.

C. It is not entirely correct to pose the problem in that way. We are not with the pro-Roosevelt militants. We developed when the Stalinists were pro-Rooseveltian. Their present attitude is conjunctural. It is not correct that we lean toward Roosevelt. Comrade Trotsky's polemic is a polemic for an independent candidate. If we were opposed to that then his account would be correct. For technical reasons we can't have an independent candidate. The real answer is independent politics.

It is a false issue: Roosevelt vs. the Stalinists. It is not a bona fide class opposition to Roosevelt. Possibly we could support Browder against Roosevelt, but Browder would not only repudiate our votes, but would withdraw in favor of Roosevelt.

T. I propose a compromise. I will evaluate Browder 50 percent lower than I estimate him now in return for 50 percent more interest from you in the Stalinist party.

C. It has many complications. (Writings, p. 275)

### World War II Deepens

Within a few months following these discussions far-reaching events would cast them in a new light. At the beginning of June 1940, Hitler seemed on the verge of victory. The German attack on the Allied evacuation at Dunkirk killed 70,000 British troops. Later that month France capitulated to Germany. And in July the

German air bombardment of Britain began.

Trotsky was assassinated by an agent of Stalin, August 20, 1940.

Less than a year later Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, June 22, 1941.

The impact of these world-shattering events was much different in Europe than in the United States. The Roosevelt administration was impelled to step up its war preparations. But it was restrained by popular anti-war sentiment and by an isolationist bloc in the U.S. Congress headed by Senator Taft. Not until early 1941 (after the presidential election) was Roosevelt in a position to take decisive measures. He then signed the controversial Lend-Lease Agreement with the beleaguered Allies to produce and deliver war materials. The second measure taken by Roosevelt came in June 1941 when FBI agents raided the branch offices of the Socialist Workers Party in St. Paul and Minneapolis. An indictment drawn up by the Justice Department was soon handed down by a federal grand jury against 29 men and women, all members of the Minneapolis Teamster movement and/or the Socialist Workers Party.

These moves were clear signals that the government was preparing on all fronts to enter the war. U.S. industry began shifting to war production and the machinery of thought control went hand in glove with this. Political activists, both in the camp of the ruling class and in the unions and other working class organizations, were beginning to realize that a great change in the economic and social structure of the country was under way, causing extensive debate and dissension in ruling class circles. For the vast majority of working people it meant that new jobs were opening up. Many who never before had a regular job now found work in some shipyards that were being built and in air plane plants and some other new industrial sites. But the mass consciousness condition by the Depression era remained.

### More on SWP's Military Policy

The leaders of the Socialist Workers Party did not doubt at that time that the proletarian military policy outlined by Trotsky would become a useful device to mobilize workers and soldiers in their own defense during the war, on the home front and in battle. A Plenum-Conference of the SWP in Chicago on September 27–29, 1940, concurred in the military policy and adopted the main report by Cannon on this subject in which he said (among other things),

We are under great pressure and will be under still greater pressure. We know that we are dealing with a murderous machine in Stalin's GPU. We know that Comrade Trotsky was not the first, and probably will not be the last, victim of this murder machine. Our party must also expect persecutions from the Wall Street government.

This conference began with a moment of silence in memory of Trotsky, "our greatest teacher and comrade and our most glorious martyr."

On the decisive questions of military service and support of the imperialist war, Cannon's report stated unambiguously,

We say it is a good thing for the workers now to be trained in the use of arms. We are, in fact, in favor of compulsory military training of the proletariat. We are in favor of every union going on record for this idea. We want the proletariat to be well trained and equipped to play the military game. The only thing we object to is the leadership of a class that we don't trust.

Cannon also gave a report on Stalinism and the SWP union policy, as discussed with Trotsky. He said,

I think this is one time we disagreed with Trotsky correctly. Nevertheless we have all realized that we must devise a more flexible tactic towards the CP and look for suitable occasions, as long as they espouse this semiradical line (The Yanks Are Not Coming!), to penetrate their ranks, by means of united front proposals. (*The Socialist Workers Party in World War II*, p. 87.)

Of course this prospect ended when Hitler's armies invaded the Soviet Union. The CP USA then became America's leading jingoists. They thought the wartime alliance between American capitalism and the Soviet Union would last forever.

### The Minneapolis Trial

In the so-called Sedition Trial, the Minneapolis trial of Trotskyist leaders which began October 27, 1941, Cannon answered a series of questions on the SWP's Proletarian Military Policy. He repeated that the party was in support of conscription, "universal military training." He also explained that the party opposed all imperialist wars. (*Socialism on Trial*, p. 40-50.)

"It is absolutely true that Hitler wants to dominate the world," he said,

but we think it is equally true that the ruling group of American capitalists has the

same idea and we are not in favor of either of them.

We do not think that the Sixty Families who own America want to wage this war for some sacred principle of democracy. We think they are the greatest enemies of democracy here at home. We think they would only use the opportunity of a war to eliminate all civil liberties at home, to get the best imitation of fascism they can possibly get.

The Trotskyists were cleared of the sedition charge, found guilty of violating the Smith Act (of questionable constitutionality), and sentenced on Dec. 8, 1941, the day the U.S. Congress declared war, following the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. From that day on the condition of life in the United States was destined for changes previously unknown.

### After Pearl Harbor

The Roosevelt administration had everything in place to start the war machine rolling. Thousands of new military recruits were quickly inducted and sent off to training camps. Factory gates opened to a flood of new workers, who went on company payrolls under the cost-plus agreement between government and industry: the government paid the cost and industry collected the plus, which was the profit mark-up for capitalist management.

At first this seemed like a minor miracle, a world of unemployment and misery transformed into jobs for everyone and quickly built housing projects near the places of work. Blacks and other minorities began to find work in industries where only whites had previously been employed. And women were given new life, freed from the drudgery and monotony of child care and house work. Auxiliary units of the military were created for women recruits in all branches of the armed forces. Women workers were needed in industry. Everybody seemed happy at first except those draft victims who were rushed off to war and got caught on the killing fields and in the slaughter pens.

In North America, especially in the United States, life was sheltered from the full impact of war. There were no air raids. Cities were not bombed or shelled. But even so there was hardship and discontent. As the war dragged on the casualties mounted. Consumer goods grew scarcer and more expensive. The rationing system imposed by government decree gave rise to corruption and created a black market. Wages were frozen. The government tried to freeze jobs to prevent workers from

leaving low-paid jobs for ones that paid more.

All social institutions experienced drastic change during the war, the schools, the rather primitive health care system, the churches, and even the governmental structure at all levels. Much of this was hardly perceptible, or went largely unnoticed and was poorly understood. The underlying assumption was that wartime conditions were temporary, that after the war things would revert to the prewar status quo.

### Changes in the Unions

The unions also underwent profound changes, probably more than most other organizations. This was true of the organizational structure, but also (perhaps more so) of the leadership and hired officialdom.

In 1940 the combined membership of all unions — AFL, CIO, Railroad brotherhoods, and independents — was 8,944,000. In 1945, at the end of World War II, total union membership was 14,796,000, an increase of nearly 6 million. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, *History of Labor*, 1976.)

In exchange for the wartime no-strike pledge and other commitments by top union officials, the Roosevelt administration conceded the union shop and dues check-off in war industries. This is what accounted for the rapid growth of union membership. Millions of workers who had never before belonged to unions suddenly became union members. Their union dues were deducted from their pay checks. Many were hardly aware that they were union members and attended union meetings, if at all, only to be initiated (in the case of some antiquated AFL craft unions and the Railroad brotherhoods). This influx of inexperienced union members changed the character of the union movement without noticeable consequences at first.

Even greater changes took place in the composition and social consciousness of the union bureaucracy. Union treasuries suddenly had more money than the officials knew what to do with. New union headquarters were built or contracted for and new office space was rented. All this was obviously necessary, they said, to accommodate the large numbers of new union officers hired to "service the needs of the growing membership." Most of these new officers were friends of incumbent officials, appointed (in some cases) to avoid the draft. Under these changing circumstances even old-line, strike-



hardened union militants who had won union elections and enjoyed popular support soon came to regard their commitment to the Roosevelt administration as more important than their obligation to the union and its members. And if some of them began to have doubts about this, they were reminded that they could be drafted into the army if they failed to remember that one of their duties as union officials was to help enforce the no-strike pledge.

### Wartime Strikes

Quite a lot has been written since the war about unions during the war. Martin Glaberman's book, *Wartime Strikes: The Struggle Against the No-Strike Pledge in the UAW during World War II*, received favorable attention when it appeared in 1980 and still serves as a useful source of information. It was reviewed by Nelson Lichtenstein (in the magazine *Labor History*). He wrote:

Throughout his book, Glaberman leaves the impression that wildcat strikes were a spontaneous upsurge from a leaderless unorganized rank and file. Undoubtedly some strikes of this sort occurred, but for the most part even the numerous departmental "quickie" stoppages took place under the informal leadership of union-conscious militants, who were unwilling to let the UAW's national commitment to the no-strike pledge stand in the way of what they considered the effective and traditional defense of rank and file interests. And as Glaberman himself records, many of the largest and most politically inspired work stoppages were actually led by elected local officials.

Lichtenstein's basic criticism was that "Glaberman's analysis is rooted in the political tradition whose chief spokesman was the Marxist activist and theoretician, C. L. R. James," certainly a valid criticism in most respects.

Glaberman claimed that those sections of the working class who were relatively new to the factories, such as women and Southern immigrants, were least likely to accept "the discipline of factory work and discipline of the union." Lichtenstein countered this hypothesis with the following observation of what happened.

The influx of new industrial recruits certainly disrupted the usual pattern of factory life and diluted union influence, but their presence alone hardly explains the intensity or the location of shop floor militancy. Of far greater import was an oppositional infrastructure and a pre-existing tradition of struggle into which these new workers could be acculturated.

The center of auto worker militancy during the war came not in new factories like Willow Run or the other aircraft plants recently built in Texas and Southern California, but at Dodge Main, Briggs and other Detroit area shops where union traditions had their deepest roots. Here a dense shop steward system, a history of local activism and a radical political milieu gave organizational and social coherence to the inchoate rebelliousness of workers new and old.

One of the best accounts of union activity during World War II is by Art Preis in *Labor's Giant Step*, which consists (in dealing with the wartime strikes) mostly of material and impressions gained during the war by Preis as an on-the-scene reporter for the SWP newspaper *The Militant*. His chapters on how the 1943 Mine Workers strikes were won and the coerced settlement of the threatened rail strike and walkouts in steel are unsurpassed accounts of those momentous wartime events. "The triumph of the miners and the rail labor upsurge, plus an almost continuous rash of unauthorized departmental and plant strikes in the CIO-organized industries, forced Murray and the other CIO leaders to make some gestures in the direction of a fight for the workers' interests. Late in November and in December (1943), the CIO in steel, aluminum, auto, textiles and even in the electrical equipment industry where Stalinists dominated the union, advanced demands from 10 to 17 cents an hour," Preis wrote (p. 200).

These demands for wage increases during the war were geared to the rising cost of living, as underscored by the union officials, and were not intended as "a threat to the war effort."

### War Industry and Racial Conflict

The wartime influx of new members into the unions had other consequences far different from the rising militancy caused by growing economic hardships. One was a sharp rise in racial tensions. Bert Cochran described the situation in Detroit.

As Michigan became a major war production center, there was an ingathering of masses of new workers, many from the South. By mid-1941 in Detroit alone there were over 350,000 new workers, 50,000 of them Blacks. No provisions worth talking about had been made to accommodate the newcomers. All facilities were monstrously overcrowded; there was an acute housing shortage; the Blacks, who were forced into decaying, infested ghetto slums and were hemmed in by walls of hatred, turned sullen. Here

and there, flurries of wildcat strikes staged by white workers opposing the transference and employment of Blacks on defense work agitated the industrial scene.

Cochran mentions one of the largest, most threatening of the wildcats.

In April 1943, 25,000 whites struck the Packard plant in retaliation for a brief sit-down of Blacks protesting their not being promoted, and R. J. Thomas (UAW International President) was jeered when he tried to get the strikers to return to work. In June the accumulating social dynamite set off the blast of a major race riot that went on for three days, resulting in 34 dead, hundreds injured, millions of dollars lost in property damage, and was only quelled when federal troops were moved in. The conduct of all UAW officials was exemplary in trying to defuse the hostilities. (*Labor and Communism*, p. 221.)

In a footnote Cochran expanded on the role of the CIO in combating racism. "The CIO changed the face of race relations in American unionism. The affiliated unions opened their doors to all Black workers on an equal basis. Gone were the constitutional bars, segregated locals, secret Jim Crow rituals that disfigured the AFL and Railroad Brotherhoods. It was an achievement of the first order," he said. Of course there were many racist CIO officials. But the CIO policy was anti-racist. This helped to curb racist practices; and the encouragement and protection it afforded Black workers contributed to the movement that arose later — the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and '60s and the growth of Black Nationalism, all resulting in the demise of Jim Crow in the South. (That was one result of changes in industry during World War II that had positive effects later.)

### Less Jingoism During World War II

During World War II there was much less of the jingoism that characterized the first world war. I think this can be attributed mainly to the mass social consciousness generated by the Great Depression. This was the ground that nurtured the CIO movement of the 1930s and it carried over through World War II. But during the war the pre-war hatred and distrust of capitalism as an economic and social system moderated appreciably because of the threat of fascism, a seemingly alien force against which the nation was united. (It was generally not recognized that fascism was just another face of imperialism, a

particular manifestation of the worldwide death agony of capitalism in its monopoly-capitalist, imperialist phase, with the rise of finance capital to dominance.)

The class struggle lost some of its edge during the war when the government became the accepted final arbiter. Governmental authority was sustained and enhanced by the policy of the Roosevelt administration to appear to compromise and to make minor concessions to organized labor.

The government's military training program and its conduct of the war met little or no opposition from the conscript army. Not until the end of the war in Europe was there any serious unrest or signs of revolt in the U.S. armed forces. The "Bring Us Home" demonstrations in 1945 at the end of fighting in Europe were caused by war weariness and a sense among the soldiers of "a job well done — now it's time for us to go home." Those in the European theater resented the prospect of being shipped off to the Pacific. And those in the Pacific thought they had been there long enough and were demanding replacements. These sentiments were shared by many commissioned officers.

### SWP's Proletarian Military Policy

The SWP's proletarian military policy determined the attitude of party members toward the draft, service in the military, and to some extent our relations with other radicals. It also affected indirectly our union activity during the war. In industry our comrades never appeared to be draft dodgers, although I know of no cases where anyone of us rushed to volunteer. Our auto fractions and perhaps others must have introduced some resolutions, from time to time, for military training under union control. But I don't know of any unions that adopted such resolutions.

I don't think very many union members during the war could understand the need for such a resolution, nor would they believe that it could be implemented if adopted. There was never, to my knowledge, any popular outcry against mistreatment of soldiers by their officers. This never became an agitational issue. It remained a propaganda question and never went far beyond the pages of the *Militant*. It was seen at the time as an educational matter, something to be taken up later as changing conditions dictated.

At the SWP national convention held in New York in October 1942 the party honored the memory of "five of her best and

most devoted sons who served the party and the working class in the most dangerous posts as merchant seamen." It also noted that party membership was growing, especially the industrial fractions in auto and maritime. And this trend continued during the entire course of the war.

### The End of the War and the Question of Revolution

When the war finally ended with the dropping of the atom bombs and the surrender of Japan the result was not what almost every SWP member had confidently expected. We believed that U.S. imperialism would not survive the rigors of war, nor did we expect the Stalinist bureaucracy to endure. But when World War II formally and officially ended both U.S. imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy appeared to be the sole remaining military powers, and both seemed to be stronger than when the war began.

This, however, did not mean that the working class was exhausted and defeated. Even before the German surrender, Hitler's partner in Italy had been pulled from power by the Italian workers and hanged by his heels. And there were revolutionary uprisings and signs of revolution in France, in the Balkans, in Algeria, and in Greece as the war machine ground to a halt. When the *Militant* headline blared "THERE IS NO PEACE!" at the very moment when the Allied powers were proclaiming victory and promising peace, there was plenty of evidence that the imperialist war would yet spawn civil wars and revolutions. And this is what did happen in the remaining years of the 1940s, capped by the Chinese revolution in 1949.

The ruling class in both camps (that of "democracy" and that of "fascism") were acutely aware of the dangers to them of proletarian revolution, and on both sides they took measures to head off this eventuality. The European Trotskyist Ernest Mandel, in his book *The Meaning of the Second World War* (published first in 1986), wrote:

It was, however, true that from the autumn of 1943 onward authoritative representatives of German big business and banking consciously prepared for a radical change of economic orientation and foreign economic policy in the direction of integration into a world market dominated by US imperialism. This involved a good deal of medium- and long-term planning, a reconversion of armaments into civilian production, the preparation of an export drive, and a radi-

cal currency reform in order to make the German Mark convertible once again (p. 154).

The military solution at war's end destroyed the early hopes of German capitalists, but the postwar moves of the U.S. rekindled those hopes.

When American imperialism decided against maintaining Germany, Japan and Italy in a state of economic prostration and moved towards the Marshall Plan [1947] and the monetary reforms of 1948, the second stage of the Cold War became unavoidable. Through the operation of the Marshall Plan and the European Payments Union linked to it, participating countries were integrated into a world market ruled by the law of value, with the US dollar as universal means of exchange and payment, and US political and military power the secular arm of that saintly rule (p. 164).

This gave German capitalism a new lease on life.

### At War's End, Back to Depression?

In the U.S. few of the fears that demilitarization would see the return of Depression-era conditions, mass unemployment, and a stagnant economy, materialized. Instead the transition to peacetime seemed relatively easy to most workers and returning soldiers. There were two reasons for this. The first was the worldwide destruction wrought by the war. And the other was the U.S. policy designed to provide a living income at home to discharged soldiers, known as the GI Bill of Rights.

The extensive material and moral destruction of the war was never fully felt or understood in America. The Europeans had experienced it differently. Mandel described what it was:

The legacy of destruction left by World War II is staggering. Eighty million people were killed, if one includes those who died of starvation and illness as a direct result of the war — eight times as many as during World War I. Dozens of cities were virtually totally destroyed, especially in Japan and Germany. Material resources capable of feeding, clothing, housing, equipping all the poor of this world were wasted for purely destructive purposes. Forests were torn down and agricultural land converted into wasteland on a scale not witnessed since the Thirty Years War or the Mongol invasion of the Islamic Empire.

Even worse was the destructive havoc wreaked on human minds and behavior. Violence and barbaric disregard of elementary human rights — starting with

the right to life—spread on a larger scale than anything seen during and after World War I—itself already quite disastrous in this regard. (*Meaning of World War II*, p. 169.)

## Postwar Labor Upsurge

Trotskyists in the U.S. were deeply involved in the labor resurgence of 1945–46, described by Preis in *Labor's Giant Step* as “American Labor’s Greatest Upsurge.”

The struggles of the American workers and soldiers became interlinked and confronted the American capitalist ruling class with an invincible power. This played an important part in giving the GM workers the will to hold on until the legions of mass industry swelled the nation’s picket lines into the mightiest strike army in this country’s history.

As the GM workers waited for steel, electrical and packinghouse workers to launch their strikes, Truman [who had become U.S. president when Roosevelt died] intervened with his Fact-Finding Board’s proposals. On January 10 [1946], the board recommended an increase of 19.5 cents an hour — a raise of 17.5 percent instead of the 30 percent demanded and needed just to keep the workers even with their take-home pay at the start of the war (p. 275).

On March 15 the GM delegates conference approved a new contract. After 113 days on the picket lines, the 225,000 GM auto workers had forced the corporation to agree to an 18.5-cent across-the-board wage raise, 13.5 cents of it retroactive to November 7, 1945; correction of local plant inequities; no ‘company security’ clauses; and paid vacations. If this was considerably less than what was demanded and needed, it was none the less a proud victory. The GM workers had been made to bear the brunt of corporate resistance; their stand had sparked the whole labor struggle which won the largest and most extensive wage increases that had ever been secured in a single period (p. 281).

In the twelve months following V-J Day more than 5,000,000 workers engaged in strikes. For the number of strikers, their weight in industry and the duration of the struggle, the 1945–46 strike wave in the U.S. surpassed anything of its kind in any capitalist country, including the British General Strike of 1926. Before its ebb it was to include the whole coal, railroad, maritime and communications industries, although not simultaneously (p. 276).

## The Cold War and Taft-Hartley

In contrast to this, 1947 was noted at the time by a member of the SWP political

committee as “the year of lost strikes.” The employing class devised an effective new strategy for dealing with unions at the economic level within the fabric of the capitalist productive system, and on the political level within the governmental structure. Following the emerging GM-UAW pattern, most basic industries adopted a paternalistic labor-management policy. Also, the U.S. Congress enacted the Taft-Hartley law, which codified and circumscribed labor-management relations.

Under the pressures from corporate capitalist government and society symbolized and expressed in the Taft-Hartley law the union movement became further institutionalized and its official representatives adjusted to their indicated social status. They now acquired official recognition as “labor statesmen.” This was different from before, because Taft-Hartley conferred upon them new responsibilities to ensure that the unions operated within the newly enacted law. It also gave them an additional distinction because under this new law “Communists” (those who refused to sign a non-Communist affidavit) were prohibited from holding union office or were denied recognition by the National Labor Relations Board.

## Reactionary Role of AFL

Many strikes were lost in 1947 due to the AFL’s union raiding policy. The AFL bureaucracy sought to take advantage of Taft-Hartley to enhance its political influence and gain control of more unions by branding the CIO a “Commie outfit” and in this way winning NLRB certification in industries organized by the CIO. In strikes called by CIO unions or provoked by employers under CIO contract, AFL unions (the Teamsters and the Sailors Union of the Pacific were especially notorious on the West Coast) supplied strike breakers. The result (in the oil industry in California as an example) was that strikes were broken and the employers refused to negotiate, no longer compelled to deal with any union.

By 1947 the U.S. economy was beginning to adjust to the transition from war production to consumer needs — and getting a new transfusion thanks to the Cold War military budget boondoggle (which has never ended, even today, long after the “Cold War” was over). A new sense was beginning to develop in the popular consciousness that stable economic growth could be expected for the foreseeable future. The old feeling of insecurity and uncertainty engendered by the Great

Depression was beginning to recede. The “great American red scare” (also known as “McCarthyism”) did not touch the daily lives of the vast majority of American workers. The organized labor and radical movements, however, were deeply affected, leading eventually to the drastic decline of both. This was conditioned by the ensuing years of relative prosperity with a steady rise in wages and standard of living until 1978 when the U.S. ruling class launched its anti-labor offensive.

## Stalinism and Trotskyism after World War II

The Cold War and “red scare” destroyed the Communist Party in the U.S. By 1955, the year of AFL-CIO merger, the CP was without influence in organized labor and no longer a factor in American politics. It played no appreciable role in the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, nor in the anti-Vietnam war movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In those years the SWP superseded the CP as the dominant organization in the broad radical movement. But the SWP also suffered from the consequences of the post-World War II capitalist prosperity (as did the union movement and all radical organizations. It began to degenerate as early as the 1960s, and — like all other radical groups — to fragment). These processes were ameliorated slightly in the case of the SWP by its superior political training and the acute sensitivity of its leadership to social and political change.

## Splits in American Trotskyism

Even before the defeat of German military power in Europe, and shortly before the 18 U.S. Trotskyist leaders were imprisoned, there were signs that Albert Goldman and Felix Morrow (two of the 18) were beginning to question the future prospects of revolution. The soldier revolts and working class revolutions had not occurred during the war as predicted by Trotsky. Goldman and Morrow expressed their feelings of disappointment and disillusionment at a meeting of the SWP national committee in New York, Oct. 29–Nov. 1, 1943, called to choose an interim leadership for the party during the period when the 18 convicted leaders would be in jail. The rather despondent mood of Goldman and Morrow found expression in sharp criticism by them of the party “regime” and the method of training and selecting leaders.

On this occasion Cannon spoke at length on the Leninist concept of organization, reviewing the differences that had

developed after the trial in Minneapolis. He concluded on a conciliatory note.

Our strength is our combination; our solidarity on the fundamental program that Trotsky taught us, and our policy of selecting and helping people to emerge from the ranks to strengthen the leadership and our division of labor is a conscious system all up and down the line in organizing and disposing of the abilities of individual people. This is the cadre that you have got to do it with, Comrade Morrison (Goldman). It is not a hand-picked group. It is not arbitrarily selected. It is truly the representative of the party. You can't find another one, not now. The task before us is how to improve and strengthen this one and to work together, and if the plenum, the comrades from out of town, have some criticism either of me or you, we have to heed that criticism... (See Cannon's talk entitled "The Problem of Party Leadership" in *The Socialist Workers Party in World War II*.)

This talk was in many ways a kind of self-identification and in others a self-criticism. Cannon spoke of his limitations and faults, and deplored the insinuation that he was or ought to be considered a Marxist theoretician. He identified himself as an organizer and agitator. Much of what he said about himself on this occasion was reminiscent of a resolution on organization adopted at the final national convention of the Communist League of America (November 30, 1934) on the eve of fusion with the American Workers Party. This resolution was entitled "The Record of the CLA Leadership" and was signed by Cannon, Swabeck, and Shachtman. (See *The Communist League of America, 1932-34*, p. 374.)

The disgruntlement of Goldman and Morrow was a prelude to their break with Trotskyism after the war.

### Apparent Stability of U.S. Capitalism

I believe Cannon understood Goldman and Morrow's malaise better than they did themselves. It was something that not only affected these two individuals but many others (in different ways) in the SWP and far beyond its narrow circle of influence. It was the apparent stability of U.S. capitalism and the arrogance of its rulers (who believed they would dominate the world, ushering in "the American Century"). Goldman and Morrow did not try very hard to convince SWP members of their rather shallow political arguments.

Some months before the 1946 National Convention of the SWP, held in Chicago (November 14-18) that year, they drifted into the orbit of the Shachtman group and away from the SWP. Goldman did not bother to attend the convention and Morrow showed up only to make his farewell speech.

The main political resolution adopted by the convention was the "Theses on the American Revolution," drafted by Cannon. (See James P. Cannon, *Speeches To The Party*, p. 323; and *The Struggle for Socialism in the "American Century,"* p. 256.) In these theses, Cannon set down at the outset (thesis I) the way he saw the world situation in the wake of World War II, what had changed and what remained.

The United States, the most powerful country in history, is a component part of the world capitalist system and is subject to the same general laws. It suffers from the same incurable diseases and is destined to share the same fate. The overwhelming preponderance of American imperialism does not exempt it from the decay of world capitalism, but on the contrary acts to involve it ever more deeply, inextricably, and hopelessly. U.S. capitalism can no more escape from the revolutionary consequences of world capitalist decay than the older European capitalist powers. The blind alley in which world capitalism has arrived, and the U.S. with it, excludes a new organic era of capitalist stabilization. The dominant world position of American imperialism now accentuates and aggravates the death agony of capitalism as a whole.

The other central theme of this document was that the working class in the U.S. would be decisive in the struggle to resolve the contradictions of the capitalist system. This was stated explicitly in thesis X.

The issue of socialism or capitalism will not be finally decided until it is decided in the U.S. Another retardation of the proletarian revolution in one country or another, or even one continent or another, will not save American imperialism from its proletarian nemesis at home. The decisive battles for the communist future of mankind will be fought in the U.S.

In his report at the convention on these theses, Cannon stressed the educational rewards of party discussion and debate, the necessary grounding for the working class reorganization of society.

Just as in the early days of our movement — at least in the first ten years — we rearmed the movement with education

and discussion and agitation around the basic principles of the Russian Opposition, the Anglo-Russian Committee, the policy in the Soviet Union, problems of the Chinese revolution, later on the problems of fascism in Europe, so now I believe we should go through that same process again of organizing our educational work, our literary and propagandistic work, in terms of popularizing and expanding on each one of the basic ideas gathered together here in the theses, so the whole party becomes saturated with the concept of the theses and the whole outlook that flows from it — that we are actually building a party to make the revolution in the United States. (*The Struggle for Socialism in the "American Century,"* p. 277-8.)

In retrospect it is clear that the theses and Cannon's report created the impression that a revolutionary situation could develop in the U.S. "in our epoch," surely before the close of the 20th century. This has not happened and seems unlikely at this late date. But careful reading also reveals that Cannon sensed (as did Morrow and Goldman at the time and as others would later) the stultifying pressures of mighty U.S. capitalism bearing down on working class culture and institutions. It is also clear that Cannon recognized that World War II had changed the world, that what remained unchanged was the class struggle, which will continue as long as capitalism endures.

We must not concede at any place or any point to that school of thought now very popular among our neorevisionists that revolutionary possibilities are decided by subjective factors — the existence or nonexistence, the strength or weakness of the party, or the reactionary or liberal policies of the ruling class at a given moment, etc.... even if we encounter really ferocious persecution — and that seems more likely than not — that will not halt revolutionary developments or succeed in breaking the party.

We must assert as a matter of course that our party is going to lead the revolution (p. 281).

This remained the official credo of the SWP until 1983 when the new generation of party leaders (the 1960s generation) repudiated Trotskyism. It is ironic that it was not government persecution that destroyed the SWP but the party's success in recruiting a predominantly petty bourgeois membership during the student radicalization of the 1960s and early 1970s. □

May 14, 1997

# Letters

## Reader Asks About Our Views on Building a Trotskyist Party

[In the following letter from a reader, frequent mention is made of the FIT (Fourth International Tendency). This tendency no longer exists as an organization; most of its former members do, however, support our magazine, which previously was the publication of that organization. Frank Lovell's reply to this letter, a slightly edited version of one mailed to our reader, explains the outlook and orientation of most *BIDOM* supporters toward the Labor Party and the prospect of eventual formation of a socialist caucus of Labor Party builders.]

To the Editors:

Recently I came across a copy of your journal, *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, at May Day Bookstore in the Twin Cities. I see that you came out of the SWP and that you're in sympathy with the Fourth International; I was wondering, though, if you could tell me more about your organization. For instance, does [*BIDOM*] plan to build a new Trotskyist party, what type of organization is the FIT at present, and what kind of work do you do?

To give an idea of my background and why I'm interested in finding out more about the FIT, I'm a student and young worker in northern Wisconsin, and very much a socialist. I used to be a member of the SPUSA [Socialist Party, USA], but I resigned out of disgust with their lack of unity and direction, which prevented them from responding to such things as the founding of the Labor Party.

I've since moved in the direction of Trotskyism, and I've been trying to pick through the various Trotskyist groups. The group I'm currently closest to is Socialist Action. I attend school in Ashland, so we're only a few hours drive from the SA branch in Twin Cities. We've spent a lot of time talking with them, and we've had them come to speak at our school a few times. (We had a hundred people turn out for Jeff Mackler's presentation on the CIA-crack issue!)

We have a socialist club here on campus, and we're all looking to enter into a closer relationship with the Trotskyist movement. This August I'll be flying out to San Francisco for three weeks to meet all the SA people, attend their educa-

tional conference, and maybe help out around the office and bookstore.

I guess it's pretty obvious that I'm already leaning pretty heavily toward SA, but I want to be sure that I've talked to all the groups I can before I make the final decision to join. I'd very much like to know what are the differences between SA and the FIT. I've talked about it a little with Lynn Henderson and Cindy Burke [leaders of Socialist Action in Twin Cities], but I'd like to hear what you have to say as well.

Also I would like to know what is the relationship between the FIT and the FIC, and between *BIDOM* and *Revolutionary Marxism Today*. What are some of the differences you have toward groups like Labor Militant and Socialist Organizer too? I'd like very much to hear from you, and if you can afford to, send me any of your literature. A letter would suffice (since I'm afraid I don't have much money to spare myself). I hope you don't mind all of the questions, and thank you for your time.

Adam Ritscher  
Ashland WI

## Frank Lovell Replies

Dear Adam:

Under separate cover I have mailed the current issue of *BIDOM* (May-June, No. 137) and a copy of *Labor Party Press* (July). These publications may help to answer some of the questions raised in your letter postmarked June 26. I'm sorry for the delay in answering. I have been out of town (in Detroit for the June 20-21 actions for the locked-out newspaper workers) and your letter has just now come to my attention.

*BIDOM* seeks to apply Marxism as a method of analyzing and understanding the evolution of the capitalist system and as a guide to educating and organizing the working class for the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism. Those readers who subscribe to the basic political concepts and organizational approaches of *BIDOM* identify with the Fourth International and with the body of working class historical experience commonly known as Trotskyism.

In this country the Trotskyist movement was initially (1928) the Communist League of America and eventually (1938) evolved into the Socialist Workers Party. In 1984 all known or suspected Trotskyists were summarily expelled

from the SWP. How this came about is documented in three volumes published by the Fourth International Tendency (one of the tendencies expelled from the SWP). The three volumes are: *The Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party, 1979-1983*; *Revolutionary Principles and Working Class Democracy*; and *Rebuilding the Revolutionary Party*.

These three books together are about 900 pages (largely documents of the struggle inside the SWP), collected under the title "In Defense of American Trotskyism."

The three as a package cost \$25. These books are intended for students seriously interested in the history of Trotskyism in the U.S. They are not popular tracts.

Most recently (1996) Humanities Press brought out a one-volume review of the history of American Trotskyism entitled *Trotskyism in the United States: Historical Essays and Reconsiderations*. Unfortunately this book is priced out of most readers' range but may be available through your school library (especially if students and faculty there request it). The issue of *BIDOM* that I have sent you contains reviews and debates about this book. The responses it is receiving, mainly among ex-Trotskyists and other radicals, reveals a renewed and growing interest in what was once called Scientific Socialism and in the 1960s and '70s came to be known as the "Far Left." (This evolution of terms could be an interesting study in itself and might be useful for future activists.)

There are many signs now of growing social consciousness among large sectors of the population, including the unions (the organized sector of the working class), and women, Blacks, and other especially oppressed groups within the working class. Your own experience testifies to this. I was especially impressed by your report that 100 students came to hear Jiff Mackler talk about the crimes of the CIA in using the Contra connection to push crack-cocaine in the Black community.

Another sign of political restiveness and rising social consciousness is the shake-up two years ago in the AFL-CIO bureaucracy and the continuing adjustments within the bureaucracy in response to demands for action by workers being targeted in the employers' union-busting drive; also, by workers who are now discovering that their future is uncertain.

The founding of the Labor Party last year after five years of patient preparation is also evidence of growing dissatisfaction in the unions and rising political consciousness.

I think it is natural and a good omen for your political future to be interested in the great variety of small radical groups and to explore the differences among them. Where you begin this exploration is usually accidental, but I think in your case the SA group may be a lucky beginning. In San Francisco you will find articulate exponents of several radical groups. I can't begin to tell you the differences among them or how we Trotskyist defenders of Marxism differ from all the others. This you will discover for yourself if you keep your eyes and ears open, and seek the facts in all situations.

You must have already noticed in *BIDOM* that we are especially interested in and try to identify with the labor party development based on the unions. Depending on the deepening radicalization of the working class, it is our belief that the labor party, in the next three or four years, will flourish into a broad social movement of the working class. Within this movement a revolutionary Marxist tendency of thousands will crystallize. We believe *BIDOM* can contribute to this tendency and become part of its development.

Comradely,

Frank Lovell  
New York, NY

### Questionable Additions to an Article

A couple of passages were added (I am sure with the best of intentions) to my article "Two Critics of 'Trotskyism in the United States'" in *BIDOM* May-June 1997. But they are formulated in a manner that I find to be ambiguous or questionable.

On page 38 there is an added passage — just before my explanation that Socialist Party leader Norman Thomas and others were aligned with U.S. imperialism in the late 1940s and early 1950s — that "the Soviet bureaucracy's collaboration with imperialism, as well as its Cold War military-bureaucratic rivalry, should not be forgotten." The impression may be given that the "collaboration with imperialism" of the Communist parties is being compared with that of Social-Democratic parties, when in fact it is my view that the Cold War involved a confrontation between

capitalist economic expansionism (imperialism) and the spread of anti-capitalist revolutionary forces that were, in some cases, under Stalinist influence. Nor am I comfortable with the apparent equation between the power structures of East and West suggested in the reference to the "Cold War military-bureaucratic rivalry." (At the same time, I have no complaint with what I take to be the editors' underlying notion: Stalinism proved more than willing to make opportunistic compromises with imperialism, and it represented a bureaucratic dictatorship that was — as recent history had definitively shown — utterly destructive of workers' democracy and genuinely socialist goals.)

On the same page there is this added passage: "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 discussed by Joe Auciello and Mark Weber elsewhere in this issue)." As I indicate in my article, I do not think Shachtman's organization represented a variety of Social Democracy in the late 1940s. Although this became true in the early-to-middle 1950s (along with an increasingly thoroughgoing adaptation to U.S. imperialism), there was, as I put it, "dogged resistance" to this trend among many of Shachtman's comrades.

It should be added that others following in this left wing of the Shachtman tradition (against Shachtman himself) continued to make important contributions to revolutionary socialist politics. Among these were the deservedly respected Marx scholar Hal Draper, Julius and Phyllis Jacobson, who for many years have been editors and publishers of the left-wing socialist magazine *New Politics*, Kim Moody and others who have been associated with the important monthly publication *Labor Notes*, the fine historian of the French Revolution Morris Slavin, and Dan La Botz, who has done so much to educate about and defend radical-democratic and revolutionary currents in Mexico. It should be noted that Slavin and La Botz have also made valuable contributions to *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. This suggests that at the very least a vital

revolutionary Marxist residue remained in the ranks of the Shachtman current. (A failure to consider this aspect of the Shachtman tradition is the only serious limitation of the otherwise excellent articles by comrades Auciello and Weber.)

None of this in any way alters my conviction that as an organization the SWP in 1946 was the only revolutionary vanguard formation in the United States. That is true most unambiguously in relation to the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, and the Social-Democratic Federation. But it is also true, as I wrote in my article, given the fact that the Shachtman group was by 1946-47 beginning to evolve in a rightward direction. The fact also remains, however, that to overgeneralize and oversimplify such points undercuts our efforts to clearly understand past realities. It also cuts across our ability to recognize the need and possibility of working with others on the left today to advance the struggles of workers and the oppressed, to build such vital and broad-based formations as the Labor Party, and to further develop Marxist theory.

Paul Le Blanc  
Pittsburgh

### Paul Le Blanc's Article, Stalinism, and the Shachtman Current

Owing to a confluence of negative circumstances, some additions we had proposed for Paul Le Blanc's article in reply to Peter Drucker and Louis Proyect were not reviewed by Paul, although we thought they had been made available to him. Thus they ended up in print without being modified.

We certainly accept the corrections he has made in his letter to the editors.

Paul rightly criticizes the inadequate formulation "military-bureaucratic rivalry" that was inserted in his article in haste, with the intention that it be reviewed. We were and are willing, without hesitation, to alter that phrase. There was certainly no intention on our part to suggest an equal sign between aggressive, expansionist U.S. capitalism and the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state or the Soviet bloc as a whole.

Crippled though they were by bureaucratic deformations, the Soviet-bloc countries, where capitalist ownership of the major means of production had been abolished, represented something qualitatively different from the U.S.-dominated "Free World"; in the Soviet-bloc

countries, initial measures had been taken to end capitalist rule. Workers throughout the world some day will have to take similar measures if the beginning of a more rational and humane society is to come into existence — based on a socialized, planned world economy under democratic workers control.

That being said, we wish to expand on two points: the class-collaborationist tendencies of the privileged bureaucratic castes that dominated and still dominate the former “socialist” countries; and the erroneous military-bureaucratic methods pursued by those leaderships.

The Soviet bureaucrats headquartered in Moscow — and the bureaucratized Communist parties over which Moscow had a dominant influence before, during, and after World War II — although they presided over or “defended” a society in transition between capitalism and socialism, and although they claimed to be Marxist opponents of capitalism, in fact engaged in conciliatory and class-collaborationist policies in relation to the capitalist ruling classes, especially those in the advanced countries, the Western imperialist powers. The Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam conferences, where Stalin agreed to “spheres of influence,” including allowing British imperialism to dominate Greece and French imperialism to take back Indochina, are perhaps the most graphic examples of this policy as World War II was coming to an end.

### Stalinist Class Collaboration in World War II

An example of how the Stalinists’ class-collaborationist line worked out in the U.S. during World War II can be seen in the policy of the U.S. Communist Party during and after Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union. The CPUSA vigorously supported the no-strike pledge within the U.S. trade union movement during the war — and continued to do so even after the war had ended. The American Stalinists, led by Earl Browder, persisted in this class-collaborationist policy in the teeth of massive sentiment among American workers to win raises after years of wage freeze — years when prices and corporate profits had skyrocketed. The Stalinists were particularly adamant against the coal miners strike led by John L. Lewis in 1943 in the middle of World War II. They argued that the “war effort” had to take precedence over everything, whether the needs of the miners or African American demands for equality.

As they saw it, the need to defeat Hitler required total accommodation to capitalist interests in the U.S. and Britain. The militant sentiment among the mass of American workers to fight for their own interests finally broke through the “no strike” stranglehold the U.S. corporations and their government had imposed with the help of most of the union bureaucrats, not just the Stalinists. The result was the biggest strike wave in U.S. history, in 1946. Yet up until the last moment official “Communist” policy was to uphold the no-strike pledge and oppose the strikes that won big advances for the workers.

In similar class-collaborationist fashion, under pressure from the Soviet bureaucracy and to serve its imagined need for “good relations” with U.S. and British imperialism, the U.S. Communist Party opposed the March on Washington movement, whose aim was to win equal rights for Blacks in the U.S. armed forces during World War II.

Likewise, in India the Communist Party opposed any struggle for independence from Britain during World War II; in its view, the demand of the Indian masses for independence had to be subordinated to the need to defeat Germany and Japan.

All these — and many other — examples of class collaboration by the Stalinized Communist parties are documented in the literature produced by the American Trotskyists, drawing on the experience and information of the worldwide Trotskyist movement. Paul Le Blanc is of course familiar with this material and understands that this background and record was what we sought to refer readers to. (Let us suggest that readers consult, in particular, Art Preis, *Labor’s Giant Step: Twenty Years of the CIO, 1935–1955*; also Frank Lovell’s book *Maritime*, on the maritime union and industry; also the American Trotskyist publications *The Militant* and *Fourth International* for the 1940s and ’50s.)

The Stalinist policy of class collaboration proved to be a total fiasco in the face of expanding revolutionary struggles during and after World War II, and especially in the face of the aggressive counter-revolutionary expansionist policy adopted by U.S. imperialism (the policy of “containment of Communism” and its “rollback”), which was given the official rubric: “Cold War.” Reluctantly the Stalinist leaders had to modify their class-collaborationist policies, at least

partially or temporarily. With their very survival at stake, they were forced to try to resist U.S. Cold War expansionism, just as they had been forced, late in the day, to resist Hitler’s invasion of June 1941 after having made a deal with him (the Stalin-Hitler pact) in 1939.

In trying to counter the U.S. corporate-inspired Cold War, however, the Stalinist leaders resorted to military-bureaucratic means, not the method of mass mobilization. Where mass struggles with revolutionary potential did take place, the Stalinist leaders sought to exploit or manipulate such movements for their own purposes (usually as diplomatic pressure in pursuit of a new “peaceful coexistence” deal with imperialism). Or when, as a defensive step, they carried out anti-capitalist measures in the territories they controlled (Eastern Europe, Korea, China, Indochina) they used military-bureaucratic means for doing this, followed by arbitrary police-state restrictions to prevent any mass impulse toward socialist democracy in the administration or utilization of newly socialized property.

In the Soviet Union, the surplus product from socialized property had been earmarked first of all for the aggrandizement of the privileged layer of bureaucratic officialdom. This bureaucratic caste sat on top of, and fed parasitically upon, the means of production that had been nationalized as a result of the mass mobilizations and mass struggles of the October revolution and the Russian civil war. The bureaucracy rose as the masses became exhausted by the tremendous effort exerted in making the first workers revolution — especially after the Soviet revolution was isolated and no other working class, especially in the more advanced countries, came to power. The material aid and moral support of a workers government in an advanced capitalist country, such as Germany, could have made all the difference.

But it didn’t happen. And as a result, the system of bureaucratic privilege and domination that grew up under Stalin in the 1920s was consolidated by massive blood purges in the 1930s. Then after World War II this bureaucratic system was duplicated in the areas where property was newly socialized. Thus, on the one hand, the anticapitalist revolution begun in October 1917 spread to new territories after World War II. But it advanced into relatively backward countries only — non-Mediterranean Eastern Europe, Korea, China, and Indochina.

And it spread in distorted form, as the result of bureaucratically controlled military and police operations, though often riding on waves of popular upsurge and the disintegration of the old order, the previously existing, rotted-away capitalist regimes, like those of Chiang Kai-shek, the Japanese colonialists in Korea, the French colonialists in Indochina, and Nazi collaborationist regimes in Eastern Europe.

That was the complex and contradictory reality arising out of World War II that our inadequate formulation was meant to indicate. It was part of the worldwide process of transition from world capitalism to world socialism (the alternative being the destruction of civilization, and probably of life as we know it, if capitalism is allowed to persist). The worldwide process continues. But with the demise of Stalinist rule in its previous form in the former Soviet-bloc

countries, the process has entered a new phase, not yet fully defined. What is most outstanding about this “new world order,” as we see it, is the combination (and contradiction) of intensified “globalization” of capitalism and an intensifying global awareness among organized workers everywhere of the need to fight back against capitalism with better methods and on a higher level.

#### The Shachtman Current

We completely agree with Paul’s observation that there was a positive strain within the Shachtman current that resisted his evolution to the right, especially those influenced by Hal Draper. He is absolutely right to emphasize the excellent work of Dan La Botz, Kim Moody, Morris Slavin, and others like them. We were happy to print La Botz’s excellent essay on Marx and permanent revolution, and continue to print his

insightful reports on Mexico. The same for Morris Slavin’s defense of the Russian revolution. Yet we have differences with these authors in certain areas (for example, on how sharply to express opposition to the bourgeois politician Cárdenas in Mexico, or to Zionism and the pro-imperialist policies of the Israeli state).

The evolution of many in the Shachtman movement into the right wing of Social Democracy, their degradation as pro-imperialist apologists, led by Shachtman himself with his support for the U.S. imperialist war in Vietnam (and unless we’re mistaken, for the blockade of Cuba, too) — that is a terrible departure from what we understand revolutionary socialism to mean. The politics that Shachtman advocated did largely result in a pro-imperialist degeneration. Those politics, therefore, represent a danger that, in our opinion, should not be downplayed.

*The Managing Editors*

## Revolutionary Vanguard in the United States During the 1930s

### Continued from page 31

following the rituals of the past, heeding the advice of community leaders, and slow to act, such men and women rarely joined unions prior to a successful strike, once moved to act behaved with singular solidarity, yet rarely served as union or political activists and radicals.

The reality of the working class was even more complex than this, though Dubofsky’s rough categorizations are useful as an initial approximation. The piece of the analysis that I want to focus on, at this point, is the militant minority that we can subdivide into political radicals (people largely like ourselves) and militant but non-socialist trade union activists, who together played an indispensable “vanguard” role.

The political radicals were members of various Communist and Socialist groups and splinter groups, plus anarchists and old-time Wobblies, who all together represented a vital left-wing subculture which existed within the U.S. working class in the first half of the 20th century. The ideas, the vision, the confidence, the organizational know-how provided by these left-wing working-class organizations constituted an essential part of the chemistry for the great labor upsurge of the 1930s.

### Role of the Communist Party

It is necessary to go beyond this, however, to emphasize the central importance of the Communist Party. This is suggested by

left-wing membership figures in the mid-1930s. The Trotskyists — even after they merged with A.J. Muste’s American Workers Party — had about 700 members. The rightward leaning Communist dissidents following Jay Lovestone had perhaps 1,000. Even the Socialist Party, fluctuating around 10,000, had only 1,300 trade union members — including in the garment and auto industries, where many were in the process of leaving the Socialist Party. The Communist Party, on the other hand, had about 30,000 people, of whom 15,000 were union members. In any event, the Left was essential for the workers’ triumph of the 1930s.

This brings us to the second riddle: if the Left was really so essential to the growth of the new labor movement, how could it be smashed within a fairly short period?

Of course, it seems unlikely that a communist or socialist or proletarian revolution could have been brought about in the United States in the 1930s. I’m not talking about that. I’m talking about surviving as an effective left-wing force in the labor movement. Some labor historians have argued that it was impossible for the Communist labor activists to do qualitatively better than they did, that the triumph of conservative anti-Communism in the unions was inevitable, that the Left could do little to prevent marginalization and elimination.

There are reasons to question this, however. In his memoirs entitled *Labor Radical*, former CIO publicity director Len DeCaux explained that the early CIO was not simply a new labor federation but “a mass movement with a message, revivalistic in fervor, militant in mood, joined together by class solidarity.” DeCaux elaborated:

As it gained momentum, this movement brought with it new political attitudes — toward the corporations, toward police and troops, toward local, state, national government. Now we’re a movement, many workers asked, why can’t we move on to more and more? Today we’ve forced almighty General Motors to terms by sitting down and defying all the powers at its command, why can’t we go on tomorrow, with our numbers, our solidarity, our determination, to transform city and state, the Washington government itself? Why can’t we go on to create a new society with the workers on top, to end age-old injustices, to banish poverty and war?

By the early 1950s the U.S. labor movement had been mostly de-radicalized — with the vision indicated by DeCaux replaced by the notion that capitalists and workers are “partners in progress.” Would it have been possible for a socialist left wing of the labor movement to survive as a significant force in the United States? Given the years of Cold War anti-Communism and capitalist prosperity, was the smashing of the Left inevitable?



I would suggest that it was not. But if that is so, then we must turn our critical attention to the one organization on the Left that was in the best position to make a difference: the U.S. Communist Party. The point is not to scapegoat the many dedicated and idealistic activists who were part of that party, and who played an often heroic role in building the CIO. But if their defeat was avoidable, or if it could have been less damaging and thoroughgoing, then it is important for us to understand the various reasons why. One aspect of Working-Class Studies must be to explore all of this, in order to learn from fatal shortcomings, so that similar mistakes are not made in the struggles of the future. Perhaps we can explore answers to this riddle in the discussion period.

In my essay in the forthcoming collection of essays on U.S. labor history in the 20th century, edited by John Hinshaw and

## From the Managing Editors

*Continued from Inside Front Cover*

Restating their views on the need for the Labor Party to run candidates immediately.

Perhaps more significantly, the June 1997 issue of *International Viewpoint*, monthly publication of the Fourth International, printed an article by Jane Slaughter giving her assessment of the Labor Party (LP) in the U.S. one year after its founding convention (in Cleveland, Ohio, June 1996). Slaughter's article is essentially a brief against the electoral policy adopted for now by the unions that are the backbone of the party.

In our next issue we expect to print an article answering Slaughter's arguments. She dismisses as a "holding tank strategy" the LP's present policy of not running candidates until a decisive segment of national and/or regional unions have joined forces behind the Labor Party.

Most of *BIDOM's* editors hold the opinion that it would be premature to begin trying to contest elections with only about 10 percent of the AFL-CIO on board. When the time comes that some major unions, or at least a much more substantial percentage of U.S. organized labor than now, get involved, things will be different. Then there would be a serious possibility of winning electoral contests. The unions, too, would have more of the necessary weight to maintain control over LP candidates, keeping them to the LP program, instead of allowing them to start running the party (as happened in Britain).

myself, I go into considerably more depth than was possible in this conference presentation. There I offer the following conclusions:

It is conceivable that an organization of the size and with the resources of the American Communist Party at the beginning of the 1930s could have followed a somewhat different political program than was in fact pursued. If this different program was applied intelligently — with a sensitivity to, a learning from, a respectful interaction with various layers of the U.S. working class — then it is possible that a stronger, more durable working class left-wing movement would have emerged from the Depression decade.

What was needed was not only a flexible and energetic united front policy in building the new industrial unions, which the Communist Party displayed, but also five other components: (1) a greater inter-

national democracy and less sectarianism toward other left-wing groups; (2) a critical independence from the bureaucratic-authoritarian and murderous Stalin regime in the USSR; (3) an independence from the Democratic Party and consistent support for the development of an independent labor party — while recognizing and living with the fact that many friends and allies in the labor movement would be drawn into it (at least for a time); (4) an understanding of the revolutionary but relatively independent character of the African American struggle, which — far from being subordinated to the needs of a liberal-labor coalition — should be supported as essential for the radicalization of the working class as a whole; and (5) persistent education and recruitment of newly unionized workers and others to an understanding of the class struggle and the need for workers' power and socialism. □

We will return to discussion of these and other Labor Party questions in our next issue.

### Teamster Election

A far more significant "electoral" question is the upcoming repeat of the election in the Teamsters. As Charles Walker explains in an article written just as we were going to press, a federal officer, Barbara Quindel, has ruled that Teamsters must vote again on who will hold the position of union president and for all positions on the International Executive Board, except for five that were won in the Midwest by the old guard forces behind James Hoffa Junior.

Much of the progress the U.S. labor movement has made in the last few years hinged on the reform leadership in the Teamsters. Much will depend on the outcome of the battle inside the Teamsters. We urge our readers to get involved and do whatever is possible to help those in the Teamsters union fighting for workers democracy and a policy of fighting back against the profit-hungry corporations.

### Discussion on Detroit Newspaper Strike

Besides the larger Teamsters struggles described above, the battle of the Detroit newspaper workers remains a key facet of the class struggle in the U.S. today. Some of the complexities and contradictions of that battle, now in its third year, are discussed in this issue, together with first-hand reports on the Action Motown 97 demonstration of June 21.

### International Coverage

This issue includes first-hand reports on the initial steps of the new revolutionary government in the Congo and on the Europe-wide demonstration in Amsterdam in June against unemployment. From Canada, Barry Weisleder gives an account of the aftermath of elections there in June. Election victories of "the left" in Britain (Labour Party) and France (Socialist Party) are touched on in the article about the Amsterdam march. We expect to have separate reports on Britain and France in our next issue.

The increasingly volatile situation in Mexico was reflected in the July 6 elections there. We reprint from *Mexican Labor News and Analysis* an excellent article by Dan La Botz, which provides the background to current events in that country. As we go to press, news comes of a proposed Zapatista bus caravan from Chiapas to Mexico City's central square, carrying 1,111 ski-masked representatives of the fighting indigenous communities of Chiapas. This "march" by bus would coincide with a convention in Mexico City of the Zapatista Front for National Liberation. Also, as we go to press, Reuter reports that the leader of the Foro group of unions has called for a new labor confederation to be formed, free of control by the Mexican ruling party, the PRI.

Solidarity with our fighting sisters and brothers in Mexico is essential at this critical juncture. We expect to have first-hand reports by Mexican Trotskyists and sympathizers in our next issue.

## History of American Trotskyism, Impact of the Russian Revolution, Tributes to the Fallen

We continue discussion of the history of American Trotskyism, and of U.S. labor history, with articles by Frank Lovell and Paul Le Blanc. Michael Steven Smith contrasts the differing effects of the Russian revolution on the lives of two radicals, one

an American, the other a Russian. And Joe Auciello refutes some of the slanders still being promoted against leaders of the Russian revolution, based on "new revelations" from the Russian archives.

Not unrelated are three obituaries of people affected by the revolutionary struggles of our times — each of whom came in touch with the Trotskyist move-

ment in some way. Ron Lare and Matt Siegfried pay tribute to a young woman who has just been lost to our movement. Joe Auciello discusses the death of Malcolm X's widow, Betty Shabazz, and Muhammad Ahmad takes another look at the significant legacy of Black leader Robert F. Williams (with whom the Trotskyists cooperated closely in the late 1950s and early '60s). □

## Two Lives Affected by the Russian Revolution

*Continued from page 49*

He reports that Communist Party membership declined from 75,000 in 1945 to fewer than 5,000 in 1958. He attributes this to Khrushchev's 1956 revelations. "His speech traumatized those of us who had weathered the domestic red hunt; the effects were felt even more severely in the highest levels of the party's structure." He goes on to say that "the result was that the party no longer performed any useful functions so far as I could see. Why?... Certainly its blind adherence to the Soviet Union's position on all issues and the revelations of Khrushchev's speech made its demise as a significant entity inevitable."

This of course had been the position of the Socialist Workers Party from its founding in 1938 — no "blind adherence" to the policies of the Soviet bureaucracy. At that time, Rabinowitz writes, "the Socialist Workers Party...and other splinter groups seemed didactic and powerless." "The Communist Party was the only game in town. It led the campaign for the rights of blacks particularly in the south and in the trade unions; it was the most dynamic voice against fascism. It gave leadership to the most militant trade unions. Its agenda was my agenda."

### Joffe: A Different Experience with Stalinism

Nadezhda Joffe is now 90 years old, a few years older than Victor Rabinowitz, and is living in Brooklyn, having moved there to join her children several years ago. She became a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as a young girl just after the revolution. She soon became a leader of the Communist Youth in Moscow.

Nadezhda was expelled from the party in 1927, imprisoned in 1929, and then sent into the Siberian gulag. Her husband was executed in the mid-1930s. After a quarter of a century she was finally released in 1956, following the Khrushchev revelations. In penning these remembrances, she wrote, "I considered it my duty to write

them for my co-prisoners and those who didn't survive." The majority were there because of a husband, brother, or friend in disfavor; because of conversations or jokes displeasing to the Stalinist authorities; because they read the wrong books or praised the wrong play. "In other words, for nothing at all."

Of her purpose, she said: "I simply wanted to tell the story of my life. But my life turned out to be so closely linked with the history of my country that to a certain degree it proved to be a piece of history in general." Indeed.

### Daughter of a Soviet Leader

Nadezhda Joffe was the oldest daughter of Adolph Abramovich Joffe, one of the Soviet delegates to the Brest-Litovsk peace talks in 1918, the first Soviet ambassador to Germany in 1918, the Soviet ambassador to China in 1922, and a former head of the Military Revolutionary Committee which directed the insurrection in Petrograd in November 1917.

Adolph Joffe was the son of a wealthy Jewish merchant from the Crimea. Joffe became a medical doctor, but he always put the resources of his family at the disposal of the movement.

Throughout his adult life Adolph Joffe was closely allied with Leon Trotsky. Between the 1905 revolution and World War I they edited a newspaper together in Vienna, which they called *Pravda*. (Lenin later chose that same name for the newspaper of his grouping, the Bolsheviks.) The families of Joffe and Trotsky grew up together, Nadezhda being especially close to Trotsky's son Lyova.

Nadezhda remembers meeting Franz Mehring in Vienna. Mehring had known Karl Marx and written an outstanding biography of Marx. Nadezhda also knew Lenin, Derzhinsky, Rakovsky, Bukharin, and many other top leaders of the Russian revolution. Her father was one of 24 Central Committee members who organized the October overthrow. Of these, eleven were shot by Stalin, a twelfth died in

prison, and a thirteenth, Trotsky, was murdered on Stalin's orders in 1940.

### Death of Joffe and His Funeral

In 1927 Trotsky was expelled from the Soviet Communist Party. His friend and collaborator Adolph Joffe was ill and had sought Stalin's permission to travel abroad for medical care. It was denied. Joffe felt he had nothing left to give the revolution but his life and took it by his own hand as a protest against Stalin's expulsion of the Left Opposition in the party. The last great public demonstration against the rise of Stalin and what he represented in terms of a privileged and brutally selfish bureaucracy was the demonstration of workers at Joffe's funeral in 1927. Nadezhda was there. It was the last time she was to see Trotsky and his wife Natalia. Stalin had ordered the funeral to be held on a workday, but 10,000 workers nonetheless attended.

Nadezhda endured imprisonment and exile with strength and dignity. She gave birth to a daughter in the arctic winter. She kept herself informed and her spirits and those of her comrades up. She read what she could, acted in plays, and worked the difficult, meaningless jobs forced on her. She raised three daughters, two of whom now live in Brooklyn. When she was allowed to return to Moscow in the post-Khrushchev thaw, the first thing she did was work on the rehabilitation of her father. She visited the cemetery where his body was buried and made contact with the head grave keeper. It turned out that he was an Old Bolshevik who was willing to help.

The crisis of moral credibility into which the idea of socialism was plunged by Stalinism is partly redeemed by the exemplary life story of Nadezhda Joffe and people like her. Fortunately her book has been translated into English, and the truth about the life of this extraordinary woman — who remains a socialist and internationalist — will go on unextinguished. □

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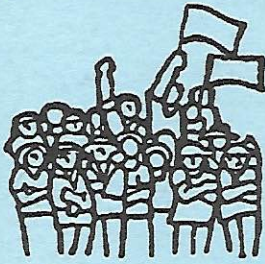
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The Manifesto of the Fourth International

## Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century

This document was adopted by a meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (FI) in 1992. It is the product of months of discussion within that world organization and an extensive process of rewriting and revision from an original draft proposed before the FI's World Congress in 1991.

The FI is an international organization of revolutionary Marxist parties and groups from dozens of countries throughout the world. It was founded in 1938 under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, dedicated to a consistent and forthright struggle for the common interests of working people and the oppressed in all nations — to their mobilization in struggle against capitalist exploitation, colonialism, and bureaucratic dictatorship, and against all forms of racial and sexual discrimination.

It should be clear, from the perspectives presented here, that the FI remains true to that purpose today. This, in itself, stands as a major accomplishment in a world where many former leftists and radical activists are rushing to embrace the "new realism" of a capitalism that has supposedly "triumphed over socialism" during the cold war.

But reality is a far cry from the "new world order" proclaimed by U.S. President George Bush after his victory against Iraq in 1991. It is, as the Manifesto points out, a world of increasing disorder — of insecurity, crisis, preventable hunger, poverty, and disease. These things are more the rule than the exception for most of the billions of people on this planet.

In short, we are living in a world that cries out for a renewed commitment to the fight for social change, for a more just and humane political and economic system. Just such a commitment, and a perspective on how those needed changes can be brought about, will be found in the pages of this pamphlet.

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