

Information, Education, Discussion

# **BULLETIN** in Defense of Marxism

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## Who We Are

The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is published monthly by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. We have dedicated this journal to the process of clarifying the program and theory of revolutionary Marxism—of discussing its application to the class struggle both internationally and here in the United States. This vital task must be undertaken if we want to forge a political party in this country capable of bringing an end to the domination of the U.S. imperialist ruling class and of establishing a socialist society based on human need instead of private greed.

The F.I.T. was created in the winter of 1984 by members expelled from the Socialist Workers Party because we opposed abandoning the Trotskyist principles and methods on which the SWP was founded and built for more than half a century. Since our formation we have fought to win the party back to a revolutionary Marxist perspective and for our readmission to the SWP. In addition our members are active in the U.S. class struggle.

At the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International, the appeals of the F.I.T. and other expelled members were upheld, and the congress delegates demanded, by an overwhelming majority, that the SWP readmit those who had been purged. So far the SWP has refused to take any steps to comply with this decision.

"All members of the party must begin to *study*, completely dispassionately and with utmost honesty, first the essence of the differences and second the course of the dispute in the party. . . . It is necessary to *study* both the one and the other, unfailingly demanding the most exact, printed documents, open to verification by all sides. Whoever believes things simply on someone else's say-so is a hopeless idiot, to be dismissed with a wave of the hand."

—V.I. Lenin, "The Party Crisis," Jan. 19, 1921.

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## NEW STAGE OF THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION

by Steve Bloom

The assassination of Rolando Olalia and his driver, Leonor Alay-ay, in Manila on November 13 marked a dramatic shift of the situation facing Filipino workers and peasants in their battle to guarantee democracy and human rights in their country—a battle which has been taking place since before the ouster of the hated Marcos dictatorship last February. The growing boldness of the Filipino right wing reached the point where they believed they could get away with murder.

The intensification of the political crisis in the country following Olalia's death has led to a shakeup of Corazon Aquino's cabinet, including the dismissal of Juan Ponce Enrile—the political leader of the rightists—from his post as defense minister. The militant protest march of workers

which took place at Olalia's funeral on November 20, by many accounts the largest demonstration in the history of the Philippines, shows that a way out of the crisis gripping the country favorable to the workers and poor peasants does indeed exist—*provided only that the leading organizations of the masses find a way to maintain their mobilization and organize as a truly independent political force.*

### Three Political Players

In broad outline these three forces—the right wing, the pro-Aquino bourgeoisie, and the worker and poor peasant masses—represent the real players on the political scene in the Philippines

## Contra Arms Scandal Shakes Washington

Many are likening it to the Watergate affair which rocked the Nixon administration in the early '70s. Like those events, the recent revelations about secret U.S. government arms deals with Iran in order to finance the Nicaraguan contras show that the so-called democracy which the people of the United States enjoy—the alleged control we have over the actions of our government—is a complete and total fraud. Those in high places carry out their real policies in secret, hidden from the population of this country. The most remarkable about the present case is that for a change the wheelings and dealings behind the scene have been exposed to public scrutiny.

As is only natural when such a thing occurs, working people and others are expressing their outrage. Reagan, to save his own neck, claims he didn't know what was happening. But very few believe him. Of course, whether Reagan was or wasn't aware is of little significance. It seems likely that the idea of such an important series of policy decisions being made without the president's knowledge may even appear more outrageous to the average citizen than the possibility that Reagan himself approved the Iran-contra connection.

In either case, one fact is indisputable. The *real* foreign policy of Washington has nothing to do with the glib and self-serving platitudes about "democracy," "freedom," and "human rights" which Reagan serves up in great abundance for public consumption.

The present crisis in Washington is more than a crisis of the Reagan administration. It is, in fact, a crisis of credibility for bourgeois rule in this country. The U.S. ruling class is well aware of that fact. That's why politicians of various stripes are scrambling to propose a way out—whether it be a special prosecutor a la Watergate, a special session of Congress, or whatever. But working people should not be fooled. The only purpose of such schemes will be to work out a plan to cut the losses of the ruling-class parties, to find the least costly scapegoat who can be blamed—as an individual—for this particular series of policy moves (even if that individual turns out to be Ronald Reagan, as it was Richard Nixon in the Watergate affair).

The real lesson we can draw from these events is that working people cannot trust *any* politicians who represent the ruling rich of the United States. We need our own political organization, our own candidates for office, who will be responsible to us. The government of the Republicans and Democrats, the government of the ruling rich, the government of hypocrisy and cynicism, must be replaced by a new kind of government which will be truly democratic; one which will represent and defend the interests of the majority of working people in the United States.

*(The next issue of the Bulletin IDOM will carry a more thorough analysis of the present crisis of confidence gripping Washington.)*

today. To be sure, each of them has its own subdivisions, but tactical disagreements within these camps (concerning the timing of the effort to impose military rule on the country, for example), while they may speed up or slow down the final outcome of the situation, are unlikely to prove decisive in actually determining what that outcome will be.

In the first nine months after she came to power, Aquino attempted to play a largely Bonapartist role—balancing between the two forces which were decisive in the February revolution: the mobilization of the workers and peasants, on the one hand, and the section of the military loyal to Enrile and Fidel Ramos on the other. She did this by placating the right wing (giving their main representative, Enrile, a place in her cabinet and taking no action against him despite repeated provocations, etc.). At the same time, after her initial amnesty of political prisoners, she asked the masses to be patient, to wait, to give her time to implement her economic program before pressing their demands. But having no realistic program to develop the country, fearing both a revolt of the right and the mobilization of the masses, Aquino was able to find no strong social base of support which she could call her own. She proved weak and ineffectual on virtually every front.

The right wing became increasingly bold over this entire period, taking as its main theme the "fight against communism." The participation of a section of the military in the revolt against Marcos meant that the ousting of the dictatorship did not result in the crushing, even temporarily, of the most reactionary forces in the country. The more farsighted among them simply made a decision that Marcos's rule was no longer viable, and they would have to live with an Aquino government for a time—much as that went against their general inclinations. They knew that at the very least they could count on Aquino to take no measures against the social and economic domination of the Philippine ruling classes. She could provide them with a breathing spell, with time to regroup in order to develop a more suitable alternative to Marcos.

The main organizations in the workers' movement, however, have repeatedly expressed their support to Aquino and acceded to her call to be patient. Unlike the forces of reaction, they have by and large refrained from mobilizing around their own demands, except in the context of complete subordination to the government. This remained true even after the assassination of Olalia. The massive funeral procession on November 20 delivered a letter to the Presidential Palace, asking Aquino to "draw your strength from the masses now at your doorstep" (*New York Times*, November 21, 1986). J. V. Bautista, a spokesperson for Bayan, the left-wing nationalist party of which Olalia was chairman before his death, explained, "[Aquino] is concerned about the strength of her own backers. She is unsure about the

strength of 'people power.' That's why we are having the march, to show her these forces are at her disposal if the military moves against her" (*ibid.*).

This has likewise been the approach of the KMU (May First Movement), the independent trade union federation also previously headed by Olalia, which has become the dominant force among Filipino workers since the ouster of Marcos. Crispin Beltran, a leader of the union, explained, "We are not against the Aquino government. We offer ourselves as a backup force in supporting the Aquino government against those minority people bound to sabotage social change" (*New York Times*, November 18, 1986).

### Only Two Solutions to the Crisis

The primary contradiction of the situation in the Philippines during the first phase of the revolution is obvious from this basic outline. Despite the existence of three *apparent* poles of political power, only two of those three had the ability to offer any kind of decisive solution to the crisis gripping the country—the right wing of the bourgeoisie and the working class. *Aquino did not and does not present any kind of "third path."* Yet only one of these two conceivable roads to stability, that of the rightists, has been actively posed up to now. The right wing has had no hesitancy about offering itself and its crusade against communism as an alternative to Aquino.

The necessary proletarian antidote for the right-wing infection includes far more than simply appealing to Aquino to lean on the workers and stand up to reaction. Aquino is, in fact, incapable of doing that, a fact which must dictate the strategic approach of the workers' organizations. As part of the landowning aristocracy of the Philippines, she fears the power of the masses far more than she fears the right. Her only response to the assassination of Olalia was to make a few pious pronouncements and appoint a commission—consisting overwhelmingly of representatives from the military and the police.

This understanding of Aquino's role was amply confirmed when she did finally decide the time was ripe to make a more decisive turn. She made it to the right, not the left. This is the real substance of her cabinet shakeup, despite her attempt to keep the working masses on a string by appearing "even-handed" and dismissing Enrile. Aquino decided that she had to win the more conservative elements of the Filipino bourgeoisie to her side, and with the support of Gen. Fidel V. Ramos, army chief of staff, she cast her lot squarely with the military as the primary prop for her regime. In doing so she firmly rejected the overtures of the workers mobilized in the streets on November 20.

Aquino sees no need at this point to make concessions to a workers' movement which has been firmly behind her and has no apparent alternative but to continue backing her government. The illusions which the masses have in Aquino have been her

most persuasive asset, encouraging one sector of the bourgeoisie to continue its support for her. They wished, above all else, to avoid a costly—and potentially disastrous—confrontation with the mass movement of workers and poor peasants which the program of the right wing threatened to unleash.

But the situation was obviously too unstable to continue indefinitely. Now Aquino is making an effort to win the loyalty of more conservative forces within the ruling class, to hopefully consolidate a strong majority and isolate the most extreme rightist elements, by coopting some of the "anti-communist" program which was championed by Enrile. Though Aquino's class position is in complete contradiction to a firm alliance with the workers, her separation from the pro-Enrile forces is merely ideological. This is a much easier gap to bridge.

The replacement of Enrile with Rafael M. Iletto, another military man and an expert in counterinsurgency, gets a political challenger out of the way and satisfies one of the superficial demands which had been raised by the workers' movement. Yet it changes nothing of substance as far as the policies which will be followed by the government or the army. After dismissing Enrile, Aquino gave an ultimatum to the guerrilla forces led by the Communist Party of the Philippines: seven days to negotiate a cease-fire or face renewed hostilities. In that way she presented herself as taking a new "hard line" against the insurgency, one of the prime demands of the right-wing bourgeoisie and the army.

On November 26, a temporary cease-fire agreement was announced. It amounts essentially to a preservation of the status quo, with no action on any issues of substance. Negotiations on social reforms will begin 30 days after the cease-fire takes effect, and of course it is on these issues that Aquino will find it very difficult to resolve her dilemma. She has bought some time to try to find a road to stabilize the situation, but the underlying conflicts which gave rise to the crisis in the first place have not gone away, and will not be easily dispensed with. It remains to be seen whether Aquino's bold maneuver will work or not.

If the negotiations prove fruitless and the cease-fire breaks down, if Aquino decides that to maintain the support of a broad spectrum of the bourgeois classes it is necessary to launch a major attack on the communist insurgency, this will undoubtedly have to be accompanied by a crackdown on the KMU, Bayan, and other left forces as well. Of course, all of this will be done in the name of "preserving national unity" against "extremists" of all ideological persuasions. A war against the guerrilla forces would also be a two-edged sword—posing serious dangers in and of itself to the stability of the regime.

Even if she is able to hold off the guerrilla threat through prolonged negotiations, Aquino will probably be forced to more and more clearly estab-

lish her alliance with the right in her effort to stabilize the situation within the ruling class. Any genuine concession made to the workers' movement in an attempt to maintain their acquiescence runs the risk of destroying this attempt to forge unity within the camp of the bourgeoisie and landowners. She may well find the working masses less inclined to go passively along with her as their understanding of what is happening increases, raising a threat to the stability of her regime from another direction, and again posing the specter of a military coup and/or fierce repression (legal or extralegal) as the countermove demanded (or unilaterally implemented) by the right.

The only other possibility in the Philippines, the only available course besides the overthrow of Aquino by the rightists or her further adaptation to them, is the formation of an alternative power by the insurgent masses, cutting loose their ties to the present government and declaring their willingness and determination to take the affairs of the nation into their own hands. The longer this is delayed, the more the workers' movement is seen to temporize, to hesitate, the more it seems to be dependent on Aquino's willingness to mobilize the masses against the right danger, the bolder and more secure the right will inevitably become, and the more inclined Aquino will be to move in a conservative direction.

Those middle layers in society which are today still willing to side with the workers and poor peasants against the bourgeoisie will become increasingly impatient with the crisis the longer it continues. If they do not see an ability on the part of the workers' organizations to provide a way out they will lose their confidence in these forces, and will either turn to the right-wing military for an answer or become increasingly passive and demoralized. In either event the reactionary danger will become stronger.

A similar demoralization can overtake the ranks of the workers and poor peasants themselves, precisely because of their present illusions in Aquino, if they do not find a winning strategy which can *actually* bring about "people power." If they see their leaders continually chasing after the dead-end illusion of "democracy" and "social justice" implemented by an Aquino government, they will be unlikely to have much confidence in those leaders after the futility of that effort has become clear. In the absence of any viable alternative, the resultant passivity of the masses would pave the road that much more surely for the counterrevolutionary wing of the bourgeoisie.

### Tasks of the Workers' Movement

Much time, during which the left could have been organizing itself as a truly independent force within the Philippines and posing its own program *against* that of Aquino and the liberal bourgeoisie, has already been lost. Until the mass

funeral for Olalia, the momentum was all on the side of the rightists. Even the general strike called by the KMU in the days leading up to the funeral procession seems to have been of limited effectiveness.

But the response of the workers in Manila on November 20 shows that the matter is not yet decided. There is still time for the workers' organizations to act to impose their own solution after winning the backing of the overwhelming majority of the Filipino people—to smash the right wing along with the liberal-bourgeois state apparatus and to proceed to the construction of a new state, truly representative of the workers and the oppressed masses, a state which can for the first time ensure democracy and human rights in the Philippines.

The workers' movement in the Philippines has shown a great deal of courage and determination. It has brought to the fore sincere and dedicated leaders who have worked hard to advance the interests of the masses. Now it needs to take the next step and recognize that the Aquino government is *incapable* of protecting them against the right-wing assassins—that she has more in common with Enrile and his backers than with the workers and poor peasants—and draw the necessary conclusions. Appeals to Aquino's good will are a waste of time. Above all else the workers' organizations cannot wait for her to mobilize them against the rightist danger. They must begin now to form self-defense units which can protect their leaders against the assassination squads of the military, and train the workers in armed tactics.

The masses will need to take other steps as well, such as continuing their presence in the streets. Strong movements can be developed, for example, against the presence of U.S. military bases in the country, for the repudiation of the debt to foreign banks (overwhelmingly U.S. banks) and against Aquino's promises to Washington on these and other questions. Every time the right wing holds a rally it should be outmobilized by severalfold. This will help demoralize the supporters of reaction and give the workers renewed confidence in their own power.

The urban workers' organizations should pledge to help the poor peasants (or rural workers who cannot make enough laboring on the sugar plantations to feed their families) in their struggle for land, and promise to back up any efforts they might make to occupy land and take it away from the big landowners. If the masses wait for a viable land reform from Aquino they will be waiting a long, long time.

Of course, workers will continue to mobilize around their own economic struggles, which can be generalized and made part of the political battle against the bourgeoisie. If the bosses claim they are unable to pay decent wages, demands can be made to open the books to let the unions see for themselves what the financial status of the business is, or for the nationalization of the plants under the control of the workers. Struggles in

individual factories can be taken to others in appeals for solidarity, optimally leading to city-wide, or even a national organization representative of the entire working class. Such workers' councils could then promote a political as well as an economic program to resolve the present crisis of the Philippines.

This outline of possible steps to be taken by the workers' movement of the Philippines is solely intended to outline a basic *strategic* approach. The specific issues, the specific forms of mobilization, the specific tactics to be used can only be decided by the Filipino revolutionaries themselves, on the scene of battle. But it is possible to say with absolute assurance that the strategic perspective of "critical participation" in the Aquino government projected by the leaders of the KMU and Bayan—which has had predominant influence within the Filipino workers' movement up to now—will have to be changed to one of active *opposition* to Aquino and the class of landowners and capitalists which she represents before the right-wing danger in the country can be combated effectively.

### Washington's Role

A few words need to be said, as well, about Washington's role in the Philippines today. As we know, it was the decision of the Reagan administration to jettison Marcos as its representative which played an important part in convincing Enrile and the wing of the military which backed him to place their bets on Aquino, at least for a time. Today, Washington insists that Aquino has its firm endorsement, and called upon Enrile, before his ouster, to cease his destabilizing antics.

But there can be little doubt that the CIA has at least a finger or two in the counterrevolutionary pie, and is keeping Washington's options open. It should be remembered that not long ago Washington professed its complete commitment to "Chilean democracy" at the very time the CIA was plotting with Pinochet for the overthrow of Allende.

At the moment it seems reasonable for Washington to continue its support for Aquino in the expectation that the illusions the masses have in her government will prove decisive for stabilizing the situation and preserving bourgeois rule. But if the time comes when Washington believes the organizations of the working masses have been sufficiently weakened, or if their illusions have broken down, creating a new threat, or if Aquino proves incapable of uniting the Filipino ruling classes, there can be little doubt that the U.S. imperialists will opt for a stronger and more stable bourgeois government in Manila.

The Chilean analogy is especially chilling when we recall that in that country, too, the mass organizations of the workers and peasants—which were not an insignificant force—declared their willingness to fight arms in hand at the call of Allende if he were challenged by the military. By

doing so the leaders of the masses tied themselves completely to Allende, became totally dependent on his willingness to fight. They were unable to mobilize the workers and peasants to combat the coup when it did take place. No call and no arms were forthcoming from the government. Allende fell to the army with insignificant resistance, paving the way for a tragic bloodbath which decimated the organizations of the left and of the masses. Only in the last year or two has this tragic defeat of the Chilean people begun to be overcome.

### International Solidarity

Whatever course the Philippine revolution takes, international solidarity from working people around the world is absolutely essential. Resolutions should be adopted by unions and political organizations, letters and telegrams should be sent to the government demanding firm measures against the right-wing terror, and in particular demanding that the murderers of Olalia and Alay-ay be brought to justice. Rallies or tours of speakers from and about the Philippines can provide an invaluable means of educating

people in other countries and displaying our solidarity. These and similar efforts will strengthen the movement of the workers and peasants in that country, and weaken the right-wing danger.

It is also important for workers in other countries to learn the lessons of the present struggle in the Philippines—which is illustrating and adding to our historical appreciation of permanent revolution and the class struggle in the colonial and semicolonial world. Through familiarizing ourselves with these lessons we can apply what we learn to our own struggles against our own ruling classes. Ultimately the fight of working people in the Philippines for a government that truly represents them is part of the worldwide struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisie and its agents, part of the international struggle for socialism and a better future for all of humanity. This particular battle will be won or lost on the territory of the Philippines. A victory there will greatly aid the cause of the international working class in its war against exploitation and oppression on our entire planet. ■

November 26, 1986

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Dear comrades of the KMU and of the Partido ng Bayan,

It was with consternation and deep sorrow that we learned of the brutal murder of Rolando Olalia, chair of the KMU and of the Partido ng Bayan. We would like to reassure you in this sad hour of our full and complete solidarity. We ask you to communicate to the family, friends and comrades of "Lando" Olalia our most sincere condolences. We call on all working-class, progressive and democratic activists to join in the protest actions undertaken in response to the murder in many countries of the world.

Rolando Olalia was tortured and struck down because he had become a symbol of the Philippine workers' movement, of class-struggle unionism, as well as of the Philippine militant left. Many cadres of the workers' and people's movement disappeared and are still disappearing after he has fallen.

But this new crime of capitalist reaction is especially grave because it is the first time that a national leader of the legal left has been kidnapped and killed in this way in Manila itself. This action comes in the wake of many provocative actions staged by the military, in particular the arrest of Rodolfo Salas in October. (3)

The objective of this is clear: to block any extension of democratic rights, to put in question what the workers' and people's movement has gained by its struggle since February 1986, to recreate a climate of terror and prepare the way for a return to a dictatorial order.

The murder of Rolando Olalia must not, and will not, go unpunished. His fight for the working class and the other poor masses of the Philippines is continuing without letup. Today, more than ever before, it is essential to build active solidarity with the Philippine workers' and people's movement. □

November 14, 1986. United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

## SOCIALIST LEFT ORGANIZES IN POLAND

### New Political Party Applies to Join the Fourth International

by Tom Barrett

The Polish working class, the vanguard of the antibureaucratic opposition in the deformed and degenerated workers' states, has over the past year-and-a-half taken some important steps forward. As workers have learned from their experiences in Solidarity, especially since the imposition of martial law, many have come to the conclusion that they, not the government, are truly fighting for socialism. The transitional demand of "workers' self-management," which in the Polish context means complete control of the workplaces by democratically elected workers' councils, has mass support within the Polish working class, and it is around this demand that the proletarian opposition is now coalescing.

The massive support for workers' self-management coincides with a drop in support for underground Solidarity and its program of "self-limiting revolution." The Workers' Opposition Alliance (POR) has arisen since May 1985 outside of the underground Solidarity framework. It is attempting to give organizational form to the mass sentiment for democratic workers' control of industry. The POR does not claim to be an alternative to Solidarity, which it considers necessary for the anti-bureaucratic struggle, but believes that Solidarity by itself is insufficient. Stressing its historic link to that organization, the POR added Solidarity to its name in May 1986, becoming the Workers' Opposition Alliance-Solidarity (POR-S).

May 1986 also saw the emergence of a political party of the workers' antibureaucratic struggle, the Workers Party of the Self-Managed Republic (RPRS). It has launched a newspaper called *Zryw* ("Take Off"), and has applied for recognition as the Polish section of the Fourth International. Its relationship with the POR-S is close and collaborative. Revolutionists throughout the world, especially Fourth Internationalists, have every reason to feel encouraged by this big step forward for the Polish workers' movement.

#### Mass Antibureaucratic Consciousness

Arthur Wilkins, writing in the October 27, 1986, issue of *International Viewpoint*, cites a sociological study on the opinions of workers from four large industrial plants in different parts of Poland. This study confirmed that the overwhelming majority of Polish workers want an end to bureaucratic domination. Seventy-eight percent favored allowing different electoral slates in parliamentary elections; 65 percent supported an end to one-party political monopoly. Fifty-eight

percent supported continued social ownership of the means of production. (That figure, though it represents a majority of those surveyed, might have been still higher had it been clearly explained that the words, "social ownership," did not necessarily have the same meaning that the regime gives them.) A full 87 percent of the respondents, however, support "full workers' self-management," a radical concept indeed, as we have already explained, and one whose logic points inexorably towards the elimination of the bureaucracy as an independent element dominating society.

However, the study also showed that many workers have lost confidence in underground Solidarity, while continuing to support the ideals which that union represented in its earliest years. Twenty to twenty-five percent of the workers expressed support for underground Solidarity, about the same number as expressed support for the Jaruzelski regime. Half of the workers, it can be concluded, oppose the bureaucracy but do not look to Solidarity as the organization which can carry through the antibureaucratic struggle. It is to this half that the POR-S can have an immediate appeal. While the underground Solidarity leadership is increasingly promoting the "market economy" as an alternative to bureaucratic management and has moved away from its working class base, the POR-S is concentrating on organizing industrial workers and leading them in struggle.

The Polish government, at the same time, is attempting to take advantage of the contradictions reflected in the attitudes of the Polish workers. Jaruzelski is hoping to tap some of the disillusionment with the underground Solidarity leadership to create more maneuvering room for the bureaucracy. Toward this end the government announced the release, on September 11, of "non-criminal prisoners," including Solidarity leader Zbigniew Bujak. It thereby attempts to appear reasonable, willing to tolerate dissent—as long as the bureaucracy's dominant position in society isn't threatened—trusting that this will encourage that wing of the opposition which, in contrast to the POR-S, is open to an accommodation with the regime.

The POR-S's chairman is a young Silesian worker, Damian Dziubelski. He has written an open letter to the Solidarity leadership explaining why he has taken the leadership of "an organization that includes left-wing sectors of the working class, trained and educated under a common banner, the banner of Solidarnosc." In his letter he insists that a free, self-managed Poland must be a



socialist Poland, and in order to fight for that end the POR-S insists on complete independence for the Polish workers' movement. This means not only independence from the bureaucracy, but from the powerful Polish clergy as well. He further rejects the anticommunist language used by many publications which claim to represent Solidarity, arguing that the Jaruzelski regime has nothing in common with true socialism.

### A Revolutionary Party

The Workers Party of the Self-Managed Republic (RPRS) published a political statement "In the fight for an independent self-managed republic of Poland" in the first issue of its newspaper, *Zryw*. It explains that its goals are Polish independence, democracy, and socialism: "We . . . oppose social exploitation by the systems of bureaucratic dictatorship that exist in the East, as well as by private capital. We declare our support for the full realization of the principles of socialism, which have been deformed and degraded by the rule of the Kremlin bureaucracy. These principles include, for example, the right of the society to sovereignty, the right of the workers to the means of production, the right of the peasants to their land, the right of the people to independent thought and creativity. Our objective is to fight for a *socialist* Poland."

The RPRS recognizes that the Polish struggle cannot be isolated from the world proletarian struggle for socialism. "Internationally, our struggle will be waged on two fronts—against the bureaucracy in the East and the bourgeoisie in the West. In our struggle we will not seek support or aid from the imperialist bourgeoisie." It completely rejects any thought of peaceful reform of the Stalinist dictatorship and recognizes the need to build a revolutionary party to achieve its objectives. "As an opposition force to the regime, Solidarnosc has proved inadequate to carry through . . . revolution. . . . We need a revolution carried through to the end, that will overthrow

and destroy this ossified system, generate structural changes and prevent a counterrevolution. Therefore, what is needed is a vanguard revolutionary organization conscious of its objectives and tasks, one that has a clearly defined program and ideology and which is based on the aspirations and support of society."

Furthermore, "Kryki," one of the RPRS's founders and a leader of POR-S, explained in an interview with *Wolny Robotnik*, the periodical of the POR-S of Upper Silesia: ". . . a party is an indispensable instrument to carry through the fight for power to a successful conclusion. . . . Palace revolutions or political cosmetics will change nothing in our bureaucratized regime. . . . A party means above all disciplined cadres but also it means a program, a definition of who are its allies and supporters. It is a concrete political instrument. (All quotations taken from *International Viewpoint*, October 27, 1986.)

These political positions have led the RPRS to apply for membership as the Polish section of the Fourth International. In the same *Wolny Robotnik* interview, "Kryki" said: "This international organization, while small, is very sound ideologically. I am convinced that its ideals correspond to the thinking of the current in the country that has not lost its head, either under the pressure of the Kremlin's propaganda or of pro-Western propaganda."

The work which the Fourth International has done thus far to get a hearing for its views inside Poland has begun to pay off. This represents the biggest opportunity in decades for revolutionary socialists to play an active role in the antibureaucratic struggle within the degenerated and deformed workers' states. The Fourth International will now be put to the test, to help develop this fledgling revolutionary organization into a powerful working class party, which can lead the overthrow of the bureaucracy and establish a new workers' state in Poland, a state based on workers' self-rule. ■

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THE FOLLOWING is the draft political-ideological statement of the Workers Party of the Self-Managed Republic (RPRS – Polish section of the Fourth International), "In the fight for an independent self-managed republic of Poland", first published in *Zryw*, No. 1, May 1986.

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Our struggle, as well as the objectives we have laid out, aims at transforming Poland into a sovereign country, economically and politically independent of any other state or political system. A people's right to chart its own path of development and decide on a political system in accord with its historic conditions

and its needs is a people's right to independence. Our objective is to fight for an *independent* Poland.

We recognize the historically established bases and principles of the socialist system, and oppose social exploitation by the systems of bureaucratic dictatorship that exist in the East, as well as by private

capital. We declare our support for the full realization of the principles of socialism, which have been deformed and degraded by the rule of the Kremlin bureaucracy. These principles include, for example, the right of the society to sovereignty, the right of the workers to the means of production, the right of the peasants to their land,

the right of the people to independent thought and creativity. (1) Our objective is to fight for a *socialist* Poland.

We reject both the anti-social system of bureaucratic totalitarianism and the pseudo-parliamentarian anti-democratic regime of imperialism. We reject systems that are based on exploiting the workers, and regimes that rule over society on the basis of usurped power. We stand firmly for a democracy based on self-management, for a people's power, for the right of the society to make decisions for itself, both in the framework of democratic institutions of self-management as well as in a system of political democracy. Our objective is to fight for a *democratic* Poland.

We reject the illusory belief in the possibility of evolutionary change or reform of the Stalinist system or the capitalist system. The conflicts of interest between the working people and the bureaucratic or bourgeois power elites are too powerful to be capable of solution through evolution or reform. The only road by which society can win its right to build socialism, the only road by which to overthrow the dictatorship of the degenerated party and state apparatus is *revolution*.

### Revolutionary internationalism

It is impossible to fight the regime of the totalitarian bureaucracy, to overthrow it and to found a self-managed republic without collaborating and cooperating with revolutionary progressive movements fighting for the independence of the non-Russian peoples from the Kremlin dictatorship, for the independence of the federation of non-Russian peoples from the Kremlin dictatorship, for the independence of the federation of Czechs and Slovaks, for a united and independent Germany. Our struggle cannot develop in separation from the struggle of the workers of the entire world against exploitation by private capital. Our ally can only be the world working class. That is the content of our revolutionary *internationalism*.

We see the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie as the common enemies of the working people. History shows that the workers are adversaries of both systems, and that when the workers rise up to claim their rights,

## "Down with poverty and the dictatorship"

ALTHOUGH PRICES went up recently, between December 1985 and March 1986, the regime imposed a new price increase on us. After the increase in rents last January, the regime is already announcing an increase in the cost of house heating, gas, electricity, coal and urban transport. Undeclared increases, running around 4 per cent, are already a daily reality.

The fall in the standard of living is the price that the working people are paying for the parasitism, the incompetence and the dictatorship of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Unless we resist, there will be no end to price rises. We need to arouse our fighting spirit and begin to put up energetic resistance. Only an organized force of the workers can put a brake on the action of the authorities, who bear the sole responsibility for the economic crisis.

To defend ourselves, it is necessary to form:

- *Statistical Committees* in the underground Solidarnosc factory committees, in the workers' councils and in other bodies to evaluate the increases in the cost of living. We have to demand an automatic sliding scale of wages.

- *Independent Tenants' Committees* to organize rent strikes, if the recent rent rises are not rescinded, or if they are followed up by new increases.

- *Protest Committees* to organize work on petitions to be directed to organs of the state administration, to the official pseudo-trade unions, and so forth and to build mass actions against the price increases.

- *May Day Committees* to build actions that will make May 1 a day of great battles in defence of our standard of living and of civil rights.

- *Self-Supply Groups* to make contact with farmers and obtain supplies collectively from them at prices below the official rates.

Moreover, it is necessary to declare a *state of alert against hunger*. Those who live under the subsistence minimum, which is 9 thousand zlotys per month per family member, are invited to put lighted candles in their apartment windows during the night of the 13th of every month.

Our best weapon is *self-organization combined with the threat of strikes*. We need to have a political awareness of the meaning of our struggle, to understand that unless we overthrow a regime that is socially and nationally alien, we cannot eradicate the causes of the crisis. We must be aware that the fundamental objectives of our struggle are *independence and self-management* and that we are waging it in the interests of the workers, peasants, intellectuals and small artisans.

Workers' Opposition Alliance  
Warsaw, March 17, 1986

both systems are united by a common interest in seeing their struggle drowned in blood. Internationally, our struggle will be waged on two fronts — against the bureaucracy in the East and the bourgeoisie in the West. In our struggle we will not seek support or aid from the imperialist bourgeoisie. It is in the interest of all the workers of the world to fight against a third world war, to defend peace and to oppose the flareup of international conflicts contrary to our class needs or which are artificial in character. Therefore, we are for peace.

We recognize the need to assure the role of working class as a subject and the sovereignty of society. (2) Therefore, we stand for social ownership of the means of production and for the right of the workers to self-

organization and self-management, and fight for social and national sovereignty. We are fighting for a *self-managed* Poland.

*There is no socialism without democracy.*

Democracy means people's power, workers' power over their workplaces, cities and communities. It means that the society must be free of any dictatorship and that the state power must derive from the social

1. The term "society" and "social" in the writings of the workers' opposition movement in Poland means the civil society as opposed to the state, that is, the masses as opposed to the bureaucracy.

2. "Subject" means that the workers determine their own fate, instead of being an "object," that is, having their fate determined by someone else. — 'IV'

power. The bureaucratic regimes in the East and the plutocracies in the West will never be a people's power. The basis of socialism is power by the people, that is, freedom for the people and a role of political subject both collectively and individually. The absence of democracy has led the present system to degenerate into an anti-social "actually existing socialism." There is no socialism where there is no democracy. Nor is there real democracy without socialism.

*There is no socialism without independence.*

The anti-social and anti-democratic bureaucracy bases itself on political subordination to the power of the Kremlin and on economic subordination to the also anti-social imperialist monopolies. Without the support of these two systems, the present political regime could not maintain itself in Poland. In order to achieve socialism in our country by the revolutionary road, it is necessary to deliver the people from this subordination, which means subjugation. Socialism will be possible only if we win national independence. There is no socialism without independence nor is there any independence without socialism.

*There is no socialism without self-management.*

Only a self-managed society can guarantee a socialist system, democracy and independence. The right of independent organs of workers' self-management to make the decisions in the factories; the right of the

society to decide about the environment in which it lives and works; the right of creative thinkers to propagate their independent opinions; the right of parties, organizations, groupings, associations or interest groups to function, mean the right to socialism. Only factory, industry, territorial, social and political self-management can guarantee socialism. Without self-management there is no socialism.

*There is no socialism without revolution.*

The experience of the working-class uprisings in 1956, 1970, 1976 and 1980-81 shows that the socialist reforms that have been demanded in the course of such upsurges cannot be carried out within the framework of the present ossified system. The notion that the creators of this system, the party and state apparatchniks, could turn over power to the society in accordance with the principles of socialism, carry through democratic changes or regain national independence, or that they could play any part in all this, is pure utopianism. The regime has made it necessary several times already to pay a price in the blood of the Polish workers even for small concessions. Taking power is possible only by the road of socialist revolution, which at the same time will be a revolution for national independence.

*There is no revolution without organization.*

As an opposition force to the regime, Solidarnosc has proved in-

**LEW TROCKI**

**DO KAD  
BIUROKRACJA  
STALINOWSKA  
PROWADZI  
ZSSR**

Title page of the pamphlet with Trotsky's article from January 1935, "Where is the Stalinist Bureaucracy Leading the USSR?" published at the Olof Palme underground printshop by the Political Group of the POR-S in North Praga, Warsaw

adequate to carry through such a revolution. The spontaneous social upsurges have been channelled by the partisans of a self-limiting revolution or a revolution within the framework of the system. We need a revolution carried through to the end, that will overthrow and destroy this ossified system, generate structural changes and prevent a counter-revolution. Therefore, what is needed is a vanguard revolutionary organization conscious of its objectives and tasks, one that has a clearly defined program and ideology and which is based on the aspirations and support of society.

*We have to be democratic revolutionary socialists, organized internationally to fight for the genuine principles of socialism.*

For the moment, we base ourselves on the ten general political principles set forth in the draft platform of the Workers' Opposition Alliance — Solidarnosc (POR-S), until they are further developed. On this basis, we have made the following decisions:

- To begin conscious organized work to build the Workers' Party of the Self-Managed Republic (RPRS).
- To this end, to form a provisional coordinating body, the Provisional Organizing Committee. □

*International Viewpoint 27 October 1986*

NR 1 **ZARYW**

**RPRS**

**ROBOTNICZA PARTIA RZECZPOSPOLITEJ SAMORZADNEJ**

SEKCJA POLSKA IV MIĘDZYNARODOWKI

ORGAN PRACY TYMCZASOWEGO KOMITETU ZAŁOZCIELSKIEGO

**RPRS**

**komunikat TKZ**

Tymczasowy Komitet Założycielski stoi na gruncie szerszego rozumienia społecznego i narodowego na latanie kadrowej, samostalinizowanej, świadomej wycie i zadań organizacji politycznej, powołuje Robotniczą Partię Rzeczpospolitej Samorządnej, Naród Polski nekany, poniszony, poszwawiony godności przez totalitarny reżim okrajbiurokratyczny pod przewodnictwem peldorobniczej PZP zmuszony jest drogą rewolucji zdobyć należne samostanowienie i wartości.

Polakom niepodległość, samorządność i w pełni demokratyczną mość wywołają tylko zorganizowana świadoma klasa robotnicza, wazy i ludzkie pragnienia powołują do postępowej, inteligentnej. Masz sojusznicy to przedewszystkiem Międzynarodowy Front Robotniczy, wszystkie postępowe robotnicze partie międzynarodowe waloszące o wyzwolenie klasy robotniczej, pokój i postęp społeczny. Wszystkie organizacje społeczne i polityczne przedostawiające się dyktatorom, reżimowi i nieuczestniczące w sprawowaniu władzy.

Jestem przekonani, że nasza Partia stanie się nowożytnym politycznym dla tych wszystkich, którym nie jest obojętne Polska niepodległa i Naród wolny od tyranii.

Tymczasowy Komitet Założycielski

**DEKLARACJA IDEOWO POLITYCZNA RPRS**

## LOS ANGELES CENTRAL AMERICA COALITION ORGANIZES NOVEMBER 1 MARCH AND RALLY

by Evelyn Sell

On October 25 a few dozen people picketed the Federal Building in downtown Los Angeles. A spokesperson told the media that the group was part of a national day of "Actions for Peace, Jobs and Justice."

On November 1, as reported by *La Opinion* newspaper, over 10,000 marched and rallied in Los Angeles to demand, "Stop the U.S. War in Central America!"

These two actions differed not only in size and themes but in the process involved in initiating, organizing, and building the events.

In a letter dated July 17, Actions for Peace, Jobs and Justice invited selected organizations to endorse and participate in nationally coordinated actions in ten cities on October 25 to demand: "ABOLISH ALL NUCLEAR WEAPONS. Begin with a ban on nuclear testing, followed by a comprehensive freeze. Ban Star Wars. STOP U.S. WAR IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND U.S. INTERVENTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST. Support the sanctuary movement of refugees from C.A. REDIRECT RESOURCES FROM THE MILITARY TO MEET HUMAN NEEDS: DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS. Create jobs by funding socially useful production. CUT ALL

TIES WITH SOUTH AFRICA AND END RACISM AT HOME. Support full equality and justice in the U.S."

Although Los Angeles was listed as one of the ten sites for a regional action, key local organizations and activists had not been consulted—or even contacted!—about such an action. In fact, beginning in June, representatives of about ten groups in Los Angeles had been meeting to discuss the possibilities of a fall action. The call for the October 25 actions was brought up and rejected by all of the solidarity and anti-intervention activists involved. Based on these discussions, combined with consultations with key solidarity forces, a letter (signed by sixteen well-known persons and organizations) was sent to a wide range of organizations and individuals to: "Come to the first planning meeting for a fall mobilization on Central America, and a discussion of our participation in anti-apartheid actions projected for the fall."

Almost 100 came to this July 28 meeting; those attending represented key solidarity organizations, Central American groups, representatives from the religious community, campus activists, and veterans of the anti-intervention/antiwar movement. Major points were overwhelmingly approved by democratic vote: a focus on Central America with a linkup to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa; a November 1 march on the main downtown street to a rally in front of City Hall. At its second meeting, the coalition adopted a democratic structure: one person/one vote at general meetings, an elected steering committee, and representatives from the five work committees on the steering committee. This meeting also adopted the name "Fall Mobilization on Central America," and the main theme of the action: "Stop the U.S. War in Central America."

The work committees immediately produced positive results: an initial announcement leaflet, outreach mailings, arranging permits, raising funds. Endorsements were secured. A relationship was established with the coalition organizing the October 11 march and rally against apartheid.

While all of this activity was going on, the October 25 coalition continued to list Los Angeles as the site for an action for peace, jobs, and justice—still without any consultation with the Los Angeles coalition which did exist, and without the agreement of the individuals listed as "regional contacts."

In mid-September a national leader of Actions for Peace, Jobs and Justice was in Los Angeles and

### MOVEMENT AWAITS CALL FOR APRIL 25

As we are preparing this issue of the *Bulletin IDOM* the anti-intervention movement in the United States is still awaiting the formal call for actions in Washington and on the West Coast on April 25, 1987. It is now expected to be issued some time in January.

But work has already started. Local coalitions, religious, anti-intervention, and solidarity groups, figures in the labor movement, and others opposed to U.S. intervention in Central America and the Reagan administration's policies in Southern Africa have begun to organize themselves to build this important demonstration.

The unity which has been generated around this date is an extremely positive sign that the movement can begin to overcome the fragmentation which has weakened its power. With the partial exception of April 20, 1985, we have been unable to mobilize the tremendous sentiment which exists in the U.S.A. in opposition to aid for the contras and in favor of the basic right of the peoples of Central America to determine their own future, run their own lives, without interference from the United States of America.

urged local contacts to get involved in the national coalition. There was a brief attempt to make the Los Angeles action part of the October 25 events. This was after 50,000 leaflets had already gone out clearly presenting a focus on Central America issues; after many coalition meetings; after hundreds of activists were busy building the clearly defined action; after all basic thematic and structural decisions had been democratically approved by majority votes.

The Fall Mobilization on Central America succeeded in holding "the largest local protest to date against U.S. military intervention in Central America" (*Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 2, 1986). Over 120 endorsing organizations and individuals were listed in the tabloid distributed by the coalition at the march. Among the 93 endorsing organizations were key solidarity groups such as CISPES, Nicaragua Task Force, Coordinadora de Comites Salvadoreños, FACHRES, Office of the Americas, Pledge of Resistance. Union endorsements included AFSCME, SEIU, ILWU, UE locals, and United Teachers-Los Angeles (NEA-AFT), as well as officials of farm workers, transport, service employees, auto, electrical, longshore workers, garment and teachers' unions. Almost a dozen endorsements from the religious community included key groups such as the Southern California Ecumenical Council Interfaith Task Force on Central America.

Endorsing groups played a vital role in helping organize the action, publicity, fund-raising, and outreach. For example, well-respected organizations made their mailing/phone lists available to the coalition so that phone-bank teams, who called 15-20,000 persons, were able to build attendance on November 1 and to raise over \$7,400. Special leaflets were made up and distributed by the religious, labor, and lesbian and gay contingents. College and high school students distributed leaflets, made up poster teams, and brought many to the march and rally. The *Los Angeles Times* noted that "about 50 suburban and inner-city church groups from nearly every denomination participated" in the November 1 action—the result of intensive efforts by religious components of the coalition.

Both the coalition and the action were larger and had broader support and involvement than last year's April 20 march and rally for peace, jobs, and justice. This plain fact proves that the old argument for a multi-issue approach is false: "A Central America action can't attract significant numbers. We have to bring in additional demands in order to attract other forces," we have been told.

But the Fall Mobilization on Central America garnered endorsements from almost all of the groups who had endorsed April 20. November 1 endorsers included: LA Council of Unemployed and Homeless, Iran-Iraq Peace Movement, National Coalition for Redress and Reparations (for Japanese-Americans interned during World War II). These organizations obviously understood the connections between "their" issues and U.S. interventionist policies in Central America. Also, the November 1 action brought out many "new faces"—another sign of the power of the issue to arouse previously inactive elements.

The enthusiasm inspired by the successful demonstration on November 1 carried over to the coalition's November 17 evaluation meeting. It was unanimously agreed to continue the coalition. Various ideas for future activities were presented and will be discussed and voted on at a December 8 meeting. Activists responded most positively to the news that leading labor figures and religious groups were calling for national actions on April 25, 1987, with a focus on Central America and South Africa. A steering committee member pointed out that the two largest fall actions took place in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., (4,000) and in both cases the issue of Central America was the dominant theme—a significant fact to keep in mind while looking toward spring 1987 actions. ■

November 18, 1986

#### ANTI-INTERVENTION CONFERENCE HELD IN TORONTO

On the weekend of November 15-16 over 150 people from all across Canada gathered in Toronto for a conference of the Toronto Anti-intervention Coalition (TAIC). Particularly significant was the representation from Quebec. TAIC has for a number of years conducted demonstrations, rallies, and other activities in Toronto against U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean. The latest conference decided to hold a mass mobilization in that city on May 9, 1987, and also urged others throughout Canada to hold actions focused around Central America on the same date.

Conference organizers had hoped to coordinate their action with the call for April 25 in the United States, but that date had previously been selected for demonstrations by groups in Canada organizing to protest nuclear policies.

## INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

Fortnightly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International

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# THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR IN THE 1980s

by David Williams

"For the first time in a year and a half," said a front-page editorial in the September 26, 1986, *Militant*, "nationally coordinated actions protesting U.S. intervention in Nicaragua are being organized in cities across the country. Scheduled for October 25 in some areas, and for November 1 in others, these demonstrations provide a much-needed opportunity to get out the truth about Washington's mercenary war against Nicaragua and why it should be roundly opposed." Some who have seen the Socialist Workers Party's abstention from antiwar, anti-intervention activity in the past few years might have misunderstood the meaning of that statement and seen it as evidence that the party is now "right where it needs to be," building mass actions against U.S. war policies. But simply building demonstrations is an elementary responsibility; the minimum that must be done.

What is required of an organization which seeks to lead the working class in socialist revolution is considerably more than this; the most fundamental necessity today is for leadership. The demonstrations which took place this fall did not reflect the massive opposition to U.S. intervention in Central America which exists within the U.S. population. Unfortunately, they were quite modest actions, and did not mobilize more than a few thousand committed activists nationwide. An energetic, straight-thinking *leadership* is needed to turn this shameful situation around.

At one time the Socialist Workers Party would have attempted to provide such leadership, but not any more. We are fortunate, however, since today it appears that others are coming together to take the necessary initiative through the call, still expected soon, for a demonstration in Washington on April 25 to protest U.S. policies in Central America and Southern Africa. No doubt, the SWP will be among the organizations which will join in and build these actions and that is all to the good. But if the movement follows its usual pattern, we will be faced once again, after April 25, with the question of what to do next. Do we continue to work to mobilize the people of this country in the streets, in powerful mass action, in ever-increasing numbers, until our demands are met? Or do we abandon that perspective and look for solutions by electing Democratic Party politicians, through lobbying, civil disobedience, or other means? Shall we build a truly democratic movement in which the rank-and-file activist has the final voice and vote on what is to be done? Or shall we organize an elitist movement with decisions made by "leaders," meeting behind closed doors and announcing their decisions to the move-

ment as a whole? What role will the SWP play in helping those struggling against U.S. intervention in Central America and Southern Africa decide these crucial questions?

The September 26 *Militant* should have spoken to the question of *why* it took a year and a half for more nationally coordinated demonstrations against intervention in Central America to take place. It should have taken up the problem of the fragmentation and lack of coordination among the anti-intervention organizations—problems which reach to the very heart of the issues mentioned above.

The *Militant* has not addressed these problems because the Socialist Workers Party is, at least in part, responsible for them as a result of its failure to project an alternative course for the movement. Instead of proposing a broad, democratic conference of anti-intervention activists to plan for nationally coordinated demonstrations, the SWP sent its representatives to participate in a closed-door meeting of "peace bureaucrats," which called the actions for October 25 in cities around the country without even discussing the matter with activists from those cities. Instead of arguing for a clear focus on mobilizing the broad sentiment against war in Central America and translating it into action in the streets, the SWP supported the burying of the Central America issue in a host of demands, headed by nuclear disarmament. Instead of working to build an independent, nonpartisan united front to keep Washington out of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and the rest of Central America and the Caribbean, the SWP, before October 25, 1986, was participating in a coalition which had as one of its explicit goals, "the election of a peace majority in Congress."

The letter sent out to build the initial New York City planning meeting for October 25 stated this as one of the goals of the action, and SWP representative Geoff Mirelowitz is listed on the back of the letter as a cosponsor of the meeting. No doubt, Mirelowitz was not in favor of such a formulation of the goals of the demonstration. Perhaps he was even embarrassed by the inclusion of his name on the list. But apparently neither he, nor the SWP as a whole, considered it necessary to draw any conclusions from this small but significant incident, to recognize the political box they have put themselves in with their present approach to the anti-intervention movement. They still fail to recognize that they must change their decision to climb into bed with the people whose goal is to "defeat Reaganism" by electing Democrats.

## A Ship Without a Compass . . .

This disorientation of the SWP has been a problem for a number of years. Party spokespeople are fond of saying, "This is not Vietnam," but they don't say what that means. They can't explain why the proven mass-action united-front strategy which contributed mightily to the U.S. defeat in Vietnam is inapplicable in defense of the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran revolutions. They don't have a logical analysis on which to base a winning approach. For a number of years, in fact, the SWP has had no consistent strategy at all, but has floundered about, sometimes following the initiatives of others, and at other times abstaining completely.

If the SWP's policy reflects anything at all, it reflects the party's loss of confidence in itself and in the Trotskyist program. That loss of confidence, in turn, comes from a series of setbacks the organization has suffered, brought about in great measure by a complete misassessment of the level and direction of working class radicalization in the United States. Not all of the setbacks were caused by the party's errors—the only way to totally avoid political defeats is to totally abstain from political activity. But there can be no question that the SWP leadership turned away from proven effective strategies as a result of its own demoralization.

The party's confidence in its ability to lead the antiwar struggle was first shaken severely in May 1981. Two demonstrations against U.S. involvement in El Salvador were called for that month. The People's Anti-War Mobilization (PAM), in which the ultraleft Workers World Party plays a leading role, called a demonstration for May 3, and the Committee Against Registration and the Draft (CARD) called one for May 9.

The SWP was not in the leadership of either group, but did participate in the conference held by CARD, and publicly supported the initiative which had been taken there. There was no question that the CARD conference was broader and more democratic than the initiative taken by PAM, and that its demands and projected action were better than PAM's. However, PAM was serious about building a mass demonstration, and it was successful in generating enthusiasm and momentum for May 3. The organizers of the May 9 demonstration, by contrast, invested little time and energy to build it.

For a time after it became clear that May 3, and not May 9, would be successful, the SWP continued to cling to May 9 and to criticize the ultraleft character of May 3, even though Workers World's ultraleftism had been somewhat brought in check by the breadth of forces participating in the action. When the May 9 action was finally canceled and the party had to face reality, it was able to be little more than a spectator.

The Political Committee recognized that an error had been made, but the conclusions it drew did not go far enough. Doug Jenness, reporting to

the New York-Northern New Jersey district convention on May 17, 1981, said, ". . . we tended to underestimate the broad sentiment for a united action against U.S. intervention in El Salvador regardless of who got it going, who was involved, or who was in charge of it. . . . we did not recognize early enough that what had come out of the CARD conference was a majority for a date, not a genuine coalition. Our error was hanging onto that date too long, rather than objectively evaluating what began to happen shortly after the CARD conference. . . . we should have thrown our support behind May 3."

Everything that Jenness said was correct, but he did not explain *why* the error was made or how similar errors could be avoided in the future. In spite of his assertion that "it's important to recognize it as an error, discuss it out, learn from it, and move forward," the only thing he did was the first. The party recognized the error, but did not discuss it out, did not learn from it, and did not move forward.

No effort was made by the SWP—in the subsequent default of the May 3 coalition—to try to put together the sort of movement necessary to build on the momentum of the demonstration and continue organizing the American people. Instead, the party grew increasingly hostile to other groups, like the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), deriding them in internal discussions as "petty-bourgeois," guilty of "retreating in the face of the war drive by the U.S. imperialists." Anyone who was a member of the party during that period will remember such characterizations being made of virtually everyone else on the left (and also of the internal opposition within the SWP which was trying to get the organization to at least *attempt* to collaborate with others to oppose the war against the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran peoples). The SWP leaders preferred to stand aloof, basking in their "proletarian" purity.

## A Cool Response to the "Freeze"

This attitude was also revealed in the party's response to the Nuclear Freeze Campaign in 1982—which called on the United States and the Soviet Union to freeze their nuclear arsenals at existing levels. The challenge posed by this movement revealed another glaring weakness in the SWP leadership's approach to (admittedly imperfect) initiatives taken by other forces. It exposed their increasing abstentionism brought about by self-doubt and sectarian thinking, and revealed their inability to distinguish, in the case of the Freeze campaign, between the progressive aspirations of working people and the reactionary or reformist motivations of their bourgeois and petty-bourgeois misleaders.

The leaders of the SWP are able to see either one or the other side of such contradictions, but have proven completely incapable of grasping both

at the same time, and seeing their interrelationship. In 1982 they focused their attention on the Democratic Party politicians' attempt to use the nuclear weapons issue to their own advantage against both the Republicans and the Soviets. Though they saw that millions of people supported the Freeze out of a simple, and completely progressive, opposition to nuclear war and a deep desire for peace with the USSR, they did not know how to integrate this into a plan of action for a proletarian revolutionary current.

The SWP's approach to the Freeze movement was simply negative. In relation to the massive June 12, 1982, demonstration in New York, for example, or the campaign around the country to get referenda on the November ballot that year, the party counterposed its own "anti-imperialist" demands, including the demand for "unilateral disarmament" by the United States. This is not a bad idea, to be sure, but it is hardly the basis for organizing masses of working people in the U.S. at the present time.

The party also insisted on "defense of the workers' states" as the key issue to be raised in this context—counterposed to the "bilateralism" of the Freeze demand. This put the SWP in the unenviable position of being more "pro-Soviet" even than the U.S. Communist Party. The SWP failed to recognize that the movement against the nuclear arms race has an objective dynamic which works in the defense of the workers' states, even though it may not be explicitly stated on leaflets and banners, and may be the furthest thing from the minds of the campaign's organizers.

Had the SWP made constructive suggestions, in the context of the antipathy to nuclear weapons which the bourgeois leadership of the "Nuclear Freeze" campaign had tapped in the population as a whole—rather than simply denunciations of the movement's shortcomings—the party could have earned the respect of the activists who made June 12 a big success. "No more money for nuclear weapons and research!" "Fund public works and social programs to create jobs, not war!" "Dis-mantle all U.S. nuclear installations in other countries!" "End U.S.-backed aggression against the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean!"

These and similar demands for actions by the *U.S. government*—actions which would be objectively in the interests of the working class of the entire world and which would aid the "defense of the workers' states" very concretely—could have been presented to the movement and could have gotten a hearing from many, if not the majority of those working around the Freeze movement. Though they do not present the *entire* proletarian revolutionary program for the disarmament of the bourgeoisie, they are demands we can support wholeheartedly and point in the right direction. Raising them with "Nuclear Freeze" activists could have begun to reverse the party's decline in membership and political influence, and at the same time made the antiwar movement more effective in fighting the ruling-class's ability to make war.

## A Policy of Abstention

As we can see, then, instead of contending with the reformist forces for leadership in the antiwar movement, the SWP chose, for several years, to maintain its "purity" and criticize from the sidelines. And, of course, the reformist misleadership weakened the antiwar movement so seriously that when Reagan ordered the invasion of Grenada—the most brazen act of war carried out by the United States since it was forced out of Vietnam—the movement's response was pitiful. Reagan got away with it. Future generations will remember October 1983 as a particularly sad period in the history of American radicalism.

The SWP continued, in the abstract, to advocate mass action in response to Reagan's criminal invasion, but because of the isolation it had to a large degree created for itself, it could do so only from the sidelines. It contributed little to actually bringing about the mass actions which were objectively needed.

All of this was rationalized to party members on the basis of a unique theory. Party leaders explained over and over that it was impossible to build a genuine (a "proletarian") antiwar movement in the U.S. when U.S. troops were not yet actually fighting and dying in the Central America conflict. The party should bide its time. When the "body bags" started to come back from Central America, that would create the mass sentiment for action necessary for the proletarian current to take the leadership of the movement. Though this grotesque parody of Marxist theory was the subject of a self-criticism by the party leadership in 1985 (under the impact of the highly successful April 20, 1985 mobilization), it seriously disoriented the SWP for many years—and though the theory may have been corrected, the disorientation remains, as we shall see.

One other episode which occurred during this period is also worth mentioning here, since it illustrates the complete lack of any coherent, long-range strategic thinking on the part of the SWP leadership. In March 1982 a conference was held in Mexico which formed an organization called the World Front in Solidarity with the Peoples of El Salvador. SWP leaders attended the conference, and believed that they had established a privileged relationship with its organizers—one which would allow them to use the prestige of certain Salvadoran revolutionary organizations to project themselves as the leadership of the antiwar movement in the United States, even though they had done nothing to earn that status in this country. Party members were told in reports that a qualitative transformation of the objective situation had occurred. "Proletarian leaders" in Central America were "reaching out" across the border from Mexico to "proletarian leaders" in the United States, and this now provided the objective basis for building a "proletarian" antiwar movement.

The concrete initiative projected by members of SWP branches in local organizing efforts, and



by the *Militant* newspaper, was for a joint U.S.-Mexican demonstration, sponsored by the World Front, in San Diego and Tijuana on January 22, 1983. Not surprisingly, others in the U.S. antiwar movement failed to respond to the SWP's new-found "authority" and the demonstration turned out to be extremely modest. After that, nothing much was heard in the party about the World Front, or about participating constructively in an antiwar or anti-intervention movement.

Certainly the SWP did not create the crisis of leadership in the U.S. antiwar movement in the first half of the 1980s. But just as certainly it did nothing to help overcome that crisis, and for that reason contributed considerably to it. And it has shown little or no ability to learn from its experiences. Instead of encouraging a discussion in the party about how to overcome its growing isolation and its growing problems—not just on the antiwar front—the SWP leadership carried out a bureaucratic purge shortly after the Grenadian catastrophe, expelling nearly everyone who had expressed opposition to its disastrous policies.

### First Emergency National Conference

In the spring of 1984 United Food and Commercial Workers representative Jerry Gordon and several other people, mainly from the Cleveland area labor movement, began work on organizing an emergency conference to overcome the serious problems facing opponents of the U.S. government's Central America policies. Gordon was well known as a mass-action organizer during the Vietnam war, and he made it clear that a similar response was needed to the stepped-up war against Nicaragua and the aid being given by Washington to the Salvadoran government—as well as the U.S. overthrow of the New Jewel Movement in Grenada.

The SWP took a hands-off attitude toward the conference and did not encourage its members or supporters to go. The party was beginning its pre-convention discussion, and it was unclear to party members what they would actually do in relation to the Emergency National Conference, whose organizing work was well under way by July, when the SWP Political Committee published its political resolution.

That resolution had nothing to say about what revolutionists should do *at that moment* to stop Washington's war drive. It talked only about the future, repeating and codifying the "body bag" theory: "The introduction of U.S. ground troops in an attempt to halt these revolutionary advances is inevitable [this statement, remember, was made over two years ago—D.W.]. . . . The opening of this stage of the war will set uncontrolled forces in motion. . . .

"It will indeed become . . . another Vietnam War. What is more, as the dead and wounded U.S. soldiers are shipped home, the class conflicts inside the United States over this war will sharpen rapidly and become polarized and radicalized in a way never before seen here in this century."

No perspective for the SWP contending for leadership in the anti-intervention struggle was put forward. The political resolution presented an alternative as follows: "Basing the party in the industrial unions is essential to meet the political challenge posed by the need to draw the working class into a fight against the war U.S. imperialism is today waging.

". . . the initiative in organizing antiwar actions may be held for some time by pacifists, solidarity groups, and others with no orientation to the labor movement or the working class.

"In actively participating in all such initiatives that mobilize actions in the streets against the U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean, the revolutionary workers' party seeks to advance them along an axis of maximizing participation by the labor movement in the fight against U.S. intervention."

What this would mean concretely was still unclear to party members, who wanted very badly to be building mass actions against U.S. intervention. This was reflected in the overflow crowd which attended a workshop at the SWP convention on anti-intervention perspectives, led by Barry Sheppard. SWP members asked point-blank what the party's attitude was towards the "Jerry Gordon Conference." Sheppard replied that the party was not interested in building or participating in the conference, that it was a narrow, sectarian gathering organized by the "Jean Tussey family." (Jean Tussey, one of the party's veteran leaders, was expelled in the 1984 purge and was a founding member of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. The reference by Sheppard is to the fact that Jerry Gordon happens to be Tussey's son-in-law and F.I.T. members in Cleveland—Tussey among them—were actively involved in building the conference.)

Sheppard developed the logic of the "war is inevitable" thesis of the leadership's political resolution, explaining that until U.S. ground troops were committed to Central America it was not possible to build a mass anti-intervention movement. The alternative he put forward was organizing co-workers to participate in tours to Nicaragua.

Of course, no one disagreed then or disagrees now that U.S. invasion of Nicaragua (or El Salvador, if the Duarte government is near collapse) is a serious danger. Furthermore, no one has ever disagreed that the absence of large numbers of U.S. troops in the Central American conflicts has made the issue seem less urgent to the broad masses of North Americans. However, even if U.S. invasion were inevitable, the task of those who oppose it would be to start organizing *now*, to *try* to prevent it. If those efforts prove to be unsuccessful, the organizing work against the war will already be underway when the war begins, and the opposition will be that much stronger. In short, whether U.S. invasion actually takes place in the future, or if the U.S. government simply continues with its efforts to wear down the morale of the masses through aiding indigenous counterrevo-

lutionary forces, the tasks dictated to the revolutionary party in the U.S. are fundamentally the same. That seems elementary. But the SWP did not see it that way in August of 1984.

The Emergency National Conference was quite successful. In the course of organizing the event, local anti-intervention coalitions came into being in a number of cities. More than six hundred people participated, and they recommended that the broader anti-intervention movement call a national demonstration on April 20, 1985. Leslie Cagan, a representative of the Mobilization for Survival, urged the conference to wait for a meeting of representatives of different organizations which, she promised, would call a demonstration. The conference participants, however, were not in a waiting mood. They had come to Cleveland to act, and act they did. The group to which Cagan referred, which became the April Actions Coalition, was put on notice: either call and build a national demonstration in the spring of 1985 or run the risk of being bypassed.

The SWP sent a delegation to the Emergency National Conference of about twelve—nearly all from the Cleveland branch. In a report on the conference in the October 1984 issue of the *Bulletin IDOM*, we said, "Through most of the weekend the SWP delegation did not participate at all in the deliberations. On Sunday, however, when the conference turned its attention to organizational measures to carry out the agreed-upon actions, the SWP decided to intervene. One party spokeswoman complained that Grenada had not been sufficiently discussed and spoke in favor of the October 27 action scheduled for Brooklyn, N.Y. (The conference, in its action resolution, had already decided to support and build all such demonstrations.) Then two SWP members took the floor to denounce the nuclear freeze. (This had not been endorsed by the conference and had received little, if any, attention.)"

Following the conference the *Militant* published a report on it by Omari Musa. Musa had attended the conference, but his report was so far removed from what had actually happened that it prompted Jerry Gordon to write to the *Militant*: "Your article (October 12, 1984, issue) on the Emergency National Conference was a crude distortion from beginning to end. The article both in substance and tone was implacably hostile to the conference. . . ."

"The thrust of the *Militant's* article was to portray the Emergency National Conference as small, narrow and inconsequential. To make your theme appear credible, you took gross liberties with the truth.

"Instead of reporting the fact that the conference had over 150 labor sponsors and endorsers, you reduced the number to 'several' who 'initially endorsed' it. (Since the complete list of labor sponsors and endorsers was distributed in the registration kits, your figure cannot be attributed to journalistic sloppiness or ignorance.)

"Instead of reporting that 650 people registered for the conference—articles in both the

Akron *Beacon Journal* and *Guardian* written by reporters who attended the conference said there were over 600 people present—the *Militant* told its readers that only 'some 300' attended."

In spite of the SWP's sideline carping, agreement was reached within the movement to hold spring demonstrations in Washington and the West Coast. The deliberations of the ENC, the fact that so many determined activists had come together in Cleveland, played no small role in bringing that action about and uniting the anti-intervention movement, even if only for a time. This had an impact on the thinking of SWP leaders, as we have said, yet the results were not altogether salutary.

### To the Opposite Extreme

In January 1985 the SWP did a fast about-face and decided to support the April 20 demonstrations. That was a welcome development. In our March 1985 issue we wrote, "The SWP's decision will greatly strengthen the anti-intervention movement; it also will greatly strengthen the SWP itself, and if the decision is generalized and extended into other areas of work it can be the first step towards correcting the party's erroneous course of the past several years." SWP members began participating in the local coalitions which had been set up around the country to build the April 20 actions. Their participation contributed to the great success of April 20, a success which has, unfortunately, not been repeated by the movement.

During the period leading up to April 20 tensions developed between the national April Actions leadership and the local coalitions. The April Actions leaders complained that they were running out of money, that they would not be able to keep their office in Washington open. Some even proposed canceling the April 20 demonstrations altogether. All these arguments were a cover. The fundamental problem was their discomfort with mass action, which, in turn, was and is caused by their orientation to the Democratic Party.

Of course, this is nothing new. The debate between the pro-mass-action forces and the pro-Democratic Party forces in the antiwar movement goes back over twenty years, and it will continue for the foreseeable future. What was different in 1985 was the role played by the Socialist Workers Party, as opposed to its firm leadership in the 1960s and early '70s.

The threat to the April Actions Coalition by the anti-mass-action forces was thwarted before the April 20 demonstration by the representatives from local coalitions around the country. They had been set up to build an action, and they insisted on continuing to build that action. Activists who had participated in the Emergency National Conference played a significant role in these local coalitions, and kept them on track. The SWP, as well, was committed to building April 20 and helped make it a success, joining with those who

insisted on continuing to build the action at national steering committee meetings. But things changed after the demonstration.

The national April Actions Coalition Administrative Committee decided after the demonstration *not* to organize another demonstration for the fall of 1985. Spring of 1986 was set as the earliest possible date for the next action. It cited the same administrative problems that had been unsuccessfully used earlier as a motivation for canceling April 20.

However, after the demonstration the local coalitions became considerably less active—as is natural, since there was no action to build. As a consequence, the April Actions leadership did not face such strong resistance to their decision. In other years the SWP could have been relied upon to stand up to the pressure and fight for mass action, but not this time. At a June 19 meeting of the New York local coalition an SWP member moved that the coalition *concur* with the Administrative Committee proposal not to call fall demonstrations! Ten days later, at a meeting of the National Steering Committee of April Actions, a motion was put forward for local demonstrations on October 26, 1985. It failed, with members of the party casting their votes against it.

The only action taken by the steering committee was to endorse a scattering of fall actions which had already been called by other groups. None of these (with the exception of a demonstration called for San Francisco) were designed to be mass actions against U.S. intervention in Central America, nor could they have maintained the momentum of antiwar organizing built up in the period before April 20. The *Militant* ran a dishonest front-page headline, which read, "Antiwar Coalition Backs Fall Actions." In fact, the best April Actions could do was to *promise* to call actions in the spring of 1986, a promise which, as it turns out, it did not keep. The result: the one-and-a-half-year gap in nationally coordinated actions which the *Militant* decried in its editorial!

### Years of Errors and Overcorrections

Since 1981 the SWP has alternated between sectarian abstention from struggles against imperialist war and tail-ending other currents. It has made little or no attempt to *lead* people in effective action against Washington's war drive, even when the war drive has led to actual acts of war, such as the invasion of Grenada or the bombing of Libya. On a national scale the anti-intervention movement failed utterly to respond to the *contra* aid decision in Congress (although there were some good locally initiated protests, especially in Washington, D.C.). The SWP has done *nothing* to overcome the crisis of leadership. Of course, even had they done so it is possible that the end result would have been the same. Success is never assured in advance. But the refusal even to make an effort *does* guarantee failure. And even a los-

ing effort helps to consolidate those forces which are in favor of pursuing a mass-action strategy, and strengthen them for future battles.

It should be remembered that the Young Socialist Alliance and SWP were no larger nor more authoritative in the mid-1960s when Lyndon Johnson began his escalation of the Vietnam war than they are today. However, the YSA's and SWP's proletarian strategy against that war was decisive in making the antiwar movement successful, and the Vietnamese fighters are the first to acknowledge that the U.S. antiwar movement was one of the decisive elements in their victory. The YSA's and SWP's proletarian strategy at that time was equally decisive in their gaining the size and authority which they enjoyed through the mid-1970s.

The Emergency National Council, without the SWP's support and participation, has thus far been unable to fill the vacuum. It has had some success in convincing broader forces to build coalitions and take united action in the streets, but this has been limited. Though there is widespread sentiment for coalition and action among activists who oppose U.S. involvement in Central America, the ENC has in general not gotten past their leaders, who have argued that "this is not the time" to build coalitions, or that the most important demand which should be raised by U.S. working people today—against U.S. intervention—has to be diluted by making it only one subordinate part of a broader program including a host of other issues and slogans. The new coalition to build April 25 promises to be an important step forward, but without the clear and consistent presence of a proletarian political perspective urging the movement to remain united, remain focused on the right of the Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, and South African peoples to self-determination, present gains will always be threatened and transitory.

Meanwhile, the war is widening in Central America. U.S. citizens flying for the *contras* have been shot down and captured by the Nicaraguans (whether they were CIA or "private sector" is irrelevant to us—they were working for U.S. imperialism); Duarte's reign of terror against workers and peasants in El Salvador continues unabated, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service here is continuing its effort to deport those Salvadorans who have been lucky enough to find sanctuary in this country. There is work to be done!

This is not an abstract theoretical debate. The SWP has adopted a strategy which was discredited decades ago, a strategy which is allowing Washington to kill Central Americans without significant negative consequences at home. A change in SWP policy in the anti-intervention movement—a decision to *fight* for mass action, independent of the ruling-class politicians—would make a big difference. The main beneficiaries would be the people of El Salvador, Nicaragua, and the rest of Central America. ■

November 21, 1986

## FOURTH LABOR NOTES CONFERENCE HELD

by Melanie Benson

More than eight hundred trade unionists and political activists—looking for ways to revitalize the labor movement in this country—gathered in Detroit November 14-16 for the fourth Labor Notes Conference which was called around the theme, "New Directions for Labor." Participants in the panels and workshops had a wealth of knowledge and experience from which to draw, sharing information and ideas with brothers and sisters from seventy different unions, thirty states, and ten countries. As an opportunity for this kind of discussion the conference was an unqualified success. The level of enthusiasm was high, with a sense of militancy, determination, and solidarity. Three main panels took place over the three days. In addition there were 38 workshops, 19 special meetings, and four caucuses which provided an opportunity for in-depth discussion. Activists were able to find out more about current struggles in a number of industries, and to meet others with interests and problems similar to their own.

### International and P-9 Panels

The international panelists who spoke Friday evening were authoritative spokespersons for burgeoning union movements in their respective countries. Jose Geremias Rivas of the Social Security Workers Union of El Salvador was forced to flee his home after threats on his life in August 1985, under the so-called "democratic" government of Duarte. Octavia Lara of Mexico City described the fight by women garment workers to save their jobs and achieve union recognition after the catastrophic earthquake of September 1985. Alberto Eulalio, a director of the Metal Workers Union in Sao Paulo, Brazil, recounted the firings of workers striking against Ford—which used the military police to try to isolate the workers and break the strike—and the union's campaign to get the workers reinstated. Leto Villar, head of the Metro Manila KMU (May First Movement, the largest labor federation in the Philippines), appealed for solidarity from American unionists for the struggles of working people in that country.

Amon Msane, chief steward at the 3M plant near Johannesburg, South Africa, and chairman of the Johannesburg branch of the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (affiliated with COSATU, the new and powerful union federation), most clearly embodied the kind of international solidarity that is possible and indispensable today. To protest the threatened shutdown of a 3M plant in Freehold, New Jersey, Msane led a one-day strike in his own plant in

South Africa. Months later, after being detained and imprisoned upon his return from a speaking tour of the U.S., Msane was released as a result of a campaign organized on his behalf by unionists in the U.S., led by Stanley Fischer, president of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers local in Freehold.

Msane concluded his remarks by exclaiming: "Workers of the world, unite! Workers of the world, take power! Amandla (Power)!" To which the assembled audience responded thunderously, "Ngawethu (To the people)!"

No less enthusiastic was the response accorded to leaders of the long and hard-fought battle against the George A. Hormel Co. in Austin, Minnesota, during Sunday's panel on "Lessons of P-9." Speakers included Ed Allen of Corporate Campaign, Inc., Barb Collette of the Austin United Support Group, and Jim Guyette, democratically elected president of P-9 (presently displaced by a United Food and Commercial Workers International-appointed trustee). Long ovations acknowledged the proud example set by a militant and democratic local that has succeeded in winning support from around the world for its refusal to accept concessions, unsafe working conditions, and the undemocratic functioning and betrayals by its own international union.

Pete Winkels, former business agent of Local P-9, recounted his response to a friend's question about why they were fighting so hard to "get back into that place when you hate it so much." He explained, "The scabs went out on strike for themselves—and they went back to work for themselves. The people that went out on strike and stayed out on strike—they did it for their children. They did it for that poor slob who's going to be hired three years from now and has got to go into the kill and snatch [hog] guts."

### The Labor Notes Newsletter

This Labor Notes Conference was the largest held so far. Like its predecessors in 1981, 1982, and 1984, it was organized by the *Labor Notes* newsletter, a monthly publication for rank-and-file trade union activists. Begun in Detroit in 1979 the newsletter now has 6,000 subscribers, including several hundred in Canada and other countries.

An article in the November issue by Kim Moody of the *Labor Notes* staff, "intended to lay the basis for discussion at the conference," accurately outlined some fundamental elements of the kind of "social unionism" which is needed today. He

explained that: 1) the interests of worker and employer, labor and capital, are opposed to one another; 2) solidarity—among different races and between young and old, men and women—is an absolute necessity; 3) union democracy must be fought for and implemented; 4) a campaign is needed to organize the unorganized; 5) working people need strategic and tactical creativity; 6) our efforts must be imbued with an internationalist spirit; 7) the unions need a "social agenda that again makes housing, jobs, income, national health care, and education political priorities," and 8) labor must "take the lead in the creation of a new political party that represents all the working people, the farmers, the poor, and the oppressed."

Although many of these questions (in particular numbers 1 through 6) were taken up by individual speakers or at specific workshops and a good deal of education, discussion, and "networking" certainly took place at the conference, something still seemed to be lacking. Organized labor in the U.S. today suffers from a severe lack of any concrete program to reverse the backsliding from which we have suffered under our present misleadership. Militancy and solidarity—important as they are—will only take us so far.

No one could have legitimately demanded that this conference come up with a full and complete program for working people in this country, given the purely embryonic development of the class-struggle left-wing current in the U.S. labor movement. But the conference organizers might have made a conscious effort to provide a *forum* where different ideas, different alternative programs for labor—especially in the field of political action—could have been presented and thoroughly discussed.

One workshop did take place on Saturday afternoon which addressed the AFL-CIO's orientation to the Democratic Party, and this revealed fully the contradiction inherent in the way the conference was organized. The workshop was run by supporters of Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition. All three of the panelists urged that conference participants go back and begin working to get their unions behind the effort to elect Jackson president in 1988. During the discussion period, the chairperson cut off all comments critical of Jackson after two minutes, and then gave the panelists a chance to respond. The result was a thoroughly one-sided debate, which even included race-baiting against those who felt labor should begin to organize its own independent electoral activity as an alternative to working for Jackson's version of liberal Democratic Party politics.

Of course, this approach did not reflect that of the conference organizers. But the fact remains that instead of a real discussion and debate about political perspectives for labor, a forum was provided at the conference for a wing of the Democratic Party. The problems this created were compounded by the fact that conference organizers had made a decision to exclude left-wing political organizations from setting up tables or distributing their literature. Such a policy can be conceivably justified (whether one agrees or not in this particular case). But if political parties and organizations as such are to be excluded, that policy must be applied to all, including the Democratic Party.

The fact is, of course, that since the reformist ideology of transforming the Democratic Party is predominant in the labor movement—even among those who are moving toward more radical ideas in other areas—that ideology will generally find some kind of expression in any gathering like the Labor Notes Conference. The effort made by the conference's organizers to exclude left-wing organizations and skirt some of the essential political issues simply made it inevitable that the alternative position could not be posed in a serious way.

#### Keynote Address

The contradictory character of the conference was also revealed by the choice of keynote speaker for the banquet on Saturday night. Victor Reuther spent his time extolling the "democracy" and other virtues of the United Auto Workers during the years that he and his brother, Walter, were in its leadership. He berated the present administration of Owen Bieber for undermining the union. In all of this, however, Reuther ignored the elementary fact that Bieber learned everything he knows about trade unionism from the Reuther administration and is a product of the Reuther machine. Reuther also took some time to extol the virtues of the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and imply that the U.S. government ought to erect tariff barriers to protect jobs.

What the Labor Notes Conference articulated above all was the willingness of hundreds to make the necessary commitment to help educate, organize, and mobilize workers in the United States and around the world to claim the wealth, the power, and the dignity that is rightfully theirs. It also demonstrated the compelling need for a serious discussion within the labor movement of a program which can achieve these ends. ■

## WHERE LANCE COMPA GOES WRONG ON THE HORMEL STRIKE

by Richard Scully

Lance Compa is one of a growing number of labor journalists who address labor's deepening crisis from a left perspective. In his various writings and commentaries, Compa, an attorney and United Electrical Workers staff person, urges rank-and-file activism in unions, independent political action, and greater labor participation in progressive social struggles. An article he co-authored last year for the *Harvard Business Review* spells out these themes.

Recently Compa joined the debate taking place in the labor and radical movements on the Hormel strike. In a widely circulated paper entitled "A Second Look at the Hormel Strike," Compa comes down squarely on the side of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) International union in its dispute with Local P-9.

It is not the intention here to respond point-by-point to all the observations and judgments Compa makes in his paper. Anyone interested in making an in-depth study of P-9's struggle against Hormel is advised to read Jim Guyette's affidavit submitted in the case *Local P-9 vs. William H. Wynn*, and statements issued by the UFCW International union and its Packing House Department. These, together with Compa's paper and the writings of others, including Dave Riehle (see *BIDOM*, Nos. 30, 33, 34) and Kim Moody of *Labor Notes* will enable readers to draw their own conclusions about whether P-9's fight merits the all-out support of the labor movement.

But before turning to that central question, there are two preliminary issues raised by Compa that warrant attention, if only because he uses them as arguments to justify his ultimate conclusion that the UFCW International was right and P-9 was wrong on the crucial differences.

### Enterprise Unionism Vs. Industrial Unionism

Compa argues in support of "industrial unionism," which he describes as uniting workers as a class with the purpose of bargaining "to standardize wages and benefits as much as possible, taking labor costs out of competition so that employers cannot ratchet down contract conditions by pitting one local against another." Compa indicts P-9 for what he regards as their turn instead to "enterprise unionism," which he defines as being "where a single local works out the best deal possible from local plant management. Because the Austin plant is brand new, highly productive and highly profitable, say P-9 spokesmen, the company should

pay more to Austin workers than it is paying other Hormel workers in the older plants."

Compa thus portrays P-9 as having a go it alone, get what you can, the rest of the Hormel chain be damned position. This is a completely false notion. The P-9 struggle is above all an *anti-concessions, fightback struggle aimed to mobilize workers to act in unity*. It is the most significant and effective struggle of its kind since the employers unleashed their antilabor offensive in the mid-70s.

The major issue for Hormel's Austin workers was not money but *safety*. The Austin plant has an accident rate of two per worker per year. It is the most hazardous and most profitable plant in the country. The company refused to give relief on the safety question. In addition, they demanded the elimination of the one-year layoff notice and of job replacement by seniority. They wanted a two-tier wage system and a 30 percent reduction in pensions.

As for money, when P-9 entered negotiations with Hormel in 1985, the company was making \$38 million in annual profits. Compensation for Hormel's top boss, Richard Knowlton, had shot up from \$339,000 to \$570,000 per year, yet the workers were asked to ratify pay cuts previously imposed. They chose not to and to fight back instead. Does Compa think they were wrong? Because the other plants in the Hormel chain had agreed to concessions the year before, was that a compelling reason for P-9 to do so also? Is this what Compa means when he says local unions should sometimes "sacrifice for the good of the whole"?

Restoring the \$10.69 master rate at Austin would have provided *upward pressure* on Hormel and the other packers to raise rates for workers who had been forced to swallow concessions. Since the "me too" "most favored nation" clause in contracts has been so widely used to *lower wages and benefits*, isn't it about time that the clause be invoked for the purpose it was originally intended, that is, to allow workers to *catch up* to those who have successfully negotiated higher rates?

Nothing that P-9's leadership has said or done in any way justifies Compa's charge that their basic objective was to get higher pay for their members as compared with other Hormel workers. *To the contrary, P-9, since Guyette became president in 1984, has been a consistent voice against concessions anywhere in the meatpacking industry and especially at Hormel.*

## P-9 and the 1984 Hormel Negotiations

That leads to another of Compa's charges against P-9: that the local union broke ranks with the rest of the Hormel chain in the 1984 negotiations with the result that in their weakened situation the chain settled on a \$9.00 rate.

The basic facts in this matter are not really in dispute. P-9, under its previous leadership, negotiated a "new plant" contract with Hormel under which it was agreed that there would be no strikes by the local for three years after the new flagship plant built in Austin began operations. The International gave its seal of approval to this contract. The plant opened in 1982. When a wage reopener came due for the Hormel chain in September 1984, the Ottumwa local had been permitted to negotiate a separate, concessionary agreement in May of that year and P-9's contract was still in effect.

At a meeting of the chain in 1984, P-9 took a position against any local giving Hormel concessions. Lewie Anderson, head of the Packing House Department, was then urging concessions by packing house workers in the major chains as a way of "stabilizing" the rates, while lower paid workers in competitive companies could be brought up. In the course of discussion, Anderson asked Guyette if P-9 would participate in a chain-wide Hormel strike if one were called. Guyette said he could not give an on-the-spot answer but would have to go back to Austin and consult his membership. Guyette also explained the problem of the 1982 contract which, of course, Anderson was fully aware of. Local P-9 decided on an expedited arbitration procedure to ascertain whether they had a right to strike in 1984. The arbitrator ruled they did not and Guyette informed Anderson that the local could not strike. The other locals ended up taking concessions.

It was this sequence of events that Anderson and the UFCW International leadership have used again and again in an attempt to discredit P-9 as failing to give solidarity to the rest of the Hormel chain in 1984, while asking for the chain's solidarity in support of P-9's struggle in 1985. Compa considers the criticism fully justified.

But the basic question affecting the 1984 negotiations was not whether P-9 would engage in a strike in violation of its contract. *This was not a decision for P-9 to make alone. What was involved above all was the policy of the International union, which was coordinating the negotiations involving all the locals and the Hormel plants.*

Suppose the International had decided that the time had come to reverse the tide of concessions and to take a stand against the very profitable Hormel company. Suppose, further, that Lewie Anderson had gone to Austin to address a mass meeting of P-9 workers and had said, "This International union is going to give its unqualified support to Hormel workers to restore the rates you had and, in fact, to improve them. We know there

may be some legal problems because of your contract. But we urge you nonetheless to join your brothers and sisters on the picket lines, if that becomes necessary, in solidarity. And we pledge you here and now that we will stand fully behind you if any litigation is brought as a result." Was it not the responsibility of the International to convey such a message if indeed they wanted P-9 to be part of a 1984 strike? And is there any question that P-9's ranks would have responded enthusiastically so that there could have been a united struggle by Hormel workers against concessions at that point?

Of course, the International and Lewie Anderson had no intention whatever of doing battle with Hormel in 1984. When Anderson asked Guyette about P-9's joining a possible strike, it was not an invitation but a setup. It was "making the record" for use later on. The UFCW's International leadership, which has demonstrated meticulous concern for observing every legality and avoiding damage suits, was not about to incur possible liability itself or pressure P-9 to ignore its contract and commit itself to a strike which was excluded from the International's agenda in 1984. It is the height of hypocrisy for the UFCW top leaders now to place the onus on P-9 for *the International union leadership's failure* to take on Hormel at that time. At stake, among other things, was the ongoing fight to salvage the \$10.69 rate. But, as Compa himself notes, Lewie Anderson had given up that fight and was pressing for an accommodation with Hormel at a far lower figure: "By mid-1984 industry standards had dropped after individual locals began cutting plant-level deals to save jobs. To end what was becoming a panic, Anderson . . . sought to stabilize the standard in the mid-\$8.00 range." To be sure, Compa says the UFCW hoped to settle higher at Hormel's, which it did. *But the \$10.69 rate was given up at that time.*

## The Fundamental Issue

Compa's paper is in large part a lawyerly-like critique of P-9's conduct extending back well before its strike began in August 1985. The mistakes, wrong judgments, and bad tactical moves he attributes to P-9 make up a lengthy list.

Even the most fervent of P-9 supporters do not contend that P-9's struggle has been error-free. But the point is that that is no longer the point. The U.S. working class, after all, has been through the PATCO experience. When the air controllers' struggle was raging, the labor leadership was on the spot. Would they confront the Reagan administration and take decisive action to defend a national union that was being destroyed? No, instead they picked PATCO apart: PATCO supported Reagan's election; it did not properly consult the labor executives before taking strike action; the strike was ill-prepared; and, anyway, the strike was illegal. So PATCO went down with hardly a murmur. Now that crushing defeat haunts the organized labor movement. "Why didn't all the

unions get together and shut down the country to save PATCO?" Many rank-and-file workers still want to know. (And they are asking similar questions regarding the USX strikes and others.)

So P-9's alleged mistakes can hardly be the acid test for denying them solidarity once their showdown battle with the Hormel bosses erupted. It no longer mattered whether the corporate campaign was properly conceived; whether the slogan "100% victory or 100% defeat" was appropriate; whether P-9 should have gone to arbitration when it did, etc.—matters to which Compa allots an inordinate amount of space and attention.

In the total scheme of things, all such concerns are beside the point. Compa recognizes the need to deal with this. He writes, "The ultimate argument of P-9 supporters, and really the most compelling one, goes like this: Screw all this high-falutin' theory and strategy and second-guessing and armchair quarterbacking. Whatever mistakes they made, P-9 members are locked in struggle with the boss, and that's what unions should be about. They're *doing* something to fight concessions, not just making statements. It's the duty of every genuine unionist to support them, and anybody who doesn't, or who at least doesn't keep quiet if they disagree, is betraying those workers and objectively siding with the company."

But Compa cannot bring himself to support the P-9 workers. Instead he closes ranks with the UFCW top leadership—supported by Lane Kirkland and the labor brass—whose aim from the beginning was to *contain, limit, and control* the struggle of those rebellious workers.

Compa poses the issue in the dispute as being: "What is the best way for workers to confront a big, multi-plant company like Hormel—in solidarity as a group, requiring some sacrifice of local goals for the good of the whole, or in a single local, flagship plant shootout with the company?" Another classic example of how by asking the wrong question you can guarantee ending up with the wrong answer!

The issue in P-9's struggle is entirely different from the way Compa has framed it. Rather, he should have asked: In a period of antilabor attacks, where unions have suffered numerous defeats and given substantial concessions to employers, when a local union, *having received strike sanction from its international union*, takes strike action rather than give concessions, and when that local union takes its fight to workers throughout the country and receives their almost unprecedented support and solidarity—does not the international union have an obligation and responsibility to do everything possible to win that strike?

Compa does not answer that question. Of course, if he contends that the International was justified in aborting the strike because, as UFCW president William Wynn claims, it was a "suicide mission," then was it correct for the International to have given strike sanction in the first place? If so, where does that leave the criticism of P-9 for "going it alone"? If not, where is the

criticism of the International leadership for *their* wrong tactical moves?

The fact is that strike sanction *was* given. A strike was called and was in progress when the International union stepped in and ended it. The membership never voted to end the strike.

A strike is a war. There should never be any turning back once it begins unless the workers on the front lines say so. It's *their* jobs that are at stake and they are the ones who must have the ultimate say.

Of course, it is a legitimate function of the International, when called upon, to insure that the local union complies with majority rule and democratic procedure to determine whether a strike is to continue. But the UFCW International had no justification to intervene in Local P-9's affairs on that account. P-9 has distinguished itself at every turn by having its members decide every question of consequence on the basis of free, democratic discussion and vote.

Lewie Anderson's argument that the strike was a lost cause from the inception, which Compa agrees with, cannot go unchallenged either.

Here was a strike that became a *crusade* against giving concessions to profit-hungry employers. As P-9 workers fanned out across the country to tell their story, they reached hundreds of unions and tens of thousands of workers. P-9 mailings went to virtually the entire U.S. labor movement. Word of what was happening in Austin reverberated throughout the country and was widely publicized by the media. Financial contributions by unions poured in, a measure of their understanding of the importance of this struggle. Local unions on occasion defied their internationals in providing support. *P-9 was proving to be the badly needed spark that could ignite large sections of the U.S. working class to stiffen their resistance to their employers' demands for concessions and to mount militant class struggles across the board.* And solidarity was being extended to P-9 from unions in other parts of the world.

And there was more to P-9's fight. The workers involved underwent a radical transformation. They reached out not only to other sections of the working class but to other sectors of the population engaged in progressive struggles. They spoke out against apartheid, against oppression of Native Americans, against U.S. intervention in Central America, against racism and sexism. These are the things progressive unionists think the U.S. labor movement should be doing. They are the things P-9 has been doing.

Now suppose that the UFCW International union had thrown its very substantial resources into the struggle. Suppose it had sanctioned roving picket lines (under UFCW contracts, other Hormel workers can respect sanctioned picket lines) and effectively shut down Hormel. Suppose the International had mobilized mass support at the plant gates and in the streets, where P-9 mounted one demonstration after another. Suppose the UFCW had called for the entire U.S. labor movement and its allies



to support a boycott of Hormel products. (These are the kinds of things the labor movement must do if it's going to stop losing and start winning.) If these things had been done, is there any reason to doubt that the fight could have been won? Or that a victory at Austin could have had the most profound and positive repercussions insofar as other Hormel workers, other packing house workers, and the working class generally were concerned?

Compa never faults the International leaders for their failure to actively support the strike. (He praises them for giving strike benefits, which the workers were entitled to under the UFCW constitution and to which they had contributed as members of the union!) He is impressed with what he regards as the accuracy of the leadership's prediction that the strike would be a loser. But that was a self-fulfilling prophecy. And it rendered the UFCW leaders practically mute when Democratic governor Perpich sent in the National Guard to escort scabs into the Austin plant. A real working class leader, which Compa feels Anderson to be, would have rushed to the scene and raised holy hell at that critical juncture of the fight, regardless of other differences. But Anderson was nowhere to be seen.

Compa does pay tribute to the P-9 workers and their leaders for their personal heroism and their militant, active strike effort. But he underestimates the consciousness that motivates their

struggle and its impact in inspiring other workers to do battle.

In speaking about the UFCW International, Compa writes, "But what if leadership is corrupt, or afraid, or just plain wrong? These problems are common in the labor movement. But it is up to workers in an industry to correct them through the procedures and structures of their union. *They cannot be corrected by a single local declaring itself a vanguard.*" [Emphasis added.]

He forgets that all great social movements in the history of the working class have arisen from below. In 1934, a single local union in Minnesota did prove itself a vanguard for the U.S. labor movement. As a labor historian, Compa is of course familiar with the experience of Teamsters Local 574 which, incidentally, was forced again and again to act in defiance of its conservative international leadership in order to organize the unorganized and win contract gains.

Fifty years later, in the tradition of Local 574, a courageous body of workers, also in Minnesota, organized under the banner of Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, has written a new chapter in the effort of workers to make their unions instruments of struggle, instruments which the workers, themselves, control. Whatever the ultimate outcome of their fight, P-9 has pointed the way forward for the even bigger class battles that are sure to come. ■



What's wrong with this picture?

# NOTEBOOKS FOR THE GRANDCHILDREN

by Mikhail Baitalsky

## 2. Our Jacobin Monastery

The best part of our Komsomol life we spent in the club. Whether in the country or in a district or provincial town, we gathered in the club every evening. There was nothing particularly attractive about our club, no concerts or films or nice-looking furniture. Most often, there were rows of crudely sanded benches. A stage made of planks was elevated a little above the floor. The curtains, sewn from various pieces of old cloth, were rarely lowered.

It seemed simply unnatural not to go to the club in the evening. It was our home and our school. Our songs were repeated every evening; everyone sang together. The conversations were not distinguished by variety. But what attracted us there, to this hall furnished with shaky benches where no portraits hung? In those years, one rarely saw Lenin's portrait, even in the newspapers.

The Komsomol club of the 1920s cannot be compared with anything else. It was not a place where measures had to be taken to lure jaded youth. We weren't jaded; we came from cultural deserts. Our needs were clear, straightforward, serious to the highest degree: politics, and only politics. Our club was something like that club in the Jacobin monastery in Paris from which the Jacobins got their name.<sup>1</sup>

Like all youth, we loved company; but there was something motivating us that was stronger than the usual inclination to have a good time together. Of all our feelings, the most ardent was the one which burns best not in the individual and not in pairs and not in a handful but in the human multitude. The proletarian revolutionary spirit is always a mass feeling.

The club formed our spirits. It was a cauldron in which our spirits stewed; so they said one had to be cooked thoroughly in the working class (or Komsomol) cauldron.

What brought us together? Club activities? Naive variety shows? It was purity of motives. We knew one another through and through. Everyone coming here came with a pure intention, the intention to give one's life if need be to defend communism. The question of life and death was not just words. It was fruitless to look for a quiet life or the chance to settle down here. For us it was a

school of communist egalitarianism. Each one of us was prepared to go hungry and risk our lives without caring about ourselves and without complaining.

Those who showed off or complained were called rotten intellectuals. "Rotten intellectual" was one of the most insulting labels. Only "self-seeker" was worse. A rotten intellectual can still be made into a human being, but a self-seeker had to be thrown out. Self-seekers are incorrigible.

Disdain for concern over oneself and scorn for people able to settle down formed, I think, the basis for the phenomenon that was so common then: demonstrative indifference toward outward appearance, toward clothes, surroundings. We did not like those who were too concerned about themselves.

Here is a model of our kind of person: That person lived as simply as we did. He was best at everything. He also best exemplified communist egalitarianism.

That person could, but didn't desire to, receive for himself personally more than every other comrade. The word "comrade" meant to be more closely related than to a brother.

"You are looking at me as if I am a woman and not a comrade," an offended woman Komsomol member would say. And in order not to look like women they cut their hair short and wore soldiers' pants, boots, and field shirts.

This is how Maryusa Yelko dressed for a long time after returning from the Polish front. (I have changed some names—like, for example, Maryusina's. Even though someone is dead, my frankness may cause some apprehension among her relatives.) She was fondly called "Maryusa in pants." The Odessa Komsomol loved her.

I am not the person to write the history of the Odessa Komsomol, which was born in 1917, and went through two periods of underground activity, a history which still—even now—has not been recounted. Having arrived from a remote district when all the fronts had been defeated, I knew about the Komsomol's past only by hearsay. But I was fortunate enough to become friends with a number of those who had founded it.

Few of my friends survived. Their bones are heaped in pits hidden from the people; and the pits were deliberately trampled down to be level with the frozen hillocks of the tundra. Maryusa and her husband, Rafael—lanky, long-nosed, imperturbable Rafa—perished, and were slandered and covered over with bloody dirt. Rafael was his underground name; his real name was Mikhail Gran. But for us he will always be Rafa.

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*This is the second installment in the memoirs of former Ukrainian Left Opposition supporter Mikhail Baitalsky. The first installment and an introduction to the series appeared in Bulletin IDOM No. 36, December 1986. Translation is by Marilyn Vogt-Downey.*

Our friendship began in Odessa, in the Moldavian region of the Komsomol where he was a secretary; Maryusa was head political educator, and I was an instructor. Rafael, like Maryusa, had only recently arrived from the front. A ragged green English overcoat hung loosely from his thin shoulders.

His eyes were a little crossed and different colors: one was brown and the other sort of green. We teased him that one eye was looking for the good ship "Diamond" and the other for her launch. He was not in the least bit offended. A more good-natured and gentle person than Rafa, it seemed, could not be found.

The provincial committee and the Komsomol dormitory were housed in a large, five-story building on the corner of Karl Marx and Zhukovsky Streets. Four of us lived in one room: Maryusa, Rafa, Kostya Grebenkin, and I. The central heating system, like the streetcars and many other things, was not working. A temporary iron stove saved us, a stove of roofing iron with the chimney a pipe that went out the window. As many windows as there were in the building, there were that many chimneys giving off smoke into the narrow, deep courtyard—a real urban ventilation shaft. The fuel was bourgeois couches and chairs; there was nothing else. We had mercy on one sofa and made it a wedding gift to Rafa and Maryusa. Kostya and I slept in a Spartan manner, on wooden trestle frames without mattresses. We had overcoats, didn't we? That was enough.

But the room with this stove was only our camp; our life was the regional committee and club in Moldavanka, 16 Prokhorovsky Street. The regional committee proper occupied one room, smoky and cramped. We started in the mornings to prepare the materials for the evening circles, classes, and stage productions. A prominent figure in our work was the club commandant; he was the main and only carpenter, electrician, artist, assistant manager, and typist—redhaired, efficient, sleepless Averbukh. Every day he received for us a ration of bread and gave us all a piece. We weren't to have another portion until tomorrow.

Mama came several times from Chernovo. In the villages, bread was still being baked. Mama brought a round loaf she had baked herself. Although I felt awkward that my mother was a petty-bourgeois element, we took the loaf as was our duty and cut it four ways. Mama stood by the door while we finished off the bread. Afterward, I walked with her. In response to her remarks, which usually had to do with the filthy state of our room, either I was silent or I said something unintelligible.

The winter of 1921-22 was severe. Along the Volga there was famine. People were dying in the streets of Odessa itself. For many days on end on the way to the regional committee, we passed by a doorway where an old Jewish woman sat, wrapped in rags. She was all swollen. Swaying and muffling her hands, she kept repeating from morning until night only two words:

"I'm hungry! I'm hungry! I'm hungry!"

One frosty morning, we saw she was dead.

At the Komsomol club on Prokhorovsky Street, boys and girls with sunken eyes in darkened faces studied in literary circles and classes for the rudiments of political knowledge. They nibbled at the granite of science and called for world revolution. The words "world revolution" we said as often as children say "mama" and just as easily, without pious religiosity.

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In any article you read, you do not see simply the name Lenin, but it has to be accompanied with his initials or with his first and middle name. But on his mausoleum there are neither initials nor first and middle name. Lenin is Lenin.

There is no need to say that we did not add to Lenin's name any sort of epithets or adjectives. All these endless "greats" and "beloveds" came into use during Stalin's time. Divine, priestly glorifications with a purely religious-school unctuousness were addressed above all to Stalin. I was not accustomed to this religious-school style and never could get used to it.

An intolerance toward sanctimoniousness and hypocrisy was particularly notable in Maryusa. Combined with a refined sarcasm it made her dangerous to the self-serving charlatan. Deeply sincere, Maryusa was not ingenuous, but she loved ingenuous people.

Maryusa and Rafael devised a satirical oral newspaper called "A Dig." Kids from Peresyp came to Moldavanka to hear it. Our wit was not particularly good, but it was pleasant, for lack of anything better.

In the mornings, dipping bread in a mug of barley coffee, the three of us composed the satirical pieces for "A Dig." It was passed around to everyone, from the secretary of the provincial committee to the girls in the party cells at the tobacco plant. In the evenings, to friendly general laughter, we read our oral newspaper to overflow crowds in the hall. It turned out that "A Dig" itself made Maryusa replace her pants for a skirt. But the name "Maryusa in pants" stuck with her for a long time.

She was far from beautiful, but she was an adornment to our district. She was able to get along better with the boys than with the girls, although the girls openly reached out to her; and maybe this is what provoked in her a tinge of condescension toward them. But she felt more at home with the lads; she was in her element. A very pure friendship bound me with her and Rafael. We were often called the inseparable troika, the holy troika, the Moldavian troika. However, when I fell in love with my future wife, not Rafael but Maryusa became my confidante. It wasn't that Rafael was too hard for this sort of thing, nothing of the kind; but it was a little bit as though he were not of this world. I did not always discuss personal matters with him.

That is not to say that we talked only of world revolution; no, we went about our simple

matters. They constantly kept us busy, as writers or scholars are constantly busy with their thoughts. When we were not doing our work, we were busy with them. It could happen that, in the middle of a conversation about something altogether unrelated, you suddenly stop: "Listen, Rafa, you know what I just thought of?" And we would begin to discuss how to conduct that evening's activity at the club. Maryusa was a person of rare inventiveness. But Rafa and I also tried not to look too bad.

In my time, Komsomol members would have been insulted if you had said: Do a better job and you'll get paid more. But not because they were showing off their enthusiasm but because the conscience of the proletariat, the creator of all things, did not allow them to work half-heartedly, no matter how little they were paid.

And if you are a communist, you are also guided by another no less important consideration: you are before the eyes of the people. In Lenin's time, there existed a party maximum pay. In no dictionary, in no novel will you find this phrase—"partmaximum." Is it possible that "partmaximum" was such a minor institution that one can disregard it? Why, in that case, so zealously expunge from history such a minor thing?

"Partmaximum" means this: For one and the same post, a member of the party and a non-party specialist are to receive the same pay; but a communist has the right to keep only such a sum as shall not exceed a certain figure established by the Central Committee. By the end of the 1920s, the "partmaximum" for Moscow was 250 rubles, the average salary of a skilled worker.

The Paris Commune insisted that state workers should be paid the same as ordinary workers. Lenin wrote in the draft of alterations in the party program in 1917: "Pay to all functionaries, without exception, is to be determined at a rate not exceeding the average pay of a skilled worker." In our country they like to recall how Lenin reprimanded Bonch-Bruyevich for giving himself an unauthorized raise in salary as chairman of the Council of People's Commissars.<sup>2</sup> But what had angered Lenin? That the principle of equal pay had been violated. People calling themselves Leninists are obliged to understand the full importance of this question.

Nothing can strengthen the confidence of the

popular masses in the ruling party—whose members fill a large portion of the most important posts in the state apparatus—so much as this Leninist party's self-restraint. The "partmaximum" began to be gradually rescinded in 1929, and by 1932 they had totally abolished it and tried to erase such a word from the memory of communists. Yes, and instead the principle of self-restraint for leading worker-communists was gradually replaced by the principle of privileges.

Lenin proposed to combine enthusiasm with the material interest of the worker but by no means to combine the enthusiasm of the highest party figures with their own material well-being.

In the resolutions of the Twelfth Congress there is a point: "The Congress fully confirms the resolution of the August 1922 All-Russian Party Conference, directed toward reducing the material inequality within the party, which is fraught with particularly great dangers under the conditions of NEP<sup>3</sup> (prohibition of participation in profits, obligatory deductions from high salaries to go to party funds for mutual assistance, etc.)." In this resolution was expressed, among other things, the view of the party at the time about material interest: it was understood as participation in the profits of an enterprise and not as payment for a large quantity of products or as a prize for fulfilling a plan. And it was precisely this personal material interest of a communist that the Twelfth Party Congress rejected, demanding material equality of party members. Party members were not expected to be motivated by material incentives but by ideological ones.

It is true that yet another, stronger incentive can move a person: lust for power and intoxication with it. We have seen numerous and terrible examples of where intoxication with power can lead when that power is unlimited. I don't want to say that everyone aspiring to power is driven by a lust for power rather than by concern for the fate of the people. Taking power in 1917, the Bolsheviks were guided by the conviction that this was the only way to save Russia from counterrevolution, and that Russia would open the way for the world proletarian revolution. What distinguishes Lenin in 1918 from Stalin in 1942 is not only their inner content but also the content of their epochs.

### 3. Were We Cultured?

The success of "The Dig" in Moldavian district prompted the emergence of oral newspapers both in Peresyp and in the Privokzal district. Soon the district committee of the Komsomol resolved to begin publishing a youth newspaper. They called it *Molodaya Gvardia* (*The Young Guard*). Rafael was named editor. Rafa always applied himself totally to work he undertook. The young editor had hardly turned twenty. No textbooks on journalism had yet been written for him to use. The weekly *Molodaya Gvardia* subsequently became a daily. Several young journalists who got their

start on our editorial staff moved to Moscow when *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (*Young Communist League Truth*) began publication. When it began to come out, we closed our newspaper down. Rafael by that time already worked for the Komsomol Central Committee, heading up the press department. But his former way of life changed little. A cheap coat hung loosely on his shoulders, sharply reminiscent of the previous green overcoat.

In Kharkov and in Moscow, leading Komsomol worker that he was, Rafa did not soon get an apartment and took shelter with comrades. He was a little

embarrassed by his own indifference to day-to-day matters and sometimes attempted to prove that he was also a regular fellow: he played the balalaika, and was able to drink a whole glass of wine.

But Maryusa remained for a long time in Odesa, meeting with Rafa only when he came home on holiday, and she was not surprised that he was living with friends. This was Rafa. What was there to be surprised about!

Our faces had long since lost the sallow hues of the famine years. We became families with children. My wife stopped viewing silk stockings as the sign of a petty bourgeois. But I never saw Maryusa wearing silk. She remained short-haired forever. I could not imagine her with a hair-do. I did, however, learn from Maryusa's sister that when Maryusa was young she had beautiful light brown braids.

As a fifteen-year-old girl, even before the revolution, in 1916, she joined an underground alliance of socialist youth. She then studied in the secondary school, which she soon completed with a gold medal. Maryusa's father, a dockworker, never dreamed of sending his daughter to secondary school, accessible only to children of merchants, government bureaucrats, and factory owners. But Maryusa performed so brilliantly in primary school that a charitable organization undertook to pay three-fourths of her tuition in a private secondary school (there were private and public secondary schools; the public schools did not accept the daughters of workers). The other fourth of the tuition, 100 rubles a year, her father paid. He loved his eldest daughter in a kind of unusual way. Perhaps that is why she grew up to be so self-willed. At home she had total command; I saw this myself, even when her sisters were grown up.

Inside the family, Maryusa acted very selfishly; there is no denying it. She had less sympathy for her mother than did her younger sisters; and she caused her brother not a little grief. But I remember the spirit that prevailed then among us. We all suffered a certain weakening of family ties. It seems to me very likely that the situation itself forced us not to feel for the mothers who would be left alone when a son or daughter got killed in the Savran forest. And you, who are ready to condemn us for this, don't you ever distress your mother? And what is your excuse?

We all knew Maryusa's character—impetuous, easily carried away, but obstinate and unyielding. However, Rafa was good-natured and rather flexible. Naturally, in family matters, Maryusa was the boss. What of it? Why should Rafa hide the fact that he did not even aspire to dominate her?

And there came a time when her impetuosity, independence, and firmness proved to be such important qualities that they decided the fate of both of them. Trees die standing.

. . . If someone were to ask me what was Maryusa's main feature, besides her character,

which does not say everything about a person, I would answer: it was a consciousness of community with the collective, which she considered herself to be a part of. Her democratic spirit, her disdain for those who dig themselves in, her ability to keep from becoming isolated from the milieu of her comrades—all this originated from her persistent awareness of her community with all of them.

Had this trait characterized her alone, Maryusa would have stood out. But it characterized all of us.

At that time, we considered one of the worst sins of a leadership to be isolation from the masses. It was feared worse than death. For that, without hesitation, you were expelled from the party during a purge. If, for example, a secretary of a provincial committee missed a meeting of the cell where he was a rank-and-file member, he would begin to lose touch, and some Komsomol member would go up onto the club stage and severely tell him so to his face.

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There is nothing easier than to dismiss Maryusa with her egalitarian ideas, with her lack of refinement, with all those things that now seem primitive and deliberately awkward. But she was not primitive at all. The times demanded that we ruthlessly eliminate those feelings that could weaken the spirit of a soldier of the revolution. The times demanded straightforwardness and abruptness. The times hastened us along, forcing us to discard what was not absolutely necessary (even though it might be very important), just as a soldier on a campaign keeps only the vital necessities: a gun, an overcoat, a flask of water, and a little food. Thus we ended up in black and white, lacking many colors, almost without half-tones. But these colors were the colors of the epoch. We were not imitating the epoch, but making it. And it, in turn, formed us.

Maryusa, like all of us, scornfully hurled the words "rotten intellectual." But within her lived the spirit of genuine culture. We then only vaguely understood what was automatically shifting the conduct of the government workers in the first years of the revolution toward the very essence of culture. Now this "primitive" artifact has been forgotten and something new has appeared: official culture.

The moral ideals of all the generations of the Russian revolutionary-intelligentsia, its non-conformism and its conscientiousness—this we acquired, although in many ways we may have poured ourselves a drop too much. Our active hatred of hypocrisy and lies, of shouts from the top and silence from below was no good to Stalin. The fact that almost all of my friends from my youth were destroyed by him is far from accidental. ■

[Next month: "Criteria of Human Behavior"]

(Notes appear on page 36)

# THE LIBERATING INFLUENCE OF THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM (Part 4)

by George Breitman

## 2. The Labor Party Question

I can't repeat the ground covered yesterday, but I'll give a brief chronology.

**1928**—Our movement begins when Cannon, Shachtman and Abern are expelled for "Trotskyism" from the American CP.

**1929**—The Communist League of America holds its founding convention and adopts its platform.

**1931**—The CLA holds its second convention.

**1933**—The International Left Opposition, to which the CLA is affiliated, makes the most important shift in its history, giving up its efforts to reform the Comintern and calling for a new International. In this country the CLA ceases to consider itself a faction of the CP and sets out to build a revolutionary Marxist party. This means the beginning of a turn away from almost pure propagandism directed to the CP toward intervention in the class struggle with the aim of linking up with leftward-moving tendencies to construct the cadres of the revolutionary party.

**1934**—The CLA merges with the AWP headed by Muste to form the Workers Party of the U.S.

**Spring of 1936**—We dissolve the WPUS and join the SP and YPSL in order to win over to the Fourth International young revolutionaries recently attracted by those organizations.

**Summer of 1937**—We are expelled from the SP and YPSL, with our forces considerably increased, and begin a discussion in preparation for the founding convention of a new party.

**New Years 1938**—The SWP is founded at a convention in Chicago that adopts a declaration of principles and other basic documents to guide the new organization.

**End of March 1938**—Cannon, Shachtman, Dunne, and Karsner go to Mexico to meet with Trotsky to discuss plans for the founding conference of the Fourth International to be held later that year.

Trotsky introduces to them the idea of the Transitional Program, to be written as the basic program of the FI founding conference. They discuss this and related problems for an entire week, and then agree that they will go back to the United States to ask the SWP to approve it and act as its sponsor at the international conference, even

though it will require changing certain positions previously adopted by the SWP. One of these is the SWP's position on the Ludlow amendment to the U.S. Constitution for a referendum on war, which I discussed yesterday.

The other is the SWP's position on the labor party, which I shall discuss today. Before doing that, however, I would like to carry the narrative further as regards the disposition of the Transitional Program as a whole, aside from the labor party question.

Cannon and Shachtman got back to New York in time for a Political Committee meeting in mid-April, nine days before a plenum of the National Committee. The Political Committee adopted an agenda for recommendation to the plenum, which was to be changed a week later on the eve of the plenum; they changed the rules for attendance—previously it was to be open to all members, now it was to be closed except for NC members and a few invited guests; and they received reports from the delegates, the minutes reporting only, "Comrades Cannon and Shachtman give full reports on their journey."

There is no record of the Political Committee deciding to recommend anything regarding these reports; it only designated Cannon, Shachtman and Dunne reporters to the plenum, but did not take a position on anything, which is not how it is usually done. We can assume that the Political Committee wanted time to think over the Transitional Program and related proposals.

In referring to this plenum yesterday I called it stormy and chaotic, and I don't think that is an exaggeration, although the minutes contain only motions and a few statements made specifically for the record. In the first place, the plenum was extended from three days to four, an unusual thing; and even so a considerable part of the agenda was not acted on, and at the end had to be referred to the Political Committee.

The first point on the agenda was a report by Cannon on the matters discussed in Mexico, supplemented by brief remarks on factory committees by Shachtman. The second point was questions from the National Committee members, answered by Cannon, Shachtman and Dunne. The third point was a five-hour recess to study documents (the first draft of the Transitional Program had arrived shortly before the plenum), including stenograms of the talks with Trotsky (those that dealt with the Transitional Program have just been published for the first time in the second edition of the Transitional Program book).

Then the political discussion began on transitional demands and related questions. But when the political

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*The concluding section of this talk on the labor party will be published in our next issue. It is one of a series of three talks by Breitman at an SWP educational conference in 1974.*

discussion ran out, instead of a vote being taken, voting was deferred to the third day of the plenum; in fact before the vote was taken, time was consumed with local reports on the branches, labor party sentiment, the antiwar movement, the CP, etc. The members of the plenum were plainly not in a hurry to vote on the key proposals. But the clearest sign of uncertainty or confusion was the nature of the motions presented and finally voted on.

A motion was made by Maurice Spector, supported by Cannon and Abern, that the SWP approve the Transitional Program, and a motion was made by Shachtman, supported by Burnham, that the SWP approve the Transitional Program, and the debate over these motions became one of the two focal points of the plenum, leading to rollcall votes duly recorded in the minutes and a division that was 60-40. Of course the motions were not exactly the same. But I had to reread them several times before I detected a possible nuance, and three of the twenty-eight who voted—Goldman, Clarke and Cochran—voted for both motions, with a statement they considered them essentially the same.

The possible nuance was this. Spector's motion "endorses and adopts" the thesis written by Trotsky, while Shachtman's "endorses the general line of the thesis . . . and adopts it as a draft of an analysis." But this thin line is made thinner yet by the fact that a second part of Spector's motion "subscribes in principle to the conception of the program of transitional demands proposed" in the thesis. So one endorses and accepts while subscribing in principle and the other endorses the general line and adopts it as a draft of an analysis. The vote was seventeen for Spector's motion, eleven for Shachtman's.

The same thing happened with the second part of these motions, directing the Political Committee to prepare a program of action based on the Transitional Program and the conditions and needs of the American working class struggle. To me, the two motions seem the same, but they led to a 13-12 vote in favor of Spector's. There was agreement only on the third part of the motion, that the program to be prepared by the Political Committee be submitted to the membership for discussion and referendum.

When such a thing happens, when a National Committee is divided 13-12 over motions it is hard to distinguish between, then it is safe to conclude that the situation is not normal, or, to put it another way, that it contains the potential of a crisis. In my interpretation there were two elements involved. One was what may be called personal. Cannon had been convinced by Trotsky and he wanted the SWP leadership to endorse the Transitional Program without equivocation or pussyfooting. Others, including Shachtman, probably still had some reservations, hence wanted to affirm only "the general line." They resented being pushed or pressured, they wanted more time to try to square the new line with what they had said in the past, and they reacted against the motions supported by Cannon as a way of expressing their dislike of him as a "handraiser" for Trotsky, as someone who unthinkingly went along with whatever Trotsky proposed, in contrast to themselves as independent thinkers.

This was closely connected with something that had happened the previous year, 1937, when we were still in

the SP. Trotsky was the first, in a confidential letter to the leadership, to conclude that the SP experience was coming to an end and that we should prepare to be expelled and set up our own party. Cannon, agreeing, quickly sent a letter from California, endorsing Trotsky's perspective. Shachtman and Burnham, who were in the New York leadership, almost flipped out when they got this letter, because they had settled themselves in for an extended, an indefinitely extended, stay in the SP, and they were bitter about Cannon "the handraiser" even after they were compelled to agree with his proposal.

The difference between them was that Cannon was a more astute politician, saw things faster, and did not feel there was anything shameful about endorsing a good idea just because Trotsky had made it; while they, being perhaps less self-confident, had greater psychological difficulty in reaching a decision.

But the other element, a purely political one, played the main role in producing the strange situation of a fight over two similar motions. That was the one I referred to in some detail yesterday. Namely, that the SWP leadership was being asked to sharply change positions on important questions like the labor party which they had held for several years and which they had reaffirmed just a few months before at the founding convention of the SWP; and that the reasoning Trotsky used in the Transitional Program seemed in some ways new to them, so new that at first they were jolted by it.

Supporting this part of my interpretation are the facts about what happened after the plenum. A Political Committee subcommittee was set up to draft a national program of action based on the Transitional Program, which was to consist of two parts, one on transitional demands, the other on the labor party question. In June Spector and Burnham brought in separate drafts on the Transitional Program, but as they worked on them, the realization grew that really there were not any significant differences, and what emerged was a joint document. There were differences over various passages, but these were settled by majority vote (except Workers Government or Workers and Farmers Government) and in the end the comrades who had voted against each other at the plenum all accepted the final draft, which was submitted to the membership for the referendum.

So the leadership should be credited with the good sense to reach agreement, once they had a little more time to assimilate the Transitional Program. They should also be credited with avoiding a factional situation, which was unwarranted and would have done great damage, since there was no political basis for it. Their united presentation of the document did a lot to win the support of the party ranks for both Trotsky's Transitional Program draft and the American adaptation of it. A full-scale discussion took place in the ranks, and in the referendum that followed over 90 percent of those voting endorsed the international resolution, and about 95 percent endorsed the American program of action (I'll report on the labor party vote later).

I do not mean to imply that everybody in the party, leadership or ranks, absorbed the full meaning of the transitional method all at once or quickly. Late in the fall two members of the Political Committee were still trying to

get us to replace the slogan of the sliding scale of wages with a "rising scale of wages." There were also some strange things said during the discussion.

One that I remember now with some amusement is a debate that was never settled, echoes of which I still encountered in the fifties among certain kinds of comrades. That was over the question of whether transitional demands can be realized under capitalism, the implication often being that transitional demands were good or acceptable only if or when they could not be realized under capitalism and could not be supported if they could be realized under capitalism, the further implication being that supporting demands that could be realized under capitalism would lead us into some kind of horrendous trap and made rank opportunists of us all. It sounds more amusing now than it did then.

Anyhow, my point is that we did not grasp the meaning or master the use of the transitional method all at once—it took time, in my own case it was a matter of years, not months. But we did grasp it in part relatively quickly, which testifies to the maturity of both the leadership and the membership, and to the fact that our past had prepared us for this leap forward, for in practice we had been learning basic elements of the transitional approach before 1938, but without ever having generalized it or concretized it or theorized it or worked out the relations between the different parts as Trotsky did for us in 1938.

Now let me get back to the labor party question.

Lenin waged a fight in the early years of the Comintern against those sectarian elements who refused to work in or give critical support to the candidates of existing labor parties, and this fight was so successful that hardly any communist thereafter held such a position. The question that concerned our movement in the '30s was not whether to work in a labor party created by other forces, but whether it was permissible for revolutionaries to advocate the formation of a labor party. In a few moments I will trace the history of our movement on this question, but I will start by referring to my own experience, which began in 1935, when I first joined.

In 1935 the CIO and the new industrial unions were just being born; soon they were to turn their attention to politics, openly capitalist politics as in their support of Roosevelt in 1936, but also hybrid politics, as in the formation of Labor's Non-Partisan League nationally and the American Labor party in New York, which had the potential of taking an independent labor party direction. 1935 was also the year when the Stalinists dropped their third-period policies, including opposition to labor parties as social-fascist formations, and began to call for the formation of a national labor party. Labor party resolutions began that year to be discussed in various unions and other mass movements, and often were adopted at union conventions, although that was about as far as it went.

What I learned as a new member was that it was impermissible for us to advocate the formation of a labor party. We could advocate independent labor political action in general, because that encompassed the idea of revolutionary workers' politics, but we could not advocate formation of an independent labor party because a labor

party, necessarily reformist, would inevitably betray the workers. I remember that in 1936 when I was writing a pamphlet to be published by the unemployed movement in New Jersey, I felt it necessary, in reporting action taken by this movement, to try to distinguish between its endorsement of independent political action (which we favored) and its endorsement of a farmer-labor party (which we didn't).

In 1936 we joined the SP and YPSL, and our labor party position immediately became, and remained, the clearest point of distinction between our faction, called the Appeal Association or caucus, and the centrist faction, called the Clarity caucus. They advocated a labor party, for reasons that sometimes sounded radical and other times sounded opportunist, and we opposed advocacy. In the year and a half we spent in the SP and YPSL there must have been thousands of individual discussions and debates around the labor party, no one ever joining our faction without coming to accept our anti-advocacy position. In fact, it was often the crucial point for the revolutionary-minded youth in the SP and YPSL, dominating their decision on whether to join the Appeal or Clarity caucuses.

At our founding convention there was no debate on the labor party question. Instead, there was agreement, you could say unanimity, with the statement in the Declaration of Principles that the revolutionary party cannot "properly take the initiative in advocating the formation of Labor or Farmer-Labor Parties," and with the statement in the main political resolution, "Faced with the prospect of the formation of a national Labor party of one kind or another, the [SWP] has no need of altering the fundamental revolutionary Marxian position on the Labor Party question. The revolutionary party cannot take the responsibility for forming or advocating the formation of a reformist, class-collaborationist party, that is, of a petty-bourgeois workers' party."

But having settled accounts with the SP and having turned our eyes to the union movement, it began to be clear to the leaders of the new party that considerable pro-labor sentiment was developing in this country and that the party had better pay attention to it. Burnham took the lead in this respect in the Political Committee, but Cannon also was starting to concern himself with it. Burnham then wrote an article called "The Labor Party: 1938," reviewing the recent developments and urging an active orientation toward them. Even he, however, felt it incumbent to tip his hat to the convention formula: "The revolutionists are not the originators or initiators of any labor or any other kind of reformist party; they not merely give no guarantees or false hopes for such a party but, on the contrary, warn against the illusion that such a party can solve any major problem of the working class. The central task of the period ahead remains the building of the revolutionary party itself."

In the Political Committee Burnham explained the strategy behind his article: he said that "there is now a labor party movement, and that we have to find ways and means of working in it." With this approach the question of advocating a labor party could be skipped over; a movement already existed, so we didn't have to advocate it, all we had to do was get in. He asked the Political Committee to endorse his article and recommend its



approach to the plenum coming in April. The Political Committee decided merely to refer the whole matter to the plenum, and that is how things stood at the time of the talks in Mexico.

Trotsky also wanted us to work in the labor party movement, but he didn't see any need to be devious about it. Instead, as you can tell from the Transitional Program book, he argued that we should change our position and begin to advocate the formation of a labor party, and he sought to convince the SWPers that they should do the same.

In the discussion, at the beginning, Cannon said he thought the prevailing sentiment of the party was "to join the LNPL and become aggressive fighters for the constitution of a labor party as against the policy of endorsing capitalist candidates; if we can do that without compromising our principles, that would be best in the sense of gaining influence." Shachtman too was concerned about possible compromising of our principles. More than once he reminded Trotsky that we cannot advocate a reformist party and yet he (Trotsky) was advocating something that seemed just that.

Trotsky replied that he was not advocating a reformist labor party. He was trying to find a pedagogical approach to the workers. "We say [to the workers], you cannot impose your [political] will through a reformist party but only through a revolutionary party. The Stalinists and liberals wish to make of this movement a reformist party but we have our program, we make of this a revolutionary—" Here Cannon interrupted: "How can you explain a revolutionary labor party? We say: The SWP is the only revolutionary party, has the only revolutionary program. How then can you explain to the workers that also the labor party is a revolutionary party?"

Trotsky: "I will not say that the labor party is a revolutionary party, but that we will do everything to make it possible. At every meeting I will say: I am a representative of the SWP. I consider it the only revolutionary party. But I am not a sectarian. You are trying now to build a big workers' party. I will help you but I propose that you consider a program for this party. I make such and such propositions. I begin with this. Under these conditions it would be a big step forward. Why not say openly what is? Without any camouflage, without any diplomacy."

Cannon: "Up till now the question has always been put abstractly. The question of the program has never been outlined as you outlined it. The Lovestoneites have always been for a labor party; but they have no program, it's combinations from the top. It seems to me that if we have a program and always point to it. . . ."

Shachtman was still not convinced: "Now with the imminence of the outbreak of the war, the labor party can become a trap." He was very much on guard against traps and illusions. "And I still can't understand how the labor party can be different from a reformist, purely parliamentary party."

Trotsky: "You put the question too abstractly; naturally it can crystallize into a reformist party, and one that will exclude us. But we must be part of the movement . . . we always point to our program. And we propose our program of transitional demands."

It is obvious from reading the stenograms that the SWP leaders were hung up by some of their previous formulas on the labor party question. Trotsky tried to bring new light on the matter, and the way in which he did this, in line with the Transitional Program as a whole, appeared to them to represent something new: "The question of the program has never been outlined as you outlined it," Cannon said. The problem seemed solved, the only thing that remained was how to explain the change. If the new position was correct, how about the old position? Had the old position been correct in the past but had become invalid as the result of new and different conditions? Or had it always been wrong? If so, what was the source of the error?

The voting on the labor party at the April plenum was very much like the voting on the Transitional Program, except that this time there was a third position, presented by Glen Trimble of California, whose motion would simply reaffirm the position taken at the founding convention, that is, would continue to oppose advocacy. Trimble's motion was defeated seventeen to four. The two major positions were expressed in motions by Cannon and Burnham.

Cannon's was very short: "That we adopt the draft statement distributed to the members as the position of the Plenum; and instruct the Political Committee to take this as a basis, concretize it and elaborate it, and submit it to the Party for discussion culminating in a referendum vote." The draft statement he referred to was one written by Trotsky, which now appears in the second edition of the Transitional Program book under the title "The Problem of the Labor Party."

The motion by Burnham was longer and more detailed, generally along the lines of his recent magazine article, but at no point in real contradiction with the line of Cannon's motion. The vote was closer this time, twelve for Cannon's, ten for Burnham's, two abstentions (weeks later one of the abstentions was changed to a vote for Cannon).

When the time came to draw up the document authorized in the Cannon motion, almost the same thing happened as with the Transitional Program. That is, virtually everyone who had voted for either the Cannon or Burnham motions realized there were no real differences among them on the labor party, and they all voted for a common NC majority resolution and jointly defended it in the referendum discussion against an NC minority resolution introduced by Hal Draper.

But the results in the discussion and the voting were not the same as with the Transitional Program. Despite the virtual unanimity of the leadership, a large part of the SWP membership (and of the youth) was and remained against the change of position. The new position received only 60 percent in the referendum, as against 90 percent for the Transitional Program and 95 percent for the American adaptation.

Here I must differ with a statement George Novack made in his introduction to the Transitional Program book. He notes that the labor party question is not included in the Transitional Program, and says, "This is for good reason. This problem is peculiar to our country, which is the most politically backward of all the advanced

capitalist countries," the only one where the workers don't have some party of their own. But obviously this was not true of all countries in 1938 and it is not true today. There are many countries in the world, especially colonial, semicolonial and neocolonialist countries, where the workers don't have a party of their own class, and where the general labor party approach could be appropriate. And although the Soviet Union was the only workers state in the world, that didn't stop Trotsky from writing a lot in the Transitional Program about the problems that were "peculiar" to that country.

But Comrade Novack was correct in saying there was good reason for the labor party not being included in the Transitional Program. And the reason was that the leaders were aware of the opposition of many members to the new labor party position and were afraid that if the questions weren't separated, so that they could be voted on separately, this might endanger adoption of the Transitional Program first of all in this country, and secondly, indirectly in the rest of the International. This was good and sound reasoning in my opinion. In my own case I could not have voted for the Transitional Program at that time if it had included a provision in favor of labor party advocacy. At least 40 percent of the party would have been in a dilemma if they had had to vote on the two matters in a single package.

Today, when there isn't anybody in our movement that disagrees on the pro-advocacy position, it may be difficult to appreciate the heat that accompanied that discussion in 1938. The source of the difficulty was that for several years before 1938 we, the members, had been taught that it was unprincipled to advocate the formation of any party but the revolutionary party. And the difficulty was compounded because the leadership, instead of forthrightly stating this was a mistake which now must be corrected

denied that it had been considered a principled question or tried to sweep it aside as irrelevant. This way of handling the change, which is not typical of Bolshevism or of our movement before or since, complicated the whole situation, distracting the discussion away from the essence of the problem into side issues, and made it more difficult for the members to resolve the question correctly.

"The question of the labor party has never been a question of 'principle' for revolutionary Marxists." That is the opening sentence of Trotsky's draft statement, printed in the back of the Transitional Program book, which was incorporated with a few changes into the National Committee majority resolution in the referendum. In my opinion that sentence was wrong. It *had* been a question of principle, and when I say that, I am not concerned with whether it had been formally labeled a principle, but with how the party membership had been educated to view the question.

In the National Committee draft, that sentence was changed from "The question of the labor party has never been a question of 'principle' for revolutionary Marxists" to "The question of the attitude toward an existing labor party has never been a question of principle for revolutionary Marxists." In my opinion, the changed sentence was correct, as it stands, but in the context it was an evasion of the problem that was troubling and confusing many party members.

I have decided not to try to prove what I have said here—that before 1938 we treated labor party advocacy as a principled question, even if we didn't label it that way. I'll merely repeat what Cannon said in Mexico, that our party would become aggressive fighters for a labor party "if we can do that without compromising our principled position." I'll assume that is sufficient until somebody challenges my statement. ■

## THE TRENTON SIEGE BY THE ARMY OF UNOCCUPATION

by George Breitman

Introduction by Frank Lovell

F.I.T., P. O. Box 1947  
New York, N.Y. 10009

**\$1.75**

"The Trenton Siege by the Army of Unoccupation" relates (and records) a dramatic moment in the struggles of the unemployed for their meager relief handouts during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Those were grim days and millions of unemployed workers led grim and desperate lives. But among the organized unemployed many were capable of humor and they experienced moments of triumph, as can be learned from the funny things that happened in Trenton fifty years ago.

## MATHEMATICS AND DIALECTICS

*Mathematics and the Search for Knowledge*, by Morris Kline. Oxford University Press, New York, 1985. \$19.95 hardcover, \$9.95 paperback.

The remarkable thing about this fine and very readable book is the author's failure to mention Hegel or dialectics once in the entire text. Many great thinkers—philosophers, logicians, mathematicians—are mentioned. Kant, Locke, even Goethe are written about and quoted (though Fichte, Schilling, and other lesser known inheritors of Immanuel Kant's [1724-1804] "German school" of philosophy are also left out). Professor Kline, who is a professor emeritus at New York University, bases much of his book on the Kantian writings, but apparently never heard of Kant's most famous student—Hegel.

Too bad! His job of writing would have been easier if he had. *Mathematics and the Search for Knowledge* traces the history of mathematics—including many ideas which have changed our world and its thinking—since the Greeks established mathematics as the quantitative language of science around 600-500 B.C. As such the book is a good example of the dialectic in actual, living, growing human existence, even if Kline is unaware of that fact.

Some may find such a statement implausible, on the grounds that mathematics is a static set of rules and abstractions, a closed system: deductive and, therefore, contradictory to the process of synthesis explored by Hegel and Marx. Professor Kline himself defines mathematics as a set of axioms and rules to allow for deductive reasoning. But his entire book demonstrates that the history of mathematics is not at all the same as this methodological approach to mathematics, and therein lies its beauty and value for Marxists. Even a resistant method of formalized abstractions reveals a living dialectic in its life and history.

### Unfolding Dialectic

Though Professor Kline may fail to mention dialectics, dialectics is far from absent in his subject, the history of mathematics. His book, in discussing the development of mathematical science, describes precisely the same sort of process addressed by Engels when he wrote: "Each stage is necessary, therefore justified for the time and conditions to which it owes its origin. But in the newer and higher conditions which gradually develop in its own womb, each loses its validity and justification. It must give way to a higher form which will also in its turn decay and perish" (Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, pp. 11-12, quoted in

George Novack's *An Introduction to the Logic of Marxism*, p. 96).

There are two essential concepts here. First that ideas change to fit changing scientific necessities but secondly, and just as important, that new scientific necessities arise because of the continually increasing correspondence of scientific theory to the real world. Furthermore, this knowledge is comprehensible to the human mind—to human understanding. It is "real," not mystical, not dependent on the recognition or non-recognition of modern day agnosticism. This is true of mathematics just as much as it is of other sciences.

Though math seems to be a step or two further removed than other disciplines from an actual material reality, its validity is, in fact, just as strongly dependent on that reality. Albert Einstein was addressing this truth—though he inverted the actual relationship between nature and mathematics—when he explained, "Our experience hitherto justifies us in believing that nature is the realization of the simplest conceivable mathematical ideas."

When Copernicus and Galileo were born, the earth was the center of the universe, and the stars and planets and the sun revolved around it. The motions of these bodies could be reasonably well measured and predicted, but not well enough to keep a calendar over many years. The idea that the earth was the center of the universe was important not only to the church, but also to commerce and to society as a whole. Yet it was increasingly in contradiction to further developing scientific knowledge about the universe.

Copernicus and Galileo helped reverse then prevailing scientific notions. They put the sun at the center—at least of our solar system—and they produced the mathematics to prove their theories. Church leaders all condemned them, from Martin Luther and Calvin to the Inquisition. But, as Copernicus replied, "The Bible may tell you how to go to heaven, but it doesn't tell you how heaven goes." Even this most powerful social institution, the church, was unable to impose its will on the objective reality of astronomical science, or on the mathematics necessary for its advancement.

Later study showed that the math of Copernicus and Galileo also didn't work well enough. The planets didn't move in perfect circles. Once again mathematics itself provided a new answer: the ellipse. On the basis of this improved understanding—this improved correspondence of mathematical science with reality—Johannes Kepler devised a new calendar, and later provided an explanation for the eccentric behavior of the planets in their

orbits. Within Professor Kline's account of ever more precise definitions and mathematical concepts we can see the working out of each succeeding stage based on the contradictions inherent in the preceding one.

### Philosophy and Revolution

The early Greeks created their religion and called it absolute. Then, seeing the need to deal with reality, they created mathematics. This they also called absolute, but soon tensions arose between these two absolutes. This contradiction between a thesis and its antithesis begat a synthesis, which the Greeks called philosophy.

Philosophy, in turn, begat many offspring, and reading about some of them in Professor Kline's book is most enlightening. It is not a history which records a direct, straight, forward march, but more like what Kepler said about the moon's orbit: "A stumbling, weaving walk of a drunken man." In other words, life, reality, the dialectic—not in correspondence with the requirements of strict formal logic.

I found George Novack's *An Introduction to the Logic of Marxism* to be indispensable as companion reading for Kline's book. Both works use much the same source material, drawing on many of the same writers and thinkers. But Novack's survey of academia's poverty of ideas explains many things that Kline's book can't—at least not without distancing himself from that community which nurtures him and of which he is a component part. Despite my enjoyment of *Mathematics and the*

To order George Novack's *An Introduction to the Logic of Marxism*, write: *Pathfinder Press*, 410 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10014.

*Search for Knowledge*, I found myself infuriated at the self-centeredness, the spinelessness of those petty-bourgeois intellectuals who occupy honored places in the academic world. They hold up elementary commonplaces, stillborn half-truths, equivocations, and redundant definitions as wisdom—and call themselves philosophers.

A fantasy occurred to me about the likely response to news of a fictional uprising by the masses against this philosophical claptrap: "Professor, the people are rebelling because they find they cannot eat existentialism." The professor's response? "Then let them eat logical positivism."

"In fighting against the mad chaos of capitalism for a socialist system free from class exploitation, and oppression, wars, crises, imperialist enslavement and barbarism, we Marxists are the most reasonable individuals alive." That is what George Novack wrote on page 16 of *An Introduction to the Logic of Marxism*. He is right. Practicing that sort of reasonableness is our business as Marxists. Reading Professor Kline's book in combination with Novack's helps a good deal toward a better understanding of that business. And I also found it to be a good way of combining business with pleasure. ■

Reviewed by Jack Bresee

## LEON TROTSKY FOR TEENAGERS

*Leon Trotsky*, by Hedda Garza. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 112 pages, \$15.95.

Those looking for an appropriate gift to give bright young readers may want to consider this new biography of Leon Trotsky written by Hedda Garza. This short book is not a product to satisfy perfectionists. It lacks the poetic vision of Victor Serge, the insight and eloquence of Isaac Deutscher, the fussiness over detail of Jean Van Heijenoort, the theoretical concentration of Ernest Mandel, the uncompromising attention to accuracy and historical balance of George Breitman. But it is a very attractive, lavishly illustrated introduction to the life of a great revolutionary which, for someone aged 12 and up, can be a stimulating beginning.

In straightforward prose, Garza provides a clear and sympathetic sketch of Trotsky's life. We are given a picture of an idealistic, brilliant, and dedicated revolutionary in the anti-tsarist underground of the Marxist and working class movements in Russia; an outstanding orator and theorist during the 1905 revolution; a central organizer

of the world's first socialist revolution in 1917; with V.I. Lenin the foremost leader of the young Soviet Republic; the organizer of the Red Army and of the Bolshevik victory during the civil war; the leading opponent of the revolution's degeneration; an exiled revolutionary who remained true to his convictions. Garza gives considerable attention to some of Trotsky's personal relations—his parents, his marriages, etc.—offering a somewhat critical-minded portrait of a human being rather than of a statue or demi-god.

She conveys, too, a sense of the ideas which animated him: a commitment to socialism and the liberation of the workers and the oppressed; the concept of permanent revolution and an uncompromising revolutionary internationalism; a counterposing of working class democracy to the rising bureaucratic dictatorship of Joseph Stalin; the belief in the need for a working class united front to defeat fascism and Nazism; an analysis of the USSR which defended the revolution's positive conquests while calling for revolutionary action to overcome its bureaucratic degeneration; the eventual belief in the need for a Fourth Interna-

tional to coordinate the efforts of revolutionary socialists throughout the world.

One might disagree with some of Garza's judgments. She gives very critical attention, for example, to the shooting of the tsar's family, while tending to slide over the much more devastating and tragic destruction of the civil war and "war communism" period, when expediency seemed to dictate ruthless and authoritarian policies. The reader is not left with a clear idea of how and why a privileged bureaucratic stratum was able to usurp power. On the other hand, unlike many commentators, Garza is unambiguous in her insistence that Stalinism constituted a break from—not a logical extension of—the ideas, policies, and goals of Lenin.

Some factual errors have also crept in, including attributing one of Trotsky's comments about Stalin's bloody purge trials (1936-38) to his autobiography, *My Life* (1930). Another example: the account of Trotsky's relations with the great Mexican artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera

(particularly the severing of those relations) is inconsistent with facts presented in Jean Van Heijenoort's *With Trotsky in Exile*. Other inaccuracies and questionable interpretations can also be found, including in some of the captions for which the publisher and editors, rather than the author, are responsible.

Nonetheless this is unquestionably the best book of its kind for young readers, in part because it was written by a veteran socialist activist—someone who obviously cares about her subject and who has a "feel" for it gained not from academic study but as a fighter for social justice.

This book is part of an extensive series, entitled "World Leaders Past and Present," published particularly for high school libraries. It isn't generally available at bookstores although individual copies can be ordered from Chelsea House Educational Communications, 5014 West Chester Pike, Edgemont, Pa. 19028. ■

Reviewed by Paul Le Blanc

## BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS FROM THE F.I.T.

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Committee, FI 75¢

Oops!!

Regarding Tom Barrett's essay, "The Importance of a Revolutionary Electoral Alternative" (*Bulletin IDOM*, December 1986), I wish to state that I am not now, nor have I ever been, Rich Finkel.

David Finkel  
Detroit, Michigan

*Quite right, our apologies to David.*

### Election Campaigns

This is to agree with the thrust of Tom Barrett's article, "The Importance of a Revolutionary Electoral Alternative" (December 1986), and to make a couple of suggestions consistent with that thrust.

You are correct to argue in favor of a vote for Socialist Workers Party candidates in the elections. The program those candidates put forward has been essentially the same as any revolutionary candidate would raise today. It's a mistake to pass up an opportunity to vote against the capitalist parties; a vote for the SWP is such an opportunity.

You are also right to argue for the supporters of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International to form a single party. (One can agree with you even if one doesn't consider the USFI the only organization that carries on the revolutionary Marxist legacy.)

But let's take the two main ideas in your article a little further.

You state that supporting candidates of reformist working class parties (the Stalinists or Social Democrats) "wasn't really a viable option." Even though these currents support Democratic Party candidates today, won't it help to explain their incorrect policy if revolutionists back *any* working class candidacy independent of the capitalist parties, including candidates who call for a vote for capitalist slates in other races? It's hard to see any excuse for abstaining in a contest in which a working class party, however reformist, is pitted against the imperialist parties. If the Communist Party is running, the only reason not to vote CP would seem to be if a revolutionist is running also.

Furthermore, the class-struggle electoral program of the SWP candidates is also the essential program of a number of other groups that call themselves Trotskyist. If these groups are sometimes sectarian or wrong on an issue, they're not more sectarian toward the F.I.T., for example, than the SWP is; and many of these groups accept the theory of permanent revolution and try to apply it, unlike the SWP.

Some of these groups are meeting in San Francisco in December and have invited the F.I.T. to participate. You would have something to contribute to such a discussion. You might benefit from it yourselves, as others of us former SWPers have.

Your polemics have been valuable, even when it's impossible to agree with you. But you limit who you're talking to. While you try to reunite with or rebuild the SWP that once existed as a Marxist organization, it might be worth your while to open up a debate with some of the forces that weren't part of the SWP when it collapsed after 1980 or so.

David Keil  
Needham, Massachusetts

### Keep Up the Good Work

Find enclosed a cheque for \$24.00 to renew our subscription for the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* for one year—this to commence when the current subscription expires.

Keep up the good work; your magazine is an inspiration to us all, and we are sure that with your clear and principled positions, you will soon be making big gains for the Trotskyist movement in the United States of America.

Marian and Pat Brain  
Birmingham, England

### Another Testimonial

Your excellent work is very much appreciated. I find your publication the most valuable one available from the Trotskyist movement.

Darrel Furlotte  
Toronto, Ontario

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(Continued from page 27)

### NOTES

1. The Jacobins were the radical wing of the bourgeois forces during the French revolution of 1789. Their name derived from the early meeting place of their club, the monastery of the Jacobins (the Parisian name of the Dominicans).
2. Vladimir Dimitryevich Bonch-Bruyevich (1873-1955). Joined the anti-tsarist revolutionary movement in the 1880s; collaborated with Lenin, specializing in the publication of Bolshevik literature in exile abroad from 1896 to 1905. After the October

Revolution, he became secretary of the Council of People's Commissars. Later, under Stalin, he became director of the Museum of History of Religion and Atheism.

3. The NEP (New Economic Policy), adopted in 1921, allowed a limited growth of free trade in the Soviet Union. It stimulated the growth of a class of wealthy peasants and of a commercial bourgeoisie, and produced a series of political and economic concessions to private farming and trade.

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