

Information, Education, Discussion

BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism

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Who We Are

The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is published monthly (except for a combined July-August issue) 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.

BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism, No. 43, July/August 1987

Closing date June 5, 1987

Send correspondence and subscriptions to **BULLETIN IDOM, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009**

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INTRODUCTION TO BULLETIN IDOM NUMBER 43

This issue of the *Bulletin IDOM* is a special one. In addition to being our regular combined July/August issue, it is designed to focus on a number of key problems facing working people in the U.S. which will be the subject for classes and discussions at the educational weekend planned by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency for September 4-6 (see back cover for details). As reported in our previous issue, the conference will hear reports and panels on: "Developments in the Capitalist Economy," "The American Class Struggle Today," "Problems of Labor Activism," "The Revolutionary International," "The Dialectics of the Transitional Program," and "Building the Revolutionary Party in the U.S." (Of course, we also have articles in this issue on other aspects of the class struggle not directly related to the points on the conference agenda.)

We hope that beginning a thinking process among our readers about the questions which will be coming up at the educational weekend will enable us to have a fuller and richer discussion there. We want as many individuals as possible to be able to participate fruitfully.

By their very nature, the issues which are to be addressed by the conference sessions do not have discrete boundaries. They overlap and interact. So readers will find that many of the articles printed here are relevant to two or three of

the items on the conference agenda. Steve Bloom's article on "deindustrialization," for example, addresses the problems of the U.S. economy today, but it also relates to the questions of the transitional program, labor activism, and the U.S. class struggle. Bill Onasch and Dave Riehle address issues of labor activism and the U.S. class struggle, while also raising important programmatic questions, as does Evelyn Sell in her contribution on the subject of "comparable worth."

Party-building, both in the U.S. and internationally, are two other closely related conference themes. Material on them will be found in the chapter from Paul Le Blanc's yet-to-be published book on Leninism, "Lenin and Democratic Centralism," in the statement of the Mexican PRT on the recent fusion of left-wing forces in that country, and in our feature, "From the Arsenal of Marxism" this month, where we reprint in full George Breitman's essay, "The Rocky Road to the Fourth International, 1933-38."

We believe that all of these articles present food for thought for both F.I.T. members and others who will be coming to the educational weekend—as well as for those who are unable to attend the conference. Out of our conference we hope to generate more useful material which we can continue to share with readers of the *Bulletin IDOM*. ■

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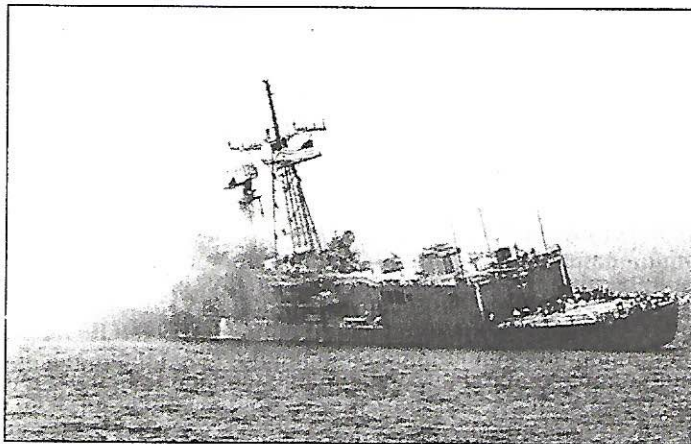
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WHAT WAS THE STARK DOING IN THE PERSIAN GULF?

We will repeat the question: *What was the Stark doing in the Persian Gulf?* The answer: *Defending the right of the U.S. imperialist ruling class to stick its guns into everybody else's business.* That is the meaning of Ronald Reagan's platitudes about "defending U.S. strategic interests" in that part of the world. He is *not* talking about any interests shared by U.S. working people, and he is certainly not talking about any interests shared by the peoples of Iran or Iraq, or of any other country in the Middle East.



lessly endangered the lives of soldiers and sailors sent abroad—for the sole purpose of compelling other countries (either by intimidation or by direct intervention) to abide by U.S. dictates. This, and only this, is what "defending U.S. strategic interests" refers to in the double-speak jargon of the White House and the Pentagon.

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, some of the families of those killed on the Stark have also begun to pose the question of why President Reagan ordered the ship to sail into the Persian Gulf. Reagan, in fact, felt obliged to defend his policies in the speech he made during the memorial service held at the Stark's home base in Florida on May 22.

It's time that we put an end to tragedies like the one which occurred on the Stark. It's time to withdraw *all* U.S. military personnel stationed in other countries or patrolling waters away from this country's coasts. These military installations are maintained in other countries only because the intention of the U.S. ruling class is to *use* them in other countries—as it has done repeatedly from Korea to Grenada.

Working people must not be fooled by the rhetoric of government officials, nor blinded by the legitimate grief we feel at the tragedy of these sailors and their families. We must focus on the root cause of the 37 needless deaths—the aggressive imperialist policies of our government—and insist that this cause be eliminated once and for all. ■

Of course, no representative of the major media or the government of this country has asked this key question. As far as they are concerned, the defense of U.S. imperialist interests in the Middle East and around the world requires no explanation. And they certainly don't want to begin asking questions which might start working people thinking the wrong kinds of thoughts.

But *working people themselves* should pose this question as loudly as possible. The fact remains that if the Stark hadn't been in the gulf, the 37 sailors killed in the attack by the Iraqi jet would be alive today.

These sailors were as much the victims of U.S. aggressive international policies as if Ronald Reagan had actually pulled the trigger and sent the Exocet missile toward the ship. Placing U.S. sailors in the Persian Gulf, where such an incident was possible, is just one more in a long list of U.S. government policies which have wreck-



THE POLITICAL CRISIS IN SOUTH AFRICA After the Whites-Only Elections

by Tom Barrett

In spite of the strikes, the repression against students of both races, and the dissension within his own party, P.W. Botha emerged as the clear winner in the May 6 election, an election in which only whites were eligible to vote. The Conservative Party, a right-wing split-off from Botha's National Party, outpolled the Progressive Federal Party and replaced the PFP as official opposition in Parliament. Many English-speaking whites defected from the PFP to vote for the nationalists. The election strengthened the most retrograde forces within South Africa's ruling elite, those least willing to carry on any negotiations with Black leaders of any persuasion. As such, it was a stinging defeat to the existing leadership of the Black struggle, whose political program comes down to nothing more than a negotiated transition away from white rule. The African National Congress, the United Democratic Front, and Bishop Desmond Tutu all had called on white voters to "vote against the candidates of apartheid," that is, to vote for the bourgeois liberal Progressive Federal Party. The PFP's defeat was so total that Bishop Tutu remarked that South Africa had entered "the Dark Ages" as a result of these elections.

Militancy in the Working Class, Cracks in the Regime

Since the beginning of the year the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has led a major strike wave. It began with the railway workers, organized in the South African Railways and Harbor Workers Union (SARHWU), a COSATU affiliate. On April 22, SARHWU refused to obey a government ultimatum to return to work. The government announced that the 16,000 transport workers would be fired, and the police attacked union pickets at the Germiston and Doornfontein railroad stations in Johannesburg, killing three strikers at each location. The workers retreated to COSATU house, which the police besieged for seven hours, arresting and brutally beating Black workers.

Meanwhile, 6,000 postal workers remain on strike, and offices of the Post and Telecommunications service remain closed. 24,000 gold miners were forced back to work at gunpoint after a two-day strike.

In an ongoing campaign of defiance against "influx control," which has replaced the pass laws as a means of controlling Black settlements within South Africa, thousands of workers' families have left the so-called "homelands" to join husbands and fathers in the single-sex workers' hostels in

South Africa's major cities. COSATU is playing a central role in this campaign as well; Cyril Ramaphosa, the general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, the largest COSATU affiliate, announced that 600 wives and children had moved into seven miners' hostels, and that "the time has come for miners and their families to start living naturally."

On April 25, the South African Defense Force carried out a raid into Zambia, allegedly to stop "ANC infiltration." Both COSATU and the Azanian Congress of Trade Unions (AZACTU) condemned the raid, and on April 27 students of both races at the University of Cape Town staged a protest demonstration. The police attacked the demonstration with birdshot, wounding ten students, two of them seriously.

Though Botha and the military remain relatively intransigent, and right-wing forces such as the Conservatives and the neo-Nazi Herstigte National Party are growing, there appear to be cracks within the white establishment. The Supreme Court in Pietermaritzburg, capital of Natal province, has been consistently striking down the most repressive government decrees. On April 24, in response to a suit by the United Democratic Front, it voided major sections of the government's emergency regulations, especially those curbing press freedom.

Among the leaders of South African big business there is increasing recognition that a quick solution to the crisis is necessary to protect investments and insure the continued profit flow. Again, the Natal is the center of this new development. The most "English" of South Africa's provinces, and the center of important commerce and trade, Natal is also home to the largest Black tribe, the Zulu. Zulu chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi has consistently rejected the status of "independent homeland" for KwaZulu, and has been the most vocal of Black leaders in promoting an end to the formalities of apartheid while continuing the existing economic structure. Within Zulu areas a great deal of the commercial enterprises are owned by Indians. The Zulu leadership, the white business class, and the Indian merchants are working together to integrate Natal's economy. It should not be surprising that the United States and Britain are taking an active and positive interest in the "Natal experiment."

A section of Afrikaner businessmen and politicians who see the Natal experiment as the pattern for future capitalist development in South Africa have broken with Botha and have formed a

liberal faction within the ruling National Party. Known as the "New Nats," they are also promoting dialogue with the United Democratic Front and the African National Congress as a way of putting an end to the violence and political instability which get in the way of making money. A group of them met with ANC president Oliver Tambo; however, this group has not moved to a position of supporting majority rule and "one-person-one-vote" democracy. As well, they rejected a request by ANC information director Thabo Mbeki that they and the liberals of the Progressive Federal Party boycott the elections. The ANC itself retreated from that position shortly before the elections took place.

On election day itself, COSATU again took the lead. It organized a general strike, which was completely successful in all areas except the Natal, where Buthelezi's campaign of intimidation continues to create problems for the Black struggle. The strike began on May 5, the day before the election, and continued for two days. The strike was 85 to 100 percent effective in all urban areas except Durban. It should also be noted that it was completely nonviolent, again with the exception of Durban, where there were clashes between strikers and police and between strikers and Inkatha, Buthelezi's vigilante organization.

Political Leadership

Neither white conciliationism nor Black militancy has been reflected in the top layers of political leadership, where white militancy and Black conciliationism are the rule.

The whites-only election was a complete victory for South African reaction and a defeat for the white liberals and the current Black leadership, which called on whites to vote for the liberals. Among white voters there was a solid shift to the right, with many English-speakers defecting to the National Party, and many Afrikaners voting for the Conservatives or Herstigte Nationalists. Botha and the National Party retained a firm majority in Parliament. The conciliationist sentiment expressed by the "New Nats" was not reflected in election results, which Botha and his associates have interpreted as a mandate for a new crackdown.

Black leaders, such as Winnie Mandela, Bishop Desmond Tutu, and Rev. Allan Boesak (who is legally classified as Coloured), were deeply stung by the results. They called on those Parliament members who oppose apartheid not to take their seats, as a gesture of protest. They were stung again when the liberals rejected their call to boycott Parliament. Even the cynical Buthelezi expressed his disappointment at the election results.

The only meaningful responses to the white-only election were organized by COSATU, and there is a reason for it. The reason is that the only meaningful response to apartheid in the 1980s is a working class response. One of the first projects of the Republic of South Africa when it became independent in 1961 was to industrialize the coun-



try, in order to diversify its economy beyond agriculture and mining. In so doing the South African bourgeoisie created a powerful Black proletariat, which it kept in check through the repressive system known as apartheid. Apartheid made possible the rapid industrialization and superprofits of the 1960s and 1970s; Black oppression and capitalism are inextricably bound together in South Africa. While apartheid—that system of pass laws, group areas, and restricted voting rights—can be ended through negotiations and parliamentary action, Black oppression cannot. Blacks were oppressed before the Nationalists instituted the apartheid system; they will continue to be oppressed until a South African proletarian state puts an end to Black economic and political oppression once and for all.

COSATU, which has proved itself capable of organizing the most militant labor action, remains a trade union confederation; its leaders have not moved in the direction of forming a political party to contend for state power. Rather, they have deferred on the political question to the African National Congress and become a member organization of the ANC-led United Democratic Front. The ANC, in return, has not challenged COSATU's leadership on the industrial level. The ANC and some of its associates in the UDF, such as Tutu and Boesak, were totally ineffectual in their response to the elections. They ended up expres-

(Continued on page 47)

THE MYTH OF DEINDUSTRIALIZATION IN THE U.S. ECONOMY

by Steve Bloom

"Deindustrialization" has become one of the economic buzzwords of the 1980s. This concept is defined by Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, in their authoritative work on the subject,¹ as the "widespread systematic disinvestment in basic productive capacity" by major corporations within the United States. Big business, they explain, has become more interested in speculative monetary ventures, buy-outs of existing companies, foreign investments, and the shifting of basic production facilities to lower-wage countries such as Mexico, Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, etc., than in the production of basic commodities here in the U.S. As a result, plants and facilities here are being phased out. This deindustrialization, they argue, is threatening the basic fabric of the U.S. economy.

The case seems convincing on its face: A drastic decline in the number of U.S. workers employed in basic industry along with a sharp increase in the percentage involved in "service" occupations, entire cities or regions devastated by plant closings, a qualitative growth of investment in production facilities in less-developed countries, a dramatic increase in industrial products imported from abroad.

But if we take a deeper look at the *fundamental* processes at work in the U.S. economy we have to raise some serious questions about the validity of the "deindustrialization" scenario. The question is not whether the economic phenomena cited are real—they certainly are—nor whether they constitute a serious problem for working people in the United States—they certainly do. What needs to be examined is the basic cause of things. Are events such as plant closings, the overall reduction in the number of industrial workers, etc., actually symptoms of "deindustrialization," i.e., a conscious decision by corporate executives not to invest in basic U.S. productive capacity, or are they signs of something different?

Rather than deindustrialization, I will argue here that what we are seeing is a process of qualitative change in the *character* of basic industry in the United States. Older industrial plants in this country are indeed being decapitalized. The percentage of the work force employed in basic production of both durable and nondurable goods has decreased continuously over the past decades, and this process has accelerated dramatically in recent years. *Yet there has been no decrease in the overall quantity of industrial goods produced in the United States.* In fact, the general trend has continued upward over the past 15 years—the period in which the "deindustrialization" process is supposed to have taken hold.

This would indicate that there is something more complex occurring in the U.S. economy. The apparent contradiction is worthy of some investigation.

The Statistical Evidence

To begin we need to look at the actual statistics of what has been happening in the U.S. economy as a whole. I will select the period after 1970 for our purposes here, since it is the events of that time frame which are supposed to make the case for the "deindustrialization" scenario.

From 1970 to 1982 the total work force involved in manufacturing, mining, and utilities remained almost constant, going from 20,976,000 to 20,996,000.² As a percentage of the work force, however, the decrease was dramatic: from 25 percent in 1970 to just over 20 percent in 1982. This represents the continuation of an historic trend. The percentage of workers involved in basic industry has been shrinking since at least the 1950s.

During this same period (1970-1982), however, the production index measuring all categories of goods produced by these workers *increased by 30 percent.* (The production index measures actual quantities of goods produced or services provided, for example, tons of steel or coal, numbers of autos, freight miles travelled by railroads or trucks, etc.) By 1984, reflecting a general upturn in the U.S. capitalist economy, it stood *61 percent higher* than the 1970 level. Increased production was taking place in almost all industrial categories. There were some exceptions: leather products, primary metals, and petroleum products; and we will take a look at what these countertrends might indicate shortly.

It is also useful to look at per capita production of goods by U.S. industry. Measured in constant 1972 dollars the total production of manufactured items was \$261.2 billion in 1970 and \$391.2 billion in 1984—an increase of almost 50 percent. During the same period, the population grew from 205.052 million to 237.019 million, a far smaller increase of only 15.6 percent. Again the key fact this increased per capita production of industrial goods was accomplished with a considerably smaller percentage of the work force employed in basic industry.

A final statistic to consider is the actual expenditure on new plant and equipment by the 1,000 largest manufacturing companies in the U.S. Here things are a little more difficult to measure, because temporary fluctuations in market conditions play such an important role and it is hard to determine any significant trend from the

period in question. Nevertheless, if one looks at the statistics from 1970 to 1984 there is no visible lessening of overall capitalization of U.S. industry. In 1970 \$26,321 million was spent on new plant and equipment. The equivalent figure for 1984 was \$90,401 million. For every year after 1979 the amount invested was over \$75,000 million, with a high of \$101,341 million in 1981. This is far from indicating any systematic deindustrialization process.

By every quantitative measure, then, the overall investment in and output of U.S. industry has not declined. It has increased. If we extend the picture back even further, before 1970, the comparable figures will be even more striking. According to Ronald E. Kutscher and Valerie A. Personick, "Real output in manufacturing in 1984 was actually more than double what it was in 1959."³

A Transformation of Industrial Production

If deindustrialization is not taking place, what is happening in the U.S. economy? Why are plants shutting down and workers being thrown out of jobs? There is only one reasonable interpretation of the data: Basic industry in this country is now entering a phase in which the productivity of labor has increased qualitatively—that is, each worker employed can produce a greater and greater quantity of industrial products. The result is that a steadily smaller proportion of the working population is required in order to produce the actual commodities needed by society. (The term "need" here has to be understood in a bourgeois economic/political context, and not in the sense of purely abstract *social* need.) This increase in the productivity of industrial labor has, of course, been made possible by dramatic new developments in technology, with advances in computer sciences and robotics heading the list.

With fewer and fewer workers required to produce the industrial goods society requires, a larger and larger number can be employed in other types of occupations—therefore the dramatic increase in service industries and individuals working in professional capacities. *The decline we are seeing in the U.S. industrial work force is not some short-term fluctuation created by bad managerial decisions in corporate boardrooms.*⁴ It is a fundamental feature of U.S. economic life, which can be expected to become more pronounced.

It is instructive to draw an analogy with a similar development, one which occurred in another area of this country's economic production within the last century—agriculture. In 1850, 60 percent of the laboring population of the United States was involved in farming. Today, the comparable figure is barely 3.1 percent.⁵ Yet this 3.1 percent is able not only to feed the entire country, but to grow a considerable surplus.

It is easy to see that the dramatic increase in farm labor productivity, created by the increased mechanization of agricultural production, could not simply be turned into more and more food

produced by the same proportion of farmers and farm workers. There are limits to how much agricultural production can be utilized by society. Under capitalism, of course, that limit is determined by the capitalist market—how much food can be sold for a profit—and not by considerations of human need as it would be under socialism. But even in a fully developed socialist society there would be objective limits to the quantity of food that could be consumed by the population.

The result of this *increase* in agricultural productivity, therefore, was a massive *decrease* in the proportion of individuals involved in that aspect of the productive process and an exodus of a large part of the rural population.

Today, the shift from industrial to non-industrial areas of economic activity has a similar material basis. There are limits to the quantity of industrial goods which can be produced. (Again, that limit is determined today by capitalist market forces, that is, what can be produced at the profit required by investors as opposed to what is needed by consumers.) For that reason there is a limit to the number of individuals who need to be employed in industrial production. The result is the decline of industrial employment and the creation of new jobs primarily in nonindustrial sectors.

The present decline of industrial employment in the U.S. can no more be cited as evidence of "deindustrialization" than the dramatic decline of the agricultural work force in previous decades can be cited as evidence for a "deagriculturalization" of America. The United States remains a premier industrial power in the world just as it remains a premier agricultural producer. Any claim to the contrary must be proven on some basis other than the simple fact of shifting employment patterns or the dismantling of old industrial plants.

Complex Economic Trends— International and Domestic

It is necessary to keep in mind, of course, that this overall process of increased industrial productivity is not taking place in a vacuum. It is part of a complex web of national and international factors which also affect the U.S. economy.

We have already mentioned the fact that there are specific industries which have run counter to the overall trend. Steel is the one which springs most quickly to mind. To a large extent this is a result of increased foreign competition (particularly Japanese), though another factor would have to be a substitution of other materials (such as plastics or lighter-weight metals) for steel in some manufacturing processes which previously demanded it. A look at steel, in isolation from the overall performance of the U.S. economy, could make a strong case for the deindustrialization position. In this industry there does appear to have been a conscious policy by major corporations to decapitalize and make maximum short-term profits at the expense of longer-term stability and growth.

The decline in petroleum production represents something different, however. The recent glut of oil on the international market and the fall in the price of crude oil—following its dramatic rise in the 1970s—meant that production facilities in the U.S. became less competitive. A future round of price increases could easily restimulate U.S. production. In the case of leather goods, the final area of industrial production which has shown a decline during our study period, it would seem likely that the displacement of a significant share of the market by substitute materials is the most likely explanation.

In short, there are different trends on the level of individual industries, within the context of the overall macro-economic reality on which we are focusing in this article. These, however, do not contradict the primary fact that an overall growth and development of U.S. industrial production has taken place.

The development of international competition in many areas, the qualitative increase in industrial capacity in other countries, has important consequences for the U.S. economy in other areas besides steel. Increasingly, industrial production cannot even be considered a national process—it has become profoundly internationalized. A division of labor exists so that there is virtually no industrial product which can any longer be honestly labeled "made in the U.S.A." Parts which are assembled in this country may be produced in factories all across the globe.

Interestingly, the trend towards a smaller proportion of workers involved in industrial production exists in other countries as well, and in some ways is even more pronounced than it is here. According to Kutscher and Personick: "A recent Bureau [of Labor Statistics] study of manufacturing productivity trends in 12 countries shows that while the rate of gain in U.S. manufacturing output over the years 1973-84 was smaller than for four of the other countries, particularly Japan, the rate of employment decline in U.S. manufacturing was the smallest of any of the countries studied."⁶ In the face of this evidence, a belief that employment trends in the U.S.A. result *fundamentally* from the adverse effects of foreign competition or "deindustrialization" simply cannot be sustained.

Capitalism Stands Progress on Its Head

Looked at from a purely "objective" point of view, the process of increased industrial productivity which we have described can be cited as an important step forward in the age-old battle of the human species to produce more and more material wealth with less and less human labor. But we are not faced with a purely objective development. It takes place in a particular social and historical context which shapes its specific forms and consequences. As is characteristic of economic progress made within the context of a society organized to produce profits for a tiny handful at

the expense of the vast majority, this particular qualitative leap in industrial labor's productivity has taken place at a huge, and (again from an "objective" point of view) completely unnecessary, cost to tens of thousands of working people who found themselves in the wrong place, with the wrong skills, at the wrong time. It is these individual and collective tragedies (not infrequently affecting entire towns or regions of the country in a dramatic way) which can, without doubt, be blamed squarely on a social system which considers only the corporate profit to be gained from specific investment and management decisions—never their human consequences.

U.S. capitalism, by the beginning of the 1970s, had accumulated a large pool of workers who had spent their entire work lives in basic industrial production. These workers were generally skilled only in a very narrow area—related to their own specific industrial tasks. To a large extent these industrial jobs provided the basic core of the U.S. union movement, and were much more highly organized than other spheres of employment. This meant that workers in these occupations—even those who were not unionized—received relatively good wages and enjoyed substantial benefits as compared to others. With the development of new production techniques based on computerization and robotization, however, these workers have become increasingly expendable to the U.S. ruling class.

This reality presented corporate America with an opportunity to undermine wages and working conditions for society in general, and for the organized sectors of the work force in particular. By proclaiming that older plants, which they wanted to eliminate, were "unprofitable" (i.e., not profitable enough to satisfy their corporate managers), many major industrial employers were able to extract significant concessions from their employees. Threats to move and locate elsewhere were used effectively—threats which were real since the new technology dictated building new plants in many cases. A contributing factor, also made possible by breakthroughs in computer controlled telecommunications, has been the present possibility to decentralize management and production facilities. This makes it easier to move plants from one part of the country (or the world) to another.

Not only were nonunion workers played off against union workers in an effort to gain concessions, but one union was used against another, even different locals of the same union. Similar tactics were used to gain concessions from state and local governments anxious to have a specific industrial facility located in their area.

All of this increases the profits of big business at the expense of U.S. working people who have to accept lower wages and reduced social programs on the part of state and local governments with reduced tax revenues. In a large number of cases, the concession-granting workers eventually found themselves phased out of a job in any case. After squeezing the last ounce of profit from their older production facilities, corporations just

threw them away, along with the workers who had no prospect of any comparable alternative employment.

There have been new jobs created during this period. But the best of them require more training, and different types of skills, than are possessed by those who have up to now been involved in industrial production. And most of the new jobs which fall into the unskilled or semiskilled category tend to pay a small fraction of the wages which the old, unionized, industrial jobs did. Even *skilled* jobs in service industries—such as health care—frequently don't have the earning power enjoyed by many unionized industrial employees. Extreme economic compulsion is obviously necessary to force previously high-paid workers to accept such a drastic cut. That's the main reason why the U.S. capitalist class has proceeded to implement its economic restructuring through such barbaric and draconian measures.

Capitalism's Historical Record

There is nothing new for capitalism in this approach to economic restructuring. It is, in fact, characteristic of the bourgeois mode of production. At its very inception, in Europe for example, the bourgeoisie relied on the most extreme economic compulsion to create the kind of work force it needed: one totally without independent means to earn a livelihood and therefore dependent on employment in a capitalist enterprise. As bourgeois property forms gained increasing ascendancy within feudal society, the economic ruin of many of the old craftsmen faced with competition they could not meet and measures such as the enclosures of common lands in the countryside making it impossible for peasants to continue to make a living on the land drove people into the new capitalist workshops—to be paid miserable wages for long and arduous labor. Historical economic progress (an increase in the overall quantity of goods produced) was then (as at present) dependent on a profound social evil—a dramatic decline in the standard of living of large numbers of people.

But there are also less coercive mechanisms by which bourgeois society funnels workers into the kinds of economic activity it requires. And this sort of process is also at work today. When the dramatic exodus from the farms into industry took place in this country, for example, it resulted in a *better* standard of living for many of those who made the transition into the working class. When the bourgeoisie is sufficiently wealthy it can find the workers it needs through wages that are high enough to attract them.

Today, at the same time as industrial workers who enjoy few other skills are forced into lower-paying unskilled or service-sector employment through plant closings and layoffs, newer workers who become trained in areas such as computer sciences, or who gain skills related to engineering, or other fields which are in increasing demand, enjoy an opportunity to earn relatively good wages. This fact of economic life—the increasing

level and type of intellectual skills as opposed to manual skills required for getting a well-paying job—is reflected in a dramatic rise in the median educational level of young people in the U.S. today.⁷ Nevertheless, the *average* wages paid, even to many of these more educated workers, has been declining, and the percentage in lower-paid wage categories continues to increase.

The result of all of this has become an increasingly two-tier society, with a large pool of individuals lacking marketable skills and without any prospects for a well-paying job, side by side with a sector of the capitalist economy which seems, to many, to provide more opportunities than ever before. The core of this underclass of unskilled labor remains, of course, Black and Latino. Women are also disproportionately represented. And the combination of this already doubly and triply oppressed core with a not insignificant layer of newly impoverished white male ex-blue collar workers creates significant fuel for a major social explosion in this country.

An Alternative Model for Industrial Restructuring

We have said that the tremendous social cost imposed by the restructuring of basic industry under capitalism is completely unnecessary from an objective point of view. It isn't hard to trace the outlines of an alternative approach, one which would allow all members of society to benefit from the dramatic increases in productive forces resulting from the computerization of industry. But to implement this alternative model it would be necessary to have a completely different social system—a society with a planned economy in which basic economic decisions could be made by working people themselves on the basis of their own overall best interests. In other words, we need a socialist society, democratically managed.

What kinds of measures could such a society introduce? We will list a few:

- First, the hours of work per week could be decreased with no reduction in weekly pay. In this way the available work would be shared by all those able to contribute productively to the economic well-being of society.

- Economic planning based on production for human needs rather than for private profit could guarantee that all facilities which remained productive could be utilized for the benefit of society. No longer would arbitrary considerations of profit margins become the basis for decisions about keeping industrial plants open.

- A planned economy could organize the *gradual* phasing out of older industrial operations when they do, in fact, become obsolete, rather than their dramatic—and often surprise—closure on short notice as presently takes place. This would be done in collaboration with the affected workers and would allow time for the retraining of younger workers and their placement in alternative jobs. Older employees would have time to reach retirement age at a pace of their own choosing.

Planning could also allow alternative uses to be created for industrial facilities which might continue to supply jobs for at least some of the workers concerned.

- The present wage disparity between industrial and service sector jobs of comparable education and skill requirements could be eliminated. This would provide workers who had to shift from one type of employment to another the ability to maintain their standard of living, and would also mean that those entering the labor force for the first time would have the same kinds of opportunities for earning decent wages.

- Economic growth and development could be organized to maintain the vitality of specific regions in which a significant concentration of older plants exist, or which find themselves completely dependent on a single industrial enterprise. One of the criteria could be the creation of new industries able to utilize at least some of the skills of those who are being phased out of older installations.

- A great deal of work which is socially necessary, but which is presently left undone because it is not profitable for private enterprise, should become the basis for the creation of new jobs. Much of this work can be undertaken by those with limited skills—such as cleaning and beautifying the living environment of our cities. Other kinds of public works projects—in particular the construction of roads, schools, hospitals, low-cost housing, etc., can provide vast opportunities for useful employment by those whose previous industrial skills are no longer required. Of course, such jobs would be provided at no reduction in pay for displaced workers.

- If the measures listed above still failed to maintain work for all who want it, workers who are phased out of obsolete operations could be guaranteed unemployment benefits at their old wages, until new jobs were created for them. A general social policy of providing adequate health care for the entire population would eliminate the dramatic decline in physical well-being presently suffered by the families of workers who lose medical benefits when they lose their jobs. Improved educational programs—particularly in Black and minority neighborhoods where children now suffer from a severe educational handicap almost from birth—could help to upgrade the skills of the overwhelming majority of those seeking employment for the first time.

These and similar steps are absolutely necessary from a social/human point of view in the face of the kind of economic transition which is currently taking place in this country.

Some Strategic Considerations for the Labor Movement

The new economic reality we have been discussing raises important problems for the organized labor movement in the United States. It should be clear that some fundamental changes are

required in the way working people think about and approach their basic class organizations. This involves more than a simple return to the militancy, solidarity, and industrial union consciousness of the 1930s—though all of these attributes are essential components of a class-struggle labor movement at the present time.

While a completely rational and humane economic policy cannot be achieved short of the socialist reorganization of society, it is possible and necessary for the labor movement to begin to raise transitional demands which address themselves to these solutions, and point out areas of struggle even within a society dominated by the bourgeoisie. These programmatic problems are the most important starting point for a discussion of how the U.S. union movement can combat the present offensive of the capitalist class.

First and foremost among the demands which should be raised are those for the creation of jobs and for the compensation of workers who lose their jobs to the transformation of basic industry. A campaign for a shorter workweek with no reduction in pay is crucial, as is the fight for a massive public works program. The necessary funds should be taken from the military budget, which represents a complete waste of our resources. Also central to labor's social agenda must be removing from the individual corporation the right to simply dispose of social property such as production facilities. If it is claimed that a plant cannot be run at a profit, it should be nationalized, and production should be continued—with government subsidies if necessary—under the control of the workers presently employed there.

Demands for improved unemployment insurance, national health insurance, and similar programs are also an integral part of the new platform which must be fought for by labor. If the American trade union movement begins to campaign around these issues—which go to the heart of the problems facing working people in this country—it will find itself with a new vitality and with new possibilities for organizing the unorganized.

A stepped-up organizing campaign is essential at the present time—directed at workers in *both* the newer industrial plants and in the service sector of the economy. This will remove one of the present incentives for companies to move production facilities. A campaign to organize the unemployed, to let them know that the union movement is their ally in the fight for jobs and justice, will also make it much more difficult for the corporations to find scabs willing to lend themselves to the present union-busting campaign.

A union movement which shows that it is fighting *against* corporate America and *for* needed social measures can begin to attract new members. They will see that it is an organization worth joining. And any increase in the strength of the organized workers' movement will contribute that much more to the fight for labor's new social agenda.

It will also be necessary to take a critical look at the basic structure of the U.S. labor

movement—which continues to be based on the reality of U.S. capitalism in the 1930s and 40s. The creation of industrial unions at that time was a crucial step which destroyed the ability of the bosses to use craft divisions and pit one group of workers against another within the same industrial facility. Today, however, with the major corporations no longer organized simply on an industrial basis—but on a multinational and conglomerate basis—it is necessary for working people to find new ways of fighting, new ways of organizing their common struggle.

Now it is no longer simply one craft which is set off against another within a plant. Nor is it even one plant against another within an industry (a situation which can be overcome by unified bargaining on an industry-wide basis for a national contract as has been implemented by the major industrial unions in the past, though this has broken down in recent years). Today the multinational corporations try to play off workers in one country against those in another. Conglomerates, with their profits coming from many different kinds of industries, can and do simply threaten to jettison one of their subdivisions if the workers demand "too much." In that way whole industrial branches can be played off against each other.

It should be obvious that the American labor movement has to put new meaning into the idea of an *international* union. Perhaps a multinational union or a conglomerate union will become an appropriate form, which could attempt to organize

the entire work force of a particular corporation. At a minimum, a network of solidarity and communication between unions involved in fighting the same corporate entity is required.⁸

The need for this kind of solution to the present problems of the U.S. labor movement places in bold relief the tremendous obstacle which now exists in the form of the entrenched trade union bureaucracy. That bureaucracy fights to defend its own particular interests, and defines those interests very narrowly in terms of the needs of the industry with which it identifies and the country in which it resides. A class-struggle leadership which can see the vital necessity of intra-class solidarity to cut across industrial and national boundaries is absolutely vital if the union movement is to go forward.

Finally, the limitations of any approach based simply on the trade union level is obvious. The broad social and political aspects of the problems facing U.S. workers today point to the need for the union movement in this country to organize its own political party which can battle for a new kind of social policy. Labor must fight for its overall political program to turn the new economic reality of the United States toward the benefit of working people in this country and of our brothers and sisters all over the globe. As long as we concede a monopoly of governmental power to the bosses through their two political parties—the Democrats and Republicans—we will be fighting with both of our hands tied behind our backs. ■

NOTES

1. Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, The Deindustrialization of America, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1982).

2. All statistics in this section are from the Statistical Abstract of the United States, published by the Bureau of the Census, 1986 edition. We should note that the figures for industrial workers are only approximately useful for us since they include both production and nonproduction workers employed by industrial establishments. If anything, however, this will understate the proportional decline of those involved in industrial production since the percentage of white collar workers to production workers has probably increased slightly during this period—if there was any change at all. Additionally, since many of the statistics cited come from the actual corporations concerned it is possible that the data is not completely accurate. We have to make a basic assumption, therefore, that if there is some problem resulting from prejudiced reporting it will be congruent throughout the period in

question and relative trends will still be accurately reflected.

3. Ronald E. Kutscher and Valerie A. Personick, "Deindustrialization and the shift to services," Monthly Labor Review, June 1986, p. 7.

4. This is true even though bad managerial decisions exist in abundance and seriously aggravate the social problems inherent in the process.

5. Wayne D. Rasmussen, "The Mechanization of Agriculture," Scientific American, Volume 247 No. 3, September 1982.

6. Kutscher and Personick, op. cit.

7. Eli Ginzberg, "The Mechanization of Work," *ibid.*

8. In this regard an interesting step was taken recently by employees of Caterpillar Tractor. An international agreement was signed in Charleroi, Belgium, on March 10, 1987, by unions from different countries representing workers employed by that international firm. (See International Viewpoint, No. 119, May 4, 1987, p. 5.)

THE CONTINUING UPSURGE IN MEATPACKING

by Dave Riehle

Nearly seven thousand packinghouse workers in the Midwest are currently engaged in four prolonged and interrelated strikes. All of them have been precipitated by employer demands for wage concessions.

Eight hundred workers at Patrick Cudahy in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, have been on strike since December. The 2,800 workers at the Iowa Beef Processors plant in Dakota City, Nebraska, have been out since December. In March, 800 workers at John Morrell in Sioux City, Iowa, struck. On May 1, the Sioux City Morrell workers extended their strike to the Morrell plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, by dispatching roving pickets. The 2,500 workers at the Sioux Falls plant honored the picket line and began to mobilize their own forces to oppose the importation of scabs into the plant.

In each of these cases, the employer has hired scabs to operate the plants, and the workers have responded with mass picket lines which have been broken up and dispersed by the cops. The courts have issued injunctions forbidding mass picketing. The local unions have responded with rallies and demonstrations mobilizing their members and supporters. The unions have issued calls for consumer boycotts of the struck products. Many leaflets have been distributed explaining the issues in the strikes, especially the fight to preserve a living wage and the terrible safety record of the packing companies.

All four strikes are now stalled. The employers are operating the plants, although at a lower rate of production and efficiency than with the union workers. The mass picketing, primarily a spontaneous reaction of the rank and file to the importation of scabs, has dissipated in the face of court injunctions and promises of compliance from union leaders. The struggles have lapsed into attenuated wars of attrition, punctuated by periodic solidarity rallies and food caravans.

Impact of Hormel Strike

Significant meatpacking strikes incorporating the same elements took place in 1984 at Iowa Pork Industries in South St. Paul, Minnesota; George A. Hormel Co., in Austin, Minnesota, in 1985-86; FDL Foods in Dubuque, Iowa, and Swift Independent in Marshalltown, Iowa, in 1986. Although the results were not uniform, all of these employers ended up either achieving a significant part of their wage-cutting objectives directly through contract concessions, or buying time by promising some restitution of wage cuts at the end of three- and four-

year agreements. In every case where the employer was determined to operate with scab labor, the local union was forced to ratify most company demands.

Although the current strikes have run up against the same obstacles, they are not simply repeats of the struggles of the past several years. What separates them is the 1985-86 Hormel strike, which was one of those social earthquakes that irrevocably changes the landscape. Every political and social element that concerns itself with the relations between capital and labor had to take a position on Local P-9 and its struggle, and was itself changed by the position that it took. This is why the post P-9 strikes in meatpacking are not just subsequent events, but *developments* produced in part by that struggle and the response to it. These developments are contradictory and unstable, and lead in turn to new alignments and struggles.

The Employers' Offensive

The relentless drive by the meatpacking employers to drive down wages and gut the packinghouse unions has entered into a new stage. The meatpacking industry for most of this century—up to the mid-sixties—was based on massive plants that employed thousands of workers. These plants slaughtered and processed hogs, sheep, and cattle under one roof. The industry was dominated by six or eight giant packers, including Armour, Swift, Cudahy, Wilson, and Morrell. The power of the union was based on establishing itself through convulsive struggles at these key plants, beginning with the victory of the Independent Union of All Workers at the Austin Hormel plant in 1933. Successfully resisting the attempt by the packers in the 1948 packinghouse strike to defeat the union, the United Packinghouse Workers of America, UPWA went on to construct the master agreements that established uniform wages and expiration dates. The master agreement remained in place for the next 25 years. In the mid-sixties, however, the big plants began to be shut down. Under the blackmail threat of plant closings, local unions began to vote to withdraw from the master agreements in the late seventies and early eighties. This did not stop plant closings, but it did break up the united front on wages and expiration dates, provoking a new, decentralized wage-cutting offensive.

IBP and Excell, owned by Occidental Petroleum and Cargill, respectively, moved into the vacuum to dominate the beef industry with new, nonunion plants. Wages in meatpacking went down from the

master agreement's \$10.69 an hour in 1981 to \$8.25 an hour in 1984. In 1983, Wilson declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy and imposed nearly a \$2.00 per hour wage cut. Wages in the nonunion sector were being driven down toward \$6.00 per hour.

Most of the wage cuts in the 1979-83 period had been obtained without provoking strikes, through plant closings and Chapter 11 manipulations. Contracts negotiated with some of the remaining major packers ratified the new, standard wage of from \$8.25 to \$9.00 an hour, while promising increases bringing the rate back up to around \$10.69 an hour by 1988. This was misinterpreted by the leadership of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Packinghouse Division as "stopping the free fall of wages." The real substance of the agreements was that they broke up the uniform expiration dates and established a wage cut of around \$2.00 an hour. The UFCW leaders congratulated themselves on the "turnaround" and "recovery," based on paper promises the packers never intended to keep, as we shall see.

Class Struggle Heats Up

In mid-1984 the Hormel workers in Austin, the birthplace of modern packinghouse unionism, elected the Guyette leadership and began to mobilize for a fight as the Hormel company imposed a \$2.40 an hour wage cut in October 1984. From then on, it was clear to the employers that further wage cuts in the industry would not be achieved without a head-on confrontation with the union.

An early example of the new approach was the 11-month strike at Iowa Pork Industries in South St. Paul. The new strategy was conducted under the direction of Richard Alaniz, a Houston, Texas, based lawyer with close ties to the meatpacking industry. Alaniz came out of the law firm of Tate, Bruckner, and Sykes in Omaha, Nebraska, a firm with ties to IBP, Montfort of Colorado, and other packers. Under Alaniz's guidance, IPI brought in 225 scabs at \$5.50 an hour, well below union scale. The bristling fight put up by UFCW Local 4-P forced an eventual agreement with the union and even a wage increase. But the approach taken by IPI management was not abandoned. It was extended within the meatpacking industry.

The clearest example is the struggle with Local P-9 under the direction of another one of the meatpacking industry's cadre of union-busting attorneys—Thomas Kurkowski of Milwaukee.

Role of the UFCW

Lewie Anderson, the head of the UFCW's Packinghouse Division, was determined to crush the insurgent leadership of Local P-9 at all costs, in order to preserve the illusory "retrenchment program" which was supposed to "stop the employers' drive to place industry wages at the \$6.00 and \$7.00 level."

Anderson defended his actions with class struggle rhetoric, polemicizing against P-9's

supposed "enterprise unionism" approach, contrasted to the UFCW's supposed defense of "industrial unionism." According to Anderson's logic, a victory by P-9 establishing a wage rate above that of the rest of the Hormel chain would do more to undermine the united front on wages and conditions than would the collaboration of the UFCW with the Hormel Co. It would, Anderson apparently believed, be more destructive than the role of the capitalist courts in crushing the P-9 strike and exiling the 850 strikers.

P-9 did *not* "go it alone" and withdraw from some common front of Hormel locals. That common front did not exist. A whole crazy quilt of local agreements had grown up through the acquiescence and complicity of the UFCW leadership. If there was any chance to forge a common struggle of Hormel workers, it could only have come from backing the P-9 strikers and doing everything possible to generate the solidarity necessary throughout the Hormel chain for them to win!

Although Anderson brags that the UFCW let 51 packinghouses close down rather than grant concessions, in the spring of 1984 the Ottumwa, Iowa, Hormel local was given permission to negotiate mid-term concessions. And, as the Austin workers found out in the fall of 1984, Anderson had agreed to a mid-term contract concession in 1982—behind the backs of the Austin local—which allowed the company to unilaterally cut wages. Consequently, P-9 was already on its own in September 1986, and forced to either strike or accept new concessions.

Anderson's theoretical musings, laid out in a 50-page report to the "National Packinghouse Strategy and Policy Conference" in November 1986, typically tries to shift the blame for the UFCW's failures onto the rank and file: "During the time in question (1979-1982) workers at twelve large national plants in several states, fearing job loss and long periods of unemployment, elected to ignore the International's advice and direction. Under fear and mass hysteria created by the employers, workers at several key plants agreed to major concessions. The net result was the free fall of packinghouse workers' wages throughout the industry."

Anderson, of course, does not refer to his secret concessions to Hormel management made in 1982, which would have been *opposed* by the workers had they known about them. Even such a source as *Meat and Poultry Magazine* points out in its March 1987 issue that the UFCW "has the power to block substandard contracts threatening other pacts."

Source of Bureaucracy's Strategic Errors

The real source of the "free fall" in packinghouse workers' wages was the bureaucratic cowardice and class collaborationist outlook of the UFCW leadership. Although Anderson learned to defend bureaucratic policy in class struggle language at the knee of Jesse Prosten, the longtime Stalinist leader of the Packinghouse Division of the UFCW and its predecessor, the Amalgamated

Meatcutters and Butcherworkmen, his real outlook is rooted in utopian illusions about the nature of capitalism.

He lays some of this out in his November 1986 report. Anderson's view is that the packinghouse industry is divided into two groups—those who will survive and prosper, and those who will fall by the wayside, "caught in the monopoly vise." Anderson warns that "the UFCW and its packinghouse members must be constantly on guard against pleas for concessions from packers who are caught in the monopoly vise."

"Wage concessions," he says, "will not save plants in this category, but, if granted, they will depress wages throughout the industry."

What about pleas for concessions from packers who are applying the monopoly vise? He never addresses this question directly. What he does say is: "As we look at the future of the U.S. meat-packing industry we have to constantly ask ourselves:

"Which packers will comprise the industry in five, ten, or twenty years? Who will the survivors be? Who will the victims be? What type of product will the industry produce?" Anderson thinks he has the answer: Those who abandon the production of "high priced, unhealthy, traditional red meat products" and begin to produce "convenient low fat, low salt items" will survive.

"We believe that between twenty and thirty percent of the remaining meatpacking plants in the U.S. will close in the next ten years. . . . Essentially, we will see a category of packing plants go out of existence and the mainstream of the industry continue to grow and prosper."

"In conclusion, the future of the U.S. meat-packing industry looks very bright. The prospect of even greater profitability for those who stay in the industry is just about assured. In order to advance and get a fair share of the prosperity, the UFCW and its packinghouse membership must be part of the industry that is the future."

It isn't too hard to figure out what this means in practice. Concessions to those packers you think are going to survive, and rejection of concessions to the losers. Clearly, Hormel fell into the category of those who would survive, and opposition to concessions by P-9 endangered the UFCW's relationship with a winner.

The Bureaucracy's Fatal Contradiction

This schema is based on the expectation that the employers who have the good sense to survive and prosper will also have the good sense to see that, as Anderson says elsewhere, "a boom is at hand and no one deserves to share more in this upward cycle than our packinghouse membership." But the employers' actual outlook is more accurately represented by the comments of Richard Alaniz, also in *Meat and Poultry*. He explains: "What the job is worth is what the market will bear. If you try to put a social, utility value on wage rates, you are going to inject something that has never really been a part of U.S. industry.

There is a whole host of jobs in the manufacturing sector that should be paid higher, but that's not what dictates wage rates.

"The company cannot assume social responsibility for an individual. Perhaps he can't get another job, but why should companies be responsible if people can't make ends meet?"

The union bureaucracy is a contradictory social layer. It adapts to the needs of the employers, and absorbs their outlook, but it rests on the social base of the working class, and has to win acceptance, or at least acquiescence from those workers in order to survive. This contradiction is beginning to trap the UFCW bureaucracy in an increasingly tight corner. This is the meaning of the strikes currently being waged at Cudahy, Morrell, and IBP.

The UFCW's betrayal of the Hormel strike emboldened the employers to press ahead even more aggressively. The head-on confrontational approach they adopted in 1984 is now the norm, and the employers' intransigence is increasing. Contrary to the assurances by Lewie Anderson that the free fall of wages was stopped a few years ago, the ground was actually prepared for the next wave of demands for wage cuts. The "turnaround" was primarily in the form of paper promises the companies never intended to abide by.

In December 1983, the Sioux City Morrell workers had their wages cut by \$3.22 an hour. In 1987 Morrell is demanding a second wage cut of \$1.25 an hour. Morrell's chief negotiator stated that: "When we are through with Sioux City, Sioux Falls is next." Sioux Falls Morrell workers had their wages cut by \$2.44 an hour in the fall of 1983.

At IBP in Dakota City, workers were forced to accept a cut in wages of \$1.07 an hour on a base rate of \$8.97 in 1983. IBP demands that they accept a four-year wage freeze, which would mean that they would be working the rest of the 1980s for less than they made at the start of the decade.

Anderson's defense of the UFCW's policy in the P-9 strike pivoted on his characterization of the local as an aberration, recklessly jeopardizing gains carefully garnered by the UFCW's retrenchment policy. He felt it necessary to attempt to identify the leadership's strategy with packinghouse workers' evident rejection of concessions and willingness to struggle, contrasting P-9's "go it alone" "enterprise unionism" with the more authentic militancy of the UFCW's "industrial union" orientation. Clearly he was feeling the pressure of the rising tide of packinghouse workers' struggles. Although compelled by the logic of his position and the pressure of the employers to give aid and comfort to the bosses' crushing of the P-9 strike, he knew well how repugnant his actions were to packinghouse workers. In an interview with the *People's Daily World* (April 19, 1987), the organ of the U.S. Communist Party and the most abject supporter of his betrayal of P-9, he felt it necessary to state: "In the packing industry, the issue is clear for 99 percent of the workers in the local union. The struggle up there

in Austin was not wrong: the struggle against the employer trying to take your wages and your benefits away and injure you and maim you on the job, that's not wrong."

And further: "I think the workers admire and respect the organization that took place there, the participation of the workers in that struggle, their commitment. I don't think you would find one worker that would disagree with that aspect of it."

The pressure to identify with the bitter and continuing struggle of packinghouse workers has led Anderson to voice the conclusion that "the retrenchment stage can no longer be accepted."

"The membership accepted the retrenchment program, but they cannot be expected to wander around in the trench for the next forty years."

"The packers' demands for concessions in 1987 is simply a broken record from 1980. Worker concessions did not correct problems cited by the packers half a decade ago, and they won't in 1987. To the packers and the peddlers of the packers' message we must say NO! *No more concessions!*"

This position has led Anderson to put the prestige of the UFCW behind the struggle at IBP, his home local, where his mother and sister still work. He has spent considerable time on the scene in the Sioux City area. Now the UFCW has four big strikes on its hands in Milwaukee, Dakota City, Sioux City, and Sioux Falls, and no way to get out of them short of capitulation to the employers. There is no doubt this is not pleasing to other elements in the UFCW hierarchy, who are beginning to see Anderson as a liability.

The interview with lawyer Alaniz in *Meat and Poultry* drives this home. Alaniz says: "The most disturbing aspect of the labor relations issue within the meat industry is the continuing advocacy by UFCW of confrontation to make gains," a clear reference to Anderson.

Anderson is trying to extricate the UFCW from its dilemma by using P-9's corporate campaign tactics—leaflets, rallies, public campaigns around the companies' safety records. But the employers still remain in control of the plants, and contin-

ue production with scabs. The spontaneous, defensive response of the rank and file has not been able to go beyond episodic mass picket lines and participation in solidarity rallies. To go beyond that requires capturing control of their own organizations and freeing them from the dead hand of the bureaucracy. In all of these strikes, the International has some full-time representative present in the strike headquarters, keeping track of who comes and goes, and making sure things stay under control. Tendencies toward independent initiative are threatened with revocation of strike benefits.

Democracy of the P-9 Strike

What made the P-9 strike so electrifying, and gave it the ability to reach out for unprecedented support and solidarity, was its democracy and independence. Without that, the bitter, defensive struggles erupting in meatpacking in response to the determined offensive of the employers will continue to have severe limitations placed on them. Democracy means, above all, the right of workers to *decide for themselves*. It was the fact that P-9 had won this right and elected a leadership committed unconditionally to it that made it such a threat to the bureaucracy and the employers.

How to express this concept in general terms, and how to codify it programmatically, was a subject of extended discussion May 1-3 in Austin, as more than 50 packinghouse workers met in response to a call for a "Rank and File Packinghouse Workers Conference" (see accompanying article).

The assault on packinghouse workers' wages, working conditions, and unions is the most advanced and determined waged today. The workers, in scores of strikes and other struggles over the past decade, and especially in the past three years, have demonstrated their willingness to fight, if given the opportunity. Their experience has been deep-going and continuous. The situation remains explosive. ■

May 25, 1987

YEAR OF DECISION FOR U.S. LABOR

The Hormel Strike and Beyond

by Dave Riehle and Frank Lovell

\$2.50

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New York, N.Y. 10009

This reprint of articles from past issues of the *Bulletin IDOM* covers a momentous year in the development of the U.S. labor movement: the year of the strike by United Food and Commercial Workers Local P-9 in Austin, Minnesota, against the giant meat-processing firm of Geo. A. Hormel Inc. It tells some of the story of that strike and draws its lessons, as well as presenting a class-struggle viewpoint on the broader issues facing working people in the U.S. fighting to defend their standard of living today.

Meatpackers Discuss How To Rebuild a Fighting Union

by Phill Kwik

"We're here because we have to do it all over again. We have to go back to the 1930s and rebuild, from the ground up, a fighting meatpackers union."

With these words Connie Dammen, a former member of UFCW Local P-9 and a charter member of the North American Meat Packers Union (NAMPU), opened the first Rank and File Packinghouse Workers Conference, held May 2-3 in Austin, Minnesota.

The conference brought together

almost 100 meatpackers and supporters from around the midwest to discuss common problems and ways to create a fighting meatpackers union. "We want to establish a network among rank and filers to find out what is happening to other rank and filers and to discuss which way to go," Dammen said.

At the conference were meatpackers from 12 UFCW locals, including a representative from Local P-40, now in the fourth month of a strike against Patrick Cudahy in Milwaukee. Three

Canadian UFCW locals which have been battling the UFCW International sent greetings. There was also a number of meatpackers from unorganized plants.

Many present felt that the conference could have been larger if it had not been rebaited by the UFCW International. A number of attendees said their local officers had received calls from the International in the week before the conference telling them to stay away.

CRISIS IN THE INDUSTRY

The conference began with a report on the crisis facing packinghouse workers. Bud Schulte, a member of UFCW Local 789 and assistant steward at the Iowa Pork plant in South St. Paul, Minnesota, told of conditions which were familiar to all: plummeting wages, high accident rates, plant closings, and non-fighting, bureaucratic leaders.

DEBATING A BILL OF RIGHTS

Schulte then introduced a Packinghouse Workers Bill of Rights (see box), which was written by four meatpackers. This led to a lively five-hour discussion over the Bill of Rights and what strategies and tactics should be used by meatpackers.

After the discussion, the conference, by a large majority, adopted the Bill of Rights and agreed that the most immediate task was building a network to get it out to meatpackers across the country.

The conference also elected a continuations committee, consisting of Lynn Huston and Cheryl Rawn, UFCW Local P-9; Jan Herritz, UFCW Local 538 in Madison; Bob Langemaier, UFCW Local 22 in Freemont, Nebraska; and Bud Schulte. Langemaier was one of the Hormel workers fired early last year for honoring Local P-9's roving picket set up at his plant.

The remaining day and a half was spent discussing conditions in the industry, the experiences of P-9, and the militant history of the packinghouse workers.

The continuations committee will get a conference report out to participants and publicize the Bill of Rights to as wide an audience as possible. It also discussed how to reach out to other packinghouse workers, such as poultry workers in the South, and the possibility of another conference.

PACKINGHOUSE WORKERS BILL OF RIGHTS

1. **We need a living wage.** Wages must be tied to the real cost of living and needs of workers and their families, not to falsified statistics on productivity and profitability cooked up by management and government.

2. **We need secure jobs.** We oppose corporations opening, closing, and selling meatpacking plants at will in order to destroy our wages, benefits, and unions. We want to lead secure lives, not be forced to move from job to job.

3. **We need a safe workplace.** The pace and conditions of work must be regulated by elected union committees to ensure immediate correction of unsafe conditions.

4. **We need an industry-wide master agreement.** We need uniform wages and expiration dates on contracts, prohibition against doing struck work, and guaranteed recall rights for strikers to prevent the employers from playing us off against each other.

5. **We need short, simple contracts.** Our contracts must be brief, specific and written in clear, everyday language, with translations available to non-English speaking workers. We need to vote on the full text of contracts, not on misleading and incomplete summaries, and only after adequate time has been allowed to study the contents.

6. **We need an international union made up of independent, autonomous locals.** The local is the basic unit of the union and the best defender of democracy and militancy. Each local must be free to decide its affairs and elect its leaders freely, without outside interference.

7. **We support the goal of one packinghouse local for every major meatpacking plant.** District and amalgamated locals have become an obstacle to direct control of unions by the ranks.

8. **We need democratic unions where every worker has a direct vote on all agreements which affect him or her.** All negotiations with the employers should be carried out democratically with the rank and file informed and consulted at every step.

9. **We need democratic unions where all local, regional and international officers are elected by a direct vote of the members.**

10. **We need democratic unions where all decisions about strike policy, finances, leadership and action are directly decided by the workers involved.** The correct role of an international is to mobilize solidarity and respect and back up the decisions of the rank and file.

11. **We need honest, militant union leaders.** Our officers must have no privileges not enjoyed by the rank and file. Their wages should be no higher than those of the rank and file who elected them. Union officers who get paid like corporate management think like corporate management.

12. **We need the right to strike, picket, honor other workers' picket lines and organize without interference by judges, police, National Guard, labor boards or any other governmental bodies acting on behalf of the employers.**

13. **We demand that public tax dollars which meatpacking employers obtain from the government in order to subsidize wages of strike breakers and the operation of low-wage non-union plants be used for the immediate relief of our unemployed packinghouse co-workers.**

14. **We demand that all contracts remain in force for the life of the agreement, regardless of changes in plant ownership.** We do not accept that hard won gains can be torn up simply because a plant is allegedly sold to another operator.

15. **We declare that only solidarity and united action can defend our wages, working conditions and unions from destruction by the employers and their financial and governmental allies.**

Our goal is one united democratic union of all packinghouse workers and our slogan is "An injury to one is an injury to all." We urge local unions and other units of packinghouse workers, no matter what unions they belong to, to discuss and adopt this Bill of Rights.

[This copy of the Packinghouse Workers Bill of Rights has been slightly shortened from the original.]

NOTES FROM A 'DISLOCATED WORKER'

by Bill Onasch

Steve Bloom's article, "The Myth of Deindustrialization in the U.S. Economy," on page 5 of this issue, is a valuable contribution to the discussion about what is happening to industrial production in North America and what the working class can do to defend itself against the current employer offensive on our hard-won past gains in wages, working conditions, and job security. Being a "dislocated worker"—the curious name assigned to those of us who have lost our jobs through plant closings—I have followed this discussion with more than an academic interest. I believe the experiences of workers at the late Litton Microwave Minnesota operations—where I was employed for ten years and served for several years as chair of the union negotiating and grievance committee—is not untypical of what is happening to mid-sized industrial operations, particularly in the Midwest.

Litton Industries is a giant conglomerate which over the past three decades has bought and sold many substantial operations. Included among their present and past acquisitions are: Ingalls shipbuilding; Royal typewriters; Jefferson Electric; Louis-Allis generators; Monroe calculators; Sweda cash registers; Cole office furniture; Union/Butterfield tools; and numerous others. Litton is a huge military contractor, a leader in radar guidance systems.

In 1965, Litton bought a small plant in north Minneapolis from Franklin Manufacturing (itself a division of the Studebaker conglomerate). This plant was manufacturing battery chargers and "infrared" ovens (used for heating packaged sandwiches in bars and filling stations). It was soon converted to the production of commercial and consumer countertop microwave ovens.

Litton became the dominant company in the explosive growth of the microwave industry. The company built two large plant facilities in a suburban industrial park and leased two other buildings. By 1976, 1,400 production workers were employed in the Minneapolis area operations, which included fabrication of sheet metal components, assembly and subassembly operations, warehousing and service facilities.

In addition to being the leader in the burgeoning North American market, Litton aggressively pursued the export market, winning a significant share of European and Australian sales under local "private labels."

Expansion and Runaway

But even as Litton was expanding in Minneapolis, it was already planning to abandon these

operations. In 1977, Litton announced it was opening "Countertop II" in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. State and local governments gave Litton lucrative tax breaks and lease terms to locate in a huge plant site in a new industrial park. Local vocational schools were put at Litton's disposal to train workers for the new operations. South Dakota has no income tax but it does have a so-called "right to work" law, banning union shop agreements. In 1977, South Dakota was 48th among the states in per capita wages.

Initially, Litton claimed that this new Sioux Falls plant was not a "runaway" but an "expansion," emphasizing that new models, never built in Minneapolis, would be produced there. While in the beginning this was technically true, it cynically ignored the fact that these "new" models were needed to replace "old" models being phased out in Minneapolis. As earlier models were discontinued in Minneapolis, huge layoffs and permanent line shutdowns followed. In 1976 Minneapolis had five countertop assembly lines (in addition to lines producing commercial ovens and ranges); by 1979 only two countertop lines remained and those were limping along on reduced, one-shift schedules.

Playing Off the Two Cities

In 1979 the first union contract negotiations since the opening of the Sioux Falls plant took place. It should be recalled that this was a period of double-digit inflation and also the "bailout" and massive concessions by the United Auto Workers to the Chrysler Corporation. Litton's negotiating team was very belligerent, bragging that they had already taken 30 strikes by local unions over the past year. They offered a paltry wage increase, patriotically conforming to President Carter's "wage guidelines," and further demanded crippling concessions in contract language. They arrogantly told the union that not only would the unorganized plant in Sioux Falls continue to operate; they intended to run the struck Minneapolis operations as well.

Run by corporate "Human Resources" experts from Beverly Hills, the company bargaining team seriously underestimated the Minneapolis union. Litton Minneapolis was organized by the small independent United Electrical Workers (UE). Because of the UE's peculiar history—fighting for survival against raids by much bigger unions—this union tended to take more militant positions and had a relatively greater level of internal democracy and membership participation than most other unions. It turned out the union was much better prepared for the strike than the company. Litton

lured only 12—out of 600—of its regular workers across the picket lines. When the company started hiring strikebreaking "replacement workers" they were met with mass picketing. Big battles ensued. After a few weeks the assembly lines began to run dry, starved for vital sheet metal parts normally produced by skilled and semiskilled Minneapolis strikers. After six weeks, with both sides somewhat bloodied, a settlement was reached granting substantial wage increases and improvements for the union in contract language.

After 1979 the company accelerated its transfer of work to the Sioux Falls plant. There was no longer any pretense about this not being a runaway; indeed, a vindictive management made clear that the "ungrateful" Minneapolis workers were being justly punished for standing up to the company. Going through the empty ritual of "bargaining over partial plant closings" with the union, Litton never maintained that they were losing money on their Minneapolis operations. Though cloaking actual numbers in top secrecy, they admitted that Minneapolis was making profits—and substantial profits. They agreed that the employees worked hard and had an acceptable level of productivity. But, the need to remain "competitive" dictated the relocation of this profitable work.

Organizing the Runaway

After the strike the union turned serious attention towards organizing the Sioux Falls plant. They encountered many scoffers. Litton management, while dealing with local unions "inherited" through company acquisitions, could boast that no union had ever organized one of their plants—though there had been numerous attempts. Officials of other unions, many of whom had seen work from their locals moved to South Dakota, were also dubious. They tried to explain that South Dakota workers—especially those fresh from the farm and mostly women, as was the case at Litton Sioux Falls—could never be organized. Besides, there was the "right to work" law.

Fortunately, the UE took the position that these women workers "fresh from the farm" were not fundamentally different from the second and third generation factory workers in Minneapolis. The major difference between the two groups was that the Sioux Falls workers were much more exploited—they were driven to produce more for a much lower wage. It turned out that they were very much interested in organizing for higher wages and—perhaps even more importantly—for some dignity and security on the job.

The UE's fight to organize the Sioux Falls plant—which I had the opportunity to participate in—became a real cause celebre in South Dakota. The Litton corporate head of "Human Resources," the notorious union-buster Mat Dietrich, took personal charge of Litton's defense. The war to win the hearts and minds of Litton workers spilled outside the walls of the plant, polarizing the town. When the Litton workers voted, in September

1980, to be represented by the UE, there were literally celebrations in the streets and the election was the lead news story of the day throughout the state.

Winning a National Labor Relations Board representation election is, of course, only a small first step in gaining a union contract. It took more than three years of struggle for Sioux Falls workers to get their first union agreement. Those three years saw mass demonstrations, numerous unfair labor practice charges filed with the NLRB, a corporate campaign aimed both at Litton's consumer products and at getting institutions to sell their Litton holdings, and even a bill introduced in Congress to deny "defense" contracts to Litton.

Wage Gap Narrowed—Not Closed

The first union contract at Litton Sioux Falls did result in some improvements in wages, but the South Dakota workers did not have sufficient bargaining power to win wages equal to Minneapolis—a substantial gap remains. Because of the continuing wage differential, Litton continued to transfer work from Minneapolis to Sioux Falls even after unionization there.

There was a sizable group of Minneapolis workers who felt they were immune to the threat of Sioux Falls—those working in the sheet metal fabrication and paint shops. This false sense of security was based not only on the higher skill levels required for these jobs but also on the observation of the substantial capital investment Litton made in these departments—huge 400-ton punch presses; high speed turret presses; numerically controlled press brakes; robotized automatic spot welding lines; an "E-dip" tank for the paint shop—state of the art stuff.

But Litton shocked these workers by announcing, in the spring of 1985, that it had sold its fab/paint operations to Northern Metals, a division of the Western Industries conglomerate. The machines, and the work, were to be moved to Osceola, Wisconsin, a small town about an hour's drive to the east of the Twin Cities.

Despite some inevitable problems, the workers were nonetheless amazed by the speed and relative ease of moving dozens of big machines to Osceola. (Some of the punch presses, even after partial disassembly, had to be transported on two semi-trailers, lashed together, traveling late at night under police escort.) By the fall of 1985, within six months, the move was complete and the assembly lines never missed a beat for want of parts.

Northern Metals hired a few Litton foremen and engineers—but no Litton production workers. Machine operators at the Osceola plant were paid less than half the Litton Minneapolis wages.

These fab/paint workers did fare better than the assembly workers laid off before them. Union proposals for severance pay for workers displaced by the moving of assembly lines had been summarily rejected. But the company needed an orderly trans-

fer of the fab/paint work and realized that it would not be wise to have angry workers, with nothing to lose, tending millions of dollars worth of equipment during the transition—so a severance package was agreed to: two to eight weeks' pay, depending on length of service, and extension of health and dental coverage. Litton also agreed to support applications for "dislocated worker" benefits under the Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA) laws.

Total Shutdown

Within a few months of the sale of the fab/paint operations, Litton not only moved out the few remaining unionized jobs in the service warehouse—it announced the move of its division offices to Memphis, Tennessee, eliminating several hundred office and technical jobs. Within ten years the Litton Minneapolis total work force declined from well over 2,000 to zero. The company did everything but pour salt on the ground when they left.

The union fought for the establishment of a "dislocated workers' project," funded by JTPA and TRA grants. These two laws are efforts to reinforce, and take advantage of, the deindustrialization myth. Professional "career counselors"—usually products of the behaviorist school of psychology—emphasize that workers must lower their expectations, accept the new and unpleasant "realities" of the job market. They stress retraining for service sector jobs, largely discounting the prospects for industrial reemployment.

The "science" of career forecasting seemed to need some fine tuning, however. At a time when the Teamsters union was arguing for the creation of a dislocated workers' project to retrain the massive numbers of unemployed truck drivers, some Litton workers were being approved for retraining—as truck drivers.

Some of the younger Litton workers were able to take advantage of retraining funds to prepare for technical jobs that have some relatively good earnings prospects. But most of the women workers were gently guided back into "traditional"—and low paying—clerical occupations while many of the older male workers did indeed find industrial jobs—but at substantially reduced wages.

Of course, there are a number of workers who have not yet found jobs and whose prospects are bleak—the victims of race and age discrimination. Black workers, who had impressive job-specific skills at Litton, are seldom seriously considered by employers in this bosses' market. Likewise with the substantial number of workers in the 45-60 age group—too young to retire but "too old" for most employers.

Not Unique

Litton Microwave is certainly but a small drop in the torrent of plant closings of recent years. In some ways it is not typical—Litton Industries is on the cutting edge of the employer offensive and the UE is among the most militant unions. But

the dynamics of the rise and fall of Litton Minneapolis are quite similar to dozens—possibly hundreds—of abandoned plants throughout the Midwest and there are some useful points to be noted:

1) The elimination of Litton Minneapolis did not represent any "deindustrialization." Allowing for market fluctuations, there are essentially the same number of production workers in Litton Microwave's operations today as at the peak of Minneapolis employment—they are merely located in different facilities, in different cities.

2) The abandoned plants bear no resemblance to the aging Eastern mills and factories, long neglected and "decapitalized" and no longer viable, that are the popular image of closed plants. Litton's Minneapolis facilities were new, built to their specifications, well maintained, and equipped with the most advanced technology.

3) The Minneapolis operations were admittedly highly profitable. Gone forever are the days when capitalists might be content with a "fair" or "reasonable" profit. To be "competitive," corporations will go to extraordinary lengths to achieve even modest increases in their rate and volume of profits.

4) The major inducement for the Litton shifts of operations was to disrupt the organization of the workers resulting in increased exploitation both through lower wages and benefits and increased "productivity" through unrelenting speedup, job combinations, and psychological intimidation.

5) Important supplementary inducements were major tax breaks and other incentives, granted by federal, state, and local governments. For example, until the recent federal "tax reform," companies such as Litton could receive substantial tax credits for opening "new" plants—under the guise that they were "creating jobs!"—even though the "new" plant might be responsible for the permanent layoffs of hundreds, or thousands, of workers in another area.

6) Advances in technology and the decline of shipping costs, due to the "deregulation" and reorganization of common carriers, allow virtually unlimited decentralization of operations. With computer modems and satellite hook-ups, there are no major technical obstacles to Litton having their top management and engineers in Memphis, their sheet metal fabrication in Osceola, and their assembly and distribution in Sioux Falls.

I believe the above factors are not unique to the Litton Microwave experience but are generalized trends at work in U.S. manufacturing. Despite the millions of "dislocated workers" and the scores of "industrial ghost towns" scarring the East and Midwest, we are not seeing deindustrialization so much as the reorganization of industry. For nearly every Youngstown you will find a Sioux Falls.

Union Response

More unique to the Litton experience was the response of the union. The Litton union was a good example of what today is described as "adversar-

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HOW WILL WOMEN WORKERS GAIN PAY EQUITY?

by Evelyn Sell

The *Militant* newspaper has published many articles supporting women's battles to win higher wages, and has proposed ways that women can close the big gap between their earnings and those of men. Coeditor Margaret Jayko attacked the concept of comparable worth as a legitimate means for achieving better wages for female workers in two articles for the "Learning About Socialism" column. In the March 20, 1987, issue she criticized the labor movement's support for "equal pay for work of comparable value." She quoted from an article in the April 5, 1986, issue of the AFL-CIO's *American Federationist* which called for "job evaluations that take into account an individual's responsibility, knowledge, skills required, and work environment regardless of sex. Pay scales would then be restructured to reflect true job values rather than institutionalized sex discrimination."

Jayko claims "This approach to the fight for equal pay assumes that women's low wages are the result of sex segregation in the labor market. But the opposite is actually the case. Segregating jobs by sex originates with the effort by employers to profit from cheap female labor.

"This false idea is based on another misconception—that what workers get paid is related to the value of what they do or produce."

After thus oversimplifying and distorting the origins and history of sex-based job categories, Jayko makes an unsubstantiated assumption about the basis of the comparable worth concept. She constructs a straw person to be knocked over by the Marxist theory of value. Jayko explains that the value of every commodity "is determined by the quantity of labor time that society needs on the average to produce it." Since labor power is also a commodity in capitalist society, "the value of workers' labor power—which regulates what workers receive in wages—is determined by what it costs to feed, clothe, house, transport, train, and reproduce a worker."

Although Jayko includes "training" in her statement, she completely ignores how this factor fits into the concept of comparable worth. She should remember how Marx analyzed differences in the value of labor power. It is *training* which makes the value of a skilled worker's labor power higher than that of an unskilled worker. Training is an important measure used in comparable worth plans—or, as the union newspaper put it "knowledge, skills required."

Schematic Vs. Genuine Marxism

Jayko presents the most elementary concept of the labor theory of value, but proves herself

totally incapable of comprehending the actual and extremely complex dynamics of what determines wages for women or any particular group of workers in a real capitalist economy such as that of the U.S. This cannot be boiled down to a textbook treatise on "reproduction of labor power," or the "value of labor power," which is only the *starting point* in determining "what workers receive in wages," not its conclusion.

A myriad of *social* realities also play a role, such as the degree of monopoly control of the economy, the political strength or weakness of the ruling classes and the oppressed, the existence and strength of labor unions, past concessions granted to groups of workers, past defeats of workers' struggles, a *history of discrimination against groups of workers*, social expectations and customs, etc. Any of these and a host of similar items can function within society to push the wages of any particular group of workers either *above* or *below* the actual "value of labor power."

Jayko is so intent on opposing comparable worth, she ends up claiming that the value of women's labor power is, in actual fact, lower than that of men. She quotes Marx: "The value of the laboring power is formed by two elements—the one merely physical, the other historical or social." From this she draws a remarkable conclusion: "Because women for centuries have been the oppressed sex, the value of their labor power is lower than that of male workers. That's why, on the average, the price they receive for their labor is less."

Marx explained that the price paid for labor is not always equal to the actual value of that labor power. Jayko helped make this point—and unconsciously contradicted her previous assertion—when she wrote in her March 27 column: "Women's status as the oppressed sex is an example of what Karl Marx described as a 'helpless condition of some sections of the working class, a condition that prevents them from *exactingly equally with the rest the value of their labor-power*'" (emphasis added).

Doesn't the fight for comparable worth address precisely this "helpless condition" of women workers, attempting to guarantee that they are paid "equally with the rest the value of their labor-power"? How could a Marxist oppose such a demand? Jayko sees only one way to improve women's earnings: affirmative action. "By fighting their way into union-organized, higher-paying jobs in industries that have previously been male, women force the bosses to pay them the same wages as men. . . . These higher wages, in fact, raise the income of women above the value of women's labor

power in this society." This strategy raises many questions. What about the many millions of women who can't get into industry? The millions who teach, provide health care, and function in jobs necessary to the transportation and distribution of industrial products? If women could win higher wages, wouldn't more men be attracted to "female jobs," thus breaking down sex segregation in employment?

Jayko promised, "Next week's column will discuss why the fight for affirmative action, not 'equal pay for work of comparable value,' is the road to ending the wage gap." I was looking forward to this next column, to find out why she rejects the obvious possibility that *both* affirmative action and comparable worth are means for narrowing the gap between male and female wages. What arguments could she pose to justify the claim that they are counterposed?

Due to illness, however, Jayko had to postpone her promised article, and presented an excerpt from Mary-Alice Waters's introduction to *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women*. Then, coeditor Doug Jenness returned from vacation and resumed writing the "Learning About Socialism" column. Jayko's promised third article has yet to appear.

Situation of Women Workers

When we look at what has actually taken place in comparable worth struggles, it is clear that women's rights groups and labor unions have been dealing with the real-life problems of women in the work force. When comparable worth demands were first raised in the 1970s, the overwhelming majority of women workers were trapped in a job ghetto. In 1975, for example, 46 percent of all women aged 16 and over were in the labor force. Of these 37 million women workers, 67 percent were employed as clerical workers, service workers outside the home, salespersons, and private household workers. An additional 16 percent had professional and technical jobs, most as teachers, health workers, and librarians. Over 80 percent of women workers were in female dominated, low-paying jobs.

Women who held traditionally male jobs received lower salaries than their male counterparts in most cases. There was a 57 percent wage gap between the earnings of women and men. The primary factor in the lower pay received by women was their concentration in low-wage occupations and industries. However, research studies showed that women still received less pay after adjusting for education, work experience, and occupation or industry group.

With the development of the women's liberation movement and the help of affirmative action gains, a rising number of women entered male-dominated fields. But the overwhelming number of women workers continued to be involved in female-dominated jobs. Demands for comparable worth plans addressed this situation—which still exists today for most women workers.

Comparable Worth Struggles

"Pay equity" was the term used by the National Organization for Women (NOW), Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), and many labor organizations fighting for comparable worth during the 1980s. In her testimony before a Congressional committee in 1985, NOW president Judy Goldsmith explained: "Pay equity requires that women be paid for the actual worth of their work, according to the skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions of their employment, and prohibits underpayment based on sex or race. . . . Pay equity simply asks that each individual employer's *existing* pay classification and wage system be made free of bias so that jobs are offered and paid on a fair basis without reference to the sex or race of the employee."

The first big victory came in 1981, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the 1964 Civil Rights Act allows women workers to file sex discrimination lawsuits on the grounds that they are not paid as much as males performing the same kinds of work. This went beyond the concept of "equal pay for equal work" embodied in the 1963 Equal Pay Act, and opened the door for subsequent lawsuits and union strikes demanding "comparable worth."

Within a month of this ruling, city workers in San Jose, California, went on strike in the first union-organized battle to include comparable worth provisions in a labor contract. The business agent for American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 101 explained, "The issue is not equal pay for women. It is equal pay for work of comparable value."

The union's position was supported by a 1979 study of city employees rating 300 job categories on: "know-how, problem-solving, accountability, and working conditions." Armed with the job ratings presented in the study, Local 101 demanded a raise in the women's wages.

After a bitter nine-day strike, the municipal workers approved a precedent-setting contract providing equal pay for comparable work. The *Wall Street Journal* warned that this was "removing the lid from Pandora's box" because it would "abolish the labor market and have everyone's pay set by bureaucrats." City officials predicted disaster but two years later they admitted that their fears had not come true. In fact, San Jose had gradually raised salaries for jobs held mostly by women without bankrupting the city or losing skilled blue-collar workers.

The second landmark victory came in 1983 from a lawsuit filed by AFSCME and nine women workers against the state of Washington. Declaring, "You can't legally balance the budget on the backs of women," U.S. District Court Judge Jack E. Tanner ruled in favor of comparable worth in this case, which covered close to 15,000 women workers.

Tanner's ruling was challenged and overturned by a federal appeals court in 1985. Labor unions and women's rights groups reacted immediately. AFSCME president Gerald McEntee said, "We're going to take it to the Supreme Court." NOW president

Eleanor Smeal said it was time to "raise hell" in the courts and in Congress to win acceptance of the comparable worth concept. Opponents were gleeful. A spokesperson for the Justice Department called the concept "a dead duck" in the legal context. An attorney for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce declared comparable worth "legally bankrupt."

In fact, comparable worth remained a live issue while this case wound its way through the courts. Some cities, fearful of similar lawsuits, adopted comparable worth studies, resolutions, and plans. The first major private sector battle over comparable worth was waged in 1984 by Yale University workers organized in Local 34 of the Federation of University Employees. After a ten-week strike, the union ratified an agreement in January 1985, giving female clerical and technical workers a 35 percent increase over the life of the 42-month contract.

Attacks by the Reagan Administration

Arguments for and against comparable worth received media attention during the 1984 presidential campaign. White House economist William Niskanen raised a storm of protest from women's groups when he called comparable worth "a truly crazy proposal." He argued that "most of the difference between men and women's salaries is a consequence of the fact that many, if not most, women have interruptions in their job experience over a period of time associated with marriage and child bearing, and that . . . reflects very real economic divisions." In response, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Thomas Donahue said, "They revive the crude belief that women work only for 'pin money,' when, in fact, most women work for the same reason men do: because they have to."

Clarence Pendleton, chairman of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, warned that employers would automate their operations or hire fewer persons if they were forced to pay higher salaries for traditionally female jobs, such as secretarial positions. Supporting her boss's opinion, staff director Linda Chavez added that comparable worth would "decrease financial incentives for women to seek higher-paying jobs traditionally held by men. The whole thrust of the women's movement for the last 20 years has been to open doors for women so they can go into these non-traditional jobs."

Feminists, however, did not agree with this evaluation of "the whole thrust of the women's movement." NOW president Judy Goldsmith called on the federal government to take the lead in setting a national standard to eliminate "sex-based wage discrimination." She said such discrimination "is against the law for both public and private employers, whether an employer provides unequal pay for equal work or unequal pay for different jobs of comparable value."

After Reagan was returned to office, federal agencies carried out his view that comparable worth was "a cockamamie idea . . . that would destroy the basis of free enterprise."

The U.S. Civil Rights Commission voted 5 to 2 to reject the concept of comparable worth, called on the Justice Department to "resist comparable worth doctrine" whenever it appears in court, and urged Congress and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to leave the issue to "market factors" such as job qualifications.

In its first decision involving the comparable worth issue, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission rejected comparable worth as a means of determining job discrimination in a case involving city employees in Rockford, Illinois. The Justice Department filed a court brief siding with the state of Illinois against a nurses' class action suit charging the state with paying substantially less for jobs held mostly by women than for comparable male-dominated jobs.

The Struggle Continues

Unions and women's rights groups continued to fight for comparable worth—losing some battles but also winning many victories.

The initial contract won by AFSCME for Chicago's city employees included \$1 million in pay adjustments for several thousand librarians. In May 1985, the Los Angeles City Council voted to raise the salaries of 3,900 women to bring their earnings in line with pay received by men in jobs on the same level. City secretaries and clerks (about 70 percent of whom were women) received boosts bringing their wages close to those received by gardeners, garage attendants, drivers, and maintenance personnel (male-dominated jobs). This settlement, negotiated with AFSCME, marked the first time a major city used comparable worth as the basis for setting wages.

Gains at the state level were registered during 1985. The Wyoming Senate approved pay equity legislation mandating a study and a revision of the state's compensation plan. A lawsuit filed by the California State Employee Association prompted the California Senate to approve comparable worth legislation recommending ways of closing the salary gap between female and male state government employees. Governors in Ohio, Oregon, Maryland, and Wisconsin submitted budget proposals which included pay equity adjustments. Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Wyoming mandated that state employee wages be set according to comparable worth principles. By the end of 1985, only five states had taken no action to address the issue of pay equity.

Majority Supports Pay Equity

The attention accorded comparable worth reflects majority opinion across the country. The National Committee on Pay Equity released the results of a poll in February 1985 which showed: 69 percent of those surveyed felt women were not paid as fairly as men for the work they do, and 79 percent supported pay equity as a solution. Groups urging Congressional action on this issue included

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“Left unity must be forged in the class struggle”

FIVE Mexican left organizations have just confirmed their decision to fuse into a single organization in May. The main ones are the Mexican United Socialist Party (PSUM, the Communist Party) and the Mexican Workers' Party (PMT). The three other formations are smaller -- the Revolutionary Patriotic Party (PPR), the People's Revolutionary Movement (MRP), and the Union of the Communist Left (UIC). A section of the PMT, the so-called Rank-and-File Current, has refused to associate itself with this fusion, which has in fact been carried out quite quickly. The PSUM only made the proposal in July 1986.

The Mexican section of the Fourth International, the Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT) has refused to participate in this accelerated unification, which is far from being the product of political convergence and common mass work.

For example, the student movement that shook Mexico in December-January showed the breadth of the differences existing among the various organizations. From the outset, the PRT were involved with students engaged in the struggle and in the University Student Council, the leading body of the strike. But the PSUM and PMT denounced the students' demands as reactionary and petty-bourgeois.

The following is a statement of the Political Committee of the PRT issued at the time of the official announcement of the fusion of the five parties.

As has been made known publicly, the Revolutionary Workers' Party, has decided not to participate in the present unification process being conducted by five left political organizations:

1. The PRT considers that progress in a process of unification by a major sector of the Mexican left could have a considerable significance. For that very reason, we think that this can be accomplished only through a broad process of convergence. A simple desire for unity is not enough -- it is necessary to measure carefully the real possibilities for such a step.

We are convinced of this, inasmuch as the frustration of such a move would have totally negative repercussions. And this is all the more true when we see in some sections of left activists a certain skepticism about the present relevance of the fight for socialism.

2. Our party proposed a method that would make it possible to assess the possibilities for a unification. Since September 1986, we have noted

that the formation of a federation of parties with its own organizational structure, but leaving a certain autonomy of functioning for each organization, could be a basis for deciding whether it was possible to form a unitary political organization.

We proposed the formation of a collective leadership to orient the process; joint functioning on a state and municipal basis; publication of a common journal and a joint internal bulletin; coordination of trade-union, peasant, urban neighborhood, women's and youth work; as well as holding public conferences to discuss the policy to be followed in all of these sectors; the drawing up of an agenda for discussion on a series of fundamental aspects of the class struggle and so on. As a guiding principle, we proposed that the ranks of the parties be the fundamental protagonists in this process, regardless of whether this extended the time necessary to conclude it. Because we were, and continue to be, convinced that only in this way could a solid unification be

achieved, in which the members of the parties involved would not find themselves limited to reading the daily paper to find out about the development of the unity process.

3. This proposal on method was based on a fact that seems to escape some people today. The left organizations have functioned separately for many years. This has not happened simply because of the sectarianism of some of them, but because of a lack of political and programmatic convergences. Today, under the slogan of "modernize or die," some left activists want to wipe out these differences by fiat.

The PRT does not suffer from confusion on this score. We know that there are a myriad of political differences, some of them very important. They are not, as some have claimed in an attempt to discredit our position, over what happened decades ago or about everybody's ideology. They are different judgements about the type of party that is to be built.

From our point of view, we need an organization that not only guarantees minority rights but also guarantees the usefulness of the party in the class struggle, a party whose members do not find themselves on opposing sides in a conflict, some supporting the movement and others the authorities.

We have no reason to hide the fact that there are differences over how the various forces assess the relationship that the party should have with the mass movement, and over the significance of political independence from the PRI [the governing party in what to a large extent is a one-party state] its currents and the bosses and so on.

4. Despite all that, the PRT's proposal was based on another real fact -- the Mexican left has begun to overcome its cannibalism, and thus it was possible to initiate a process enabling us through joint work and serious discussions to test the possibilities for unifying the left into a single party.

5. Five left organizations have decided to go ahead with another method, and we respect their decision. However, we want to point out in brief our differences with it. We think that under the pressure of approaching elections the parties involved in this fusion have turned the mechanisms for unification upside down. In their congresses, the five organizations are going to decide to fuse in May. They will legally register the new party with the Ministry of the Interior. Then they are going to discuss what policy this party will support in the mass struggle, and decide on what its analysis will be of

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These questions will not be decided upon until the new party's first congress, but it will have existed as a party legally since May. The PRT thinks that these questions are key to knowing whether it is possible to form a new party since this involves not merely tactics of a secondary importance but central political questions.

Problems

A single example suffices to demonstrate this. Recently a trade-union congress was held by the five fusing parties and the PRT. This conference discussed industrial reconversion and the strategy of the left in the workers' movement. On the first question, only the PSUM and the PRT expressed a point of view, since the other parties indicated that they did not have a position on it (and we are talking here about a fundamental problem for the Mexican workers).

However, the most revealing discussion was on the question of strategy.

Here the PSUM proposed trade-union collaboration with the bureaucracy of the Congreso de Trabajo [Congress of Labor] as the key element. The MRP argued that the Mexican left should form a union confederation outside the Congreso de Trabajo, as has been done in other countries in Latin America. The PPR maintained that in view of the crisis it was essential to offer an answer along lines similar to that put by the oil workers union (the Quinista bureaucracy, no more, no less). And the PMT argued that the basic element of strategy was to form party committees in the unions.

It may be expected that if similar conferences are held for each of the sectors of the mass struggle, the result would be the same. It could not be otherwise when you have a discussion on the recent student movement at the University of Mexico in which some of these forces think that the University Students' Committee (CEU) raised reactionary demands and fought for privileges.

6. The PRT wants to reiterate its conviction that unity is the fundamental element demanded today by the class struggle. Calls for such unity

arise in every struggle that is waged against the PRI regime's rightist policy. The unity that is needed is unity of the mass movement, unity around the struggle of the CEU to transform the university and to ward off attacks on the students' just gains; unity in the struggle of the Mexican Electrical Workers' Union against the state policy of wage restrictions; in the struggle of the education workers against the undemocratic methods of the union bureaucrats; in the struggle of the Ford-Hermosillo workers against the starvation-wages policy of this transnational company and so on.

It is these struggles that will reveal what is consistent and what is sectarian. This is where we propose that unity of the left be forged; otherwise we would be reduced to an apparatus unity. It is to this struggle for unity that the PRT has devoted its efforts, as it has to its proposal to offer the people of Mexico a single democratic electoral alternative through the formation of a coalition of all the left for the 1988 federal elections. These are the roads to be followed and the challenges that face the Mexican people.

The Rocky Road

by George Breitman

One of the good things about Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* is that along with the clash of hostile class forces in that revolution it presents the disputes and struggles that took place inside the monarchy, the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, and the proletariat, and the parties that spoke or tried to speak for them. Most valuable of all is the story it tells about what went on inside the Bolshevik Party—not only its decisions and actions, its strengths and victories, but also its hesitations and uncertainties, its mistakes and weaknesses, and how it resolved them through debate and conflict.

Believing that to be the best method for studying revolutionary history, and hoping that that aspect of Trotsky's *History* will serve as a model when the history of the Fourth International is written, I offer the following as a contribution to the study of an important segment of that history, the five-year period that ended in the foundation of the Fourth International in September 1938. This was the period that Trotsky called the second and final phase of the "prehistory" of the Fourth International.

Internationalism was at the heart of the Marxist movement from its inception. When their *Communist Manifesto* called on the workers of the world to unite, Marx and Engels did not mean this in a merely rhetorical or symbolical sense—they meant that revolutionary workers must build an international organization as well as national parties—and when the opportunity arose they helped to organize and lead the First International. Nobody who claimed to be a Marxist in the 1930s disputed the necessity of a Marxist International, although there were differences about the kind that was needed. This was before Stalin dissolved the Communist International during World War II, that is, before Stalin decreed that an international party had become outmoded, a view that is still championed by all the branches and offshoots of Stalinism today.

So in 1933 the critical problem facing revolutionaries was not whether to have or build an international Marxist party but a related though separate question: What do revolutionaries do when an international party becomes corrupt or degenerates and departs from its originally revolutionary principles and practices? Do they remain members of such an international trying to correct its course or do they, at a certain point, decide that such efforts are hopeless, break with the old International and try to build a new one?

A certain body of experience had already accumulated around this question. In the 1870s Marx and Engels agreed to the dissolution of the First International they had founded rather than let it fall into the hands of the anarchists. This cleared the path after Marx's death for the formation of the new Second International, which united the Marxists of the world and played a generally progressive role during the next quarter of a century. In 1914 Lenin called for a new International because the Second had betrayed Marxism by supporting the imperialists in World War I. This orientation guided the Bolsheviks and other internationalists through the war and the Russian revolution and led, more than four years after Lenin's first call, to the foundation of the Third or Communist International.

These developments supplied what might be called precedents for the decision that presented itself in 1933, but of course precedents alone could not determine a decision of such gravity: the chief criterion was objective necessity. And that was the criterion that prevailed at the meeting of the International Left Opposition's executive committee in France in August 1933, which voted to start work toward the formation of a new revolutionary International. It was undoubtedly the single most important decision in the 55-year history of our movement.

This talk by George Breitman was given on August 5, 1978, at an SWP national educational conference. It is reprinted from a bulletin issued in November 1979 as part of the Education for Socialists series published by Pathfinder Press.

For ten years, since 1923, the Left Opposition had been working to reform the Communist International and return it to the path of Leninism and the revolutionary internationalist principles developed under Lenin's leadership at the first four congresses of the Comintern. Although expelled from the Comintern and its affiliates, the Left Oppositionists regarded themselves as a faction of the Comintern, demanding reinstatement and disclaiming any intention of becoming an independent movement in competition with the Comintern.

But Hitler came to power early in 1933, not only because of the cowardice of the Social Democratic and union leaders but also because of the policies of the Stalinized Comintern, which fought bitterly and successfully to prevent any united front struggle against the Nazis. And in the months that followed, the executive committee of the Comintern, refusing to acknowledge any responsibility for the fascist annihilation of the powerful German workers' movement, unanimously reaffirmed the policies that had produced the German catastrophe. This reaffirmation convinced Trotsky and other leaders of the Left Opposition that the Comintern's degeneration had passed the point where its reform was any longer possible, that it was finished as a revolutionary force, and that a new International to replace it was the most urgent need of the international working class.

It was a striking example of simultaneous continuity and change. The principles—of Leninism—remained the same, but in order to promote and realize those principles it now became necessary to radically change the movement's orientation, organizational character and tactics. Previously, the major, the virtually exclusive work of our movement had been the preparation and dissemination of propaganda directed at the Communist parties, their ranks and their periphery, seeking to persuade them to change their policies so that the Communist parties could become capable of leading proletarian revolutions. Now the axis of our work was fundamentally changed. We ourselves were going to undertake the responsibility of building the Leninist international and parties—not alone of course, but together with other revolutionary forces, including those that could still be won from the CPs. Propaganda would continue to be essential, but its form would have to be altered and widened because it would be aimed at non-CP as well as CP audiences, and it would have to be combined with work in the labor and mass movements and with other independent activities to build the cadres of the new Leninist parties.

To appreciate the magnitude, the audacity, and the difficulties of this undertaking requires an effort of historical imagination and some knowledge of the state of the Left Opposition at that time.

For ten years its members had been recruited around the idea that a Leninist faction in the CPs was needed, not a new party; they had been educated around this idea after being recruited; and most of their activity had been devoted to spreading this idea among their contacts. *Faction—not party* thus had the status almost of a tradition. So it might be expected that there would be a strong psychological resistance to the new orientation. But in fact it was surprisingly small and brief. A dissident group split away in France but it probably would have split over another issue

To The Fourth International 1933-38

if this one hadn't come along, and here and there individual members could not adjust to the turn and dropped out. Opposition was so minimal that the leaders felt it was possible to make this momentous change without holding an international conference.

The near-unanimity testifies to a relatively high level of political consciousness among the members of the Left Opposition, who had tried to influence the outcome of the fight against fascism in Germany before it triumphed and who grasped the main implications of the worst defeat the worker's movement had ever suffered. And it testifies to the exceptional authority held by Trotsky, whose arguments in favor of the new orientation seemed irrefutable to the members. But it may also have reflected an inadequate awareness of the towering obstacles that lay ahead, which nobody could have foreseen in all their concreteness.

One of the principal assets of the Left Opposition has already been mentioned—the fact that its members were better educated ideologically and politically than any other tendency of the period. But on the other side, it was a small, weak, and poor movement.

An international conference in February 1933 had been attended by representatives of the Opposition from eleven countries: ten in Europe³, and the United States. The Soviet and Italian sections were organizations in exile, and most of the German leaders had to go into exile after Hitler's victory. By that time the Opposition in the Soviet Union no longer existed as a functioning organization, its remaining supporters having been isolated, exiled or imprisoned by the Stalinist repression, cut off from each other as well as from Trotsky and the Opposition center abroad. The Greek and Spanish sections were the largest, each having over a thousand members. The other main sections had memberships averaging a few hundred, and many of the sections were smaller. Most of the sections were unable to publish regularly even a four-page weekly paper. One reason why an international conference was not held late in 1933 was the material poverty of the movement, which had held a conference in February and couldn't afford the expense of another so soon. In fact, the next international conference was not held until 1936.

Both the Second International and the Third International at this time had millions of members. There were two other international groupings on the left—the International Communist Opposition or Right Opposition, which was led by Heinrich Brandler, and the loose centrist coalition of left Social Democrats and dissident Communist tendencies expelled from the Comintern for opposing the ultraleftism of the Stalinist "third period," which later came to be known as the London Bureau. Both of these two groups in 1933 had affiliates with memberships many times larger than the maximum of four or five thousand then adhering to the Left Opposition. The mightiest movements always begin small, so smallness is not a sin, provided it is not persisted in. But smallness is also never a virtue or an advantage for those whose aim is to win a majority to change the world.

Besides its small numbers, the Left Opposition had the han-

dicap of an unfavorable class composition, most of its sections having a large percentage of petty-bourgeois elements, intellectuals, and students. This too is not uncommon in the early stages of workers' movements but invariably creates critical problems for them. In addition, many of the members were immigrants who were not well acquainted with the country where they lived or its labor movement. Most of the members were young and had little previous political or organizational experience. Some had had prior experience only in the Communist parties in the years when they were being Stalinized, where they were seriously miseducated on many questions.

The leaders of the sections tended to be a little older and more experienced. Some had roots in the workers' movement extending back before the Russian revolution or World War I, and a few of the national leaderships, such as the Belgian and the American, had the important advantage of having worked together in the CPs instead of having met, so to speak, for the first time in the Left Opposition. But none of them had yet completely freed themselves of the concept that prevailed in the Comintern after Lenin and before it was completely subjugated by the Stalinist faction—namely, the concept that the revolutionary party is a federation of factions rather than a combat organization striving for political homogeneity and a collective leadership. Unprincipled factionalism and even cliquism frequently undermined efforts to achieve political and organizational stability in the national sections of the Opposition and their leading bodies.

Until 1933, the only international coordinating committee the Left Opposition had was the International Secretariat; in that year, it was supplemented by an executive committee, which was really only an enlarged IS. The composition of the IS was partly accidental because the national sections lacked money to send representative and authoritative members to serve at the center in Paris. Most of the IS members were young and its composition changed frequently, often as a result of factional changes in the national leaderships, especially in the French section. It had only one full-time staff member, the administrative secretary, the other members devoting most of their time to the work of their own sections. All in all, the independent authority of the IS in this period was never very high.

Our greatest asset in the thirties was the leadership provided by Trotsky. In his person was represented direct continuity with the experiences of the Russian revolution, the long uphill struggles that preceded it, and the lessons of the Comintern in both Lenin's and Stalin's times. This continuity enabled the Left Opposition to escape most of the ruinous mistakes and false starts that plague movements starting out from scratch. His authority—moral, political, and theoretical—towered over that of all the other Opposition leaders. He knew, better than anyone else, about the shortcomings of the IS, but he also knew, as any good branch organizer does, that you have to work with the forces available and not reject them because they are less than ideal or perfect. Trotsky had an unshakable belief in the capacity of the workers to free themselves from class exploitation and oppression, given adequate leadership, and the conviction, which never left him, that the working class vanguard was capable of forging such a leadership. These were the sources of both his patience with others and his own unceasing activism even when he was hemmed in like a prisoner in a cell. And so he worked with the members of the IS and the national leaderships, trying to educate them in the methods of Marxism and principled politics, to help them meet their responsibilities as revolutionary cadres and provide collective leadership for the whole movement. It was often frustrating work because all of them were operating under murderous pressures—the pressures of isolation and an unending series of defeats and setbacks, the pressures of imperialism and of Stalinism, repression of every kind, the spread of fascism, the poverty and demoralization resulting from mass unemployment, and much more—and most of the leading people⁴ in the thirties

3. Germany, France, Britain, Belgium, Greece, Spain, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Italy, and the USSR. Other Oppositionist groups existed—in China, South Africa, Latin America, central Europe, etc.—but were not represented at this conference.

were gone from the movement by the end of World War II. Trotsky by himself could not compensate for unfavorable objective conditions or IS leadership weaknesses, but he could and did limit their impact on the work of the movement, sometimes decisively.

The first results of the August 1933 decision to work for a new International were quite encouraging.

A week later there was an international conference in Paris of the centrist groups in and around the London Bureau, and the Left Oppositionists participated in order to raise the call for a new International and win allies around this call, which came to be known as the Declaration of Four. Trotsky had pointed to the inevitability of ferment in the radical movement as the lessons of the German catastrophe sank in, and to the likelihood that this would result in the emergence or strengthening of left wing tendencies inside the centrist and Social Democratic organizations. This was confirmed at the Paris conference where three national groups joined with the Left Opposition in signing the Declaration of Four.⁴ Two of these groups soon changed their minds about a new International but the third, a Dutch organization led by the veteran communist Henricus Sneevliet, joined the Left Opposition as its Dutch section and he himself became a member of its executive committee, playing an important role in it during the following five years.

Shortly after the Sneevliet group's adherence, the International Left Opposition changed its name to the International Communist League (ICL), the name by which we were known internationally until 1936.

The new orientation had healthy effects in several of the sections. In France it motivated the Opposition's youth group to initiate serious fraction work inside the Socialist Party's youth group, which led to valuable results a year later. In the United States it provided a favorable climate for the resolution of an internal crisis between the supporters of James P. Cannon on one side and of Max Shachtman and Martin Abern on the other that had crippled the American section for three years. Thanks to the help of Trotsky and the IS, the old differences were put aside and there ensued a period of fruitful collaboration between Cannon and Shachtman that lasted through the founding conference of the International, in 1938, making the American section the strongest in the movement and the one that went farthest along the road of transforming itself from a propagandist group to a workers' party of mass action.

But not all the results were positive. I have mentioned that a small group split from the French section when the new line was adopted, but its members had been on their way out for two years, and their departure was a blessing. More serious was the fact that behind the scenes they had the encouragement of an IS member in Paris, Witte of the Greek section.⁵ When the IS and Trotsky called Witte to order, he quit, and under his influence the Greek section, the largest in the Opposition, also broke away from the ICL.

The political reasons for the split were not too clear at the time; the Greek leadership contended that only organizational principles were in contention. But soon after splitting from the ICL in 1934, they affiliated to the London Bureau, which was adamantly

4. The three were the Socialist Workers Party of Germany (SAP), the Independent Socialist Party of Holland (OSP), and the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Holland (RSP). The SAP was organized in 1931 after a left wing tendency was expelled from the German Social Democracy; although outlawed by the Nazis, it claimed over 10,000 members in 1933. The OSP originated in 1932 out of a left wing split from the Dutch Social Democracy, and had an estimated 4,000 members. The RSP was organized in 1929 after its leaders were expelled from the Dutch CP for opposing Stalinism; it had almost a thousand members.

5. The Archeo-Marxists were a tendency in the Greek CP that was expelled in 1924. After functioning as a propagandist group for some years, they became a serious competitor of the CP. They began to sympathize with the Left Opposition in 1930 and joined as its Greek section in 1932. Witte became a member of the IS the same year.

opposed to a new International. Objectively, it would appear, the split involved divergent views on the need for a Fourth International even though the Greek leaders never posed the issue that way before the split.

One of the London Bureau groups that attended the Paris conference was the centrist Independent Labour Party of Britain. The ILP delegates voted against the Declaration of Four but some of its leaders were interested enough to visit Trotsky in France to discuss perspectives. Because of these talks and his reading of the ILP press, Trotsky concluded that an important part of the ILP was in motion toward the left, and he proposed that the members of the year-old British section of the Left Opposition should enter the ILP in order to win support for the Fourth International perspective. The IS agreed with this proposal, and formally recommended it to the British section.

In what resembled a dress rehearsal for a much bigger debate over "entrism" a year later, the leaders of the British section, which had only 40 members and not much independent experience, responded with shock and indignation. What! Right on the heels of calling for a new International and new revolutionary parties, we should go into a miserable outfit like the ILP? Wasn't this in contradiction to the principle that the independence of the revolutionary party must be maintained at all times! Trotsky tried patiently to explain that 40 members were not yet a revolutionary party but only a nucleus for such a party, that the nucleus could expand only through organizational flexibility and tactical suppleness, that the nucleus could preserve its political independence by functioning as a disciplined fraction inside the ILP, and so on. But the sectarian formalists in the British leadership would not listen, and even though the entry proposal was only a recommendation, and not a command, they expelled a minority that favored entry and split away from the International Left Opposition. Later, most of them were to join the ILP but not as a revolutionary fraction of the Fourth Internationalist movement.

As these and other examples in 1933 and later show, merely adopting the new orientation, although necessary, was not sufficient. Cadres in the revolutionary movement cannot be measured only by the good resolutions they vote for or adopt. What counts even more is how they implement those resolutions. Almost everybody in 1933 voted for a new International. But many did not really understand what they were voting for or how to carry it out in practice, and others changed their minds along the way when they saw or felt the immensity of the task.

At the end of 1933 the four organizations that had signed the Declaration of Four held a conference to consider their next steps in elaborating a program for the future International and the areas of collaboration that could take place among the four organizations. It was held in Paris, and Trotsky was part of the ICL delegation. It was agreed to hold another conference six weeks later and to prepare programmatic documents for that, but the exchanges between the ICL representatives and those of the German and Dutch centrists were so sharp that the prospects did not look promising; in fact this was the last joint meeting of the Four, and the proposed February conference never took place.

I mention the conference mainly to call attention to the composition of the ICL delegation, whom I shall designate as the Eight, because they personify and illustrate some of the central problems and developments of the period. One, there was Trotsky. Two, Sneevliet, the leader of the new Dutch section. Three, Erwin Bauer, the leader of the German section, who was then administrative secretary of the IS. Four, Alfonso Leonetti, a founder of the Italian section. Five and six, Pierre Naville and Pierre Frank, founders of the French section. Seven, Leon Sedov, Trotsky's son, a leader of the movement in his own right. And eight, Rudolf Klement, Trotsky's German-language secretary and later administrative secretary of the IS.

These eight Europeans were not the entire leadership of the ICL at the end of 1933, but they included most of the central core.

Sedov and Klement were both to be murdered by the GPU in 1938, in the months before the International's founding conference. As our narrative continues, we will take note of what happened to the other six.

Pulling together the forces of the Fourth International was not only and it was not mainly an organizational problem. It was a political problem primarily. When we were a faction of the Comintern, it sufficed to criticize the errors of the Comintern. But an independent International, if its existence is to be justified and if it is to attract people who will dedicate their lives to it, must have its own positive program, distinct from all others. Reaffirming the basic principles of the first four congresses of the Comintern was not enough; the new International needed a program that would draw the necessary lessons from the cataclysmic events since those congresses, and answer the burning strategic and tactical problems facing the revolutionary movement in the 1930s. In fact, the organizational sides of the struggle for the Fourth International in the five-year period under examination were directly connected to, interlaced with, and dependent on the programmatic sides, the development of which fell mainly on Trotsky.

If I dwell on the organizational history rather than the programmatic contributions which were undoubtedly the main achievement of our movement in this period, it is only because the organizational side is less well known. A crucial advance in our analysis of the Soviet Union was made only a few weeks after the decision to work for a new International. Then, like now, we characterized the USSR as a degenerated workers' state, which revolutionaries must defend against imperialist attack. Until then, however, we had advocated not only reform of the Russian CP but also reform of the Soviet state. This, we decided late in 1933, was no longer realistic. The CP, we concluded, could not be reformed but would have to be opposed and replaced by a Soviet section of the Fourth International; and forcible action to oust the bureaucratic Stalinist caste from power (not just reform) was needed to restore workers' democracy in the Soviet state and society. Subsequently refined as the concept of the political revolution, this has been our bedrock position on the Soviet Union and degenerated and deformed workers' states ever since. Hardly anyone in the ICL disagreed with it when Trotsky formulated it in October 1933,⁶ but differences about the class character of the USSR and what to do about it did begin to grow as the years went by and the crimes of Stalinism mounted. Our position was rejected by a third of the delegates to a national conference of the French section in 1937, and it was a major source of the important SWP split in 1940, where almost half the members were against defending the USSR when it came under imperialist attack in World War II.

Making a correct analysis of Stalinism as it evolved was only one of the important programmatic achievements that put their stamp on the Fourth International and conditioned its internal crises and conflicts in the thirties. Others related to our basic positions on fascism and the united front against it (Germany), People's Frontism (France and Spain), civil war (Spain), national liberation struggles against imperialism (China), and revolutionary policy in the fight against imperialist war. It would be hard to recognize the Fourth International without these programmatic positions. But they did not come easily or automatically. Reaching them required bitter struggle inside the movement as well as outside.

We now have come to the year 1934. In February, right wingers and fascists tried to overthrow the French bourgeois-democratic government; also in February, the Bonapartist government of Austria crushed an armed uprising by the Social Democratic workers; and in October, the Spanish right wing government

crushed an armed uprising led by the Socialist Party. Trotsky considered the French developments to be the most crucial. France is now the key to the international situation, he wrote in a manifesto published in March; he had used the same terms to apply to Germany in the 1930-33 period. By this he meant that the center of revolutionary gravity in Europe had shifted to France; that a struggle decisive for the whole world had opened in that country; that a correct policy there could create the conditions for a revolutionary victory, with all the international repercussions that that would bring, and for a qualitative change in the growth of the movement for the Fourth International.

In keeping with his analysis of the potential situation in France, Trotsky threw himself and everything he had into trying to influence its development. He was hampered when the French press launched a big witch hunt against him in April and the government ordered him deported, because this meant he had to leave the metropolitan area where he had been able to attend IS meetings. Thereafter his direct participation was limited to what he could write or tell an occasional visitor to his home in a remote Alpine village. But his concern with the French section and its work never flagged.

The attempted French coup d'état in February 1934 brought a militant response from the French workers, first a general strike and then overwhelming sentiment for a workers' united front against fascism. This was so strong that first the Socialist Party and then, more slowly, the Communist Party had to consent to a united front. Along with this grew talk and pressure for a merger of these two parties. At this point, in June 1934, Trotsky, who was on the run from one place to another and had not yet been granted permission to live in the French Alps, made an audacious proposal to the French section of the ICL: that it should formally dissolve and join the SP, which permitted tendencies inside the organization to exist and publish their own newspaper. This, he felt would enable it to avoid isolation outside of the new united front and put it in a position to make recruits to its ideas among the large number of left-wing SP members who had joined or become radicalized since Hitler's victory.

Trotsky was the initiator of this entry tactic or maneuver, which came to be known as the "French turn." And he had to explain and defend this proposal with all the vigor and eloquence at his command⁷ because it met much bigger resistance in the French section (and elsewhere) than the call for the new International had received. After a heated discussion and a near split averted only by IS intervention, the entry proposal was adopted by a majority of the French section at a national conference held at the end of August. It was supported by one of the two principal French leaders, Raymond Molinier, and opposed by the other, Pierre Naville. Shortly after the conference, the Naville group split from the section, and although it later decided to enter the SP too, it refused for a long time to join the Bolshevik-Leninist Group in the SP, which was the name now taken by the members of the French section.

The entry tactic was an affront and a blow to everyone in the ICL who was tainted by formalism, schematism, sectarianism, routinism, and passivity, and hid these traits behind radical rhetoric about revolutionary principles and Bolshevik firmness. These traits all came gushing out now. Some were opposed to the entry proposal on the ground that it was impermissible in principle under any circumstances; others were against it on tactical grounds, like Naville; and still others were opposed on any and all grounds.

It can be argued that entrism was only a tactic, and one which applied only in very specific circumstances. This is true enough, but in my opinion Trotsky's proposal was one of his finest contributions in the 1933-38 period. Aside from other benefits it

6. See "The Class Nature of the Soviet State" in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1933-34)* (Pathfinder Press, New York, 1972).

7. Several articles on this subject are in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-35)* (Pathfinder, 1971).

produced, the discussion it provoked shook up a lot of people and led to the first major liberation of our movement from the diseases of dogmatism that had been carried over from the Comintern or had been reinforced by different waves of recruits from third-period Stalinism. It also helped to rid us of people who were hopelessly unassimilable and could only hamper the healthy growth of our movement.

The repercussions in the IS and the ICL executive committee were bigger than those in the French section. Several members were opposed to the turn on various grounds, and most of them were incensed against Trotsky because he had taken the entry proposal to the French section before taking it up with the IS. Bauer, the IS secretary, denounced the proposal as a violation of Bolshevik principles and accused Trotsky of capitulating to the Second International. He could not even wait for the meeting of the ICL executive committee that was called for October to assess the French turn, but quit on the spot, and joined the German affiliate of the London Bureau. Sneevliet, the leader of the Dutch section, and Vereecken, the secretary of the Belgian section, were also opposed to the French turn, largely on tactical grounds, but Trotsky diplomatically persuaded them that even if they voted against the turn they should agree to let the French section, then already inside the SP, complete its experiment. The leadership of the Spanish section, long estranged from the ICL although still part of it, was vehemently against the French turn. The vote at the October meeting, which Trotsky could not attend, would have been even closer if Bauer had not quit so quickly and if the Spanish had not boycotted the meeting. As it was, Sneevliet, Vereecken and Pietro Tresso, a supporter of the Naville group, voted against the resolution written by Trotsky, which was adopted by a vote of 6 to 3.⁸ One of the supporters of the resolution was Cannon of the American section, who had come at Trotsky's urging and was given the assignment of meeting with Bauer, Naville, and others and trying to persuade them they should not split the movement over a tactical question. Another of the supporters of the resolution was Molinier, who favored its main parts but objected so strongly to a provision in it inviting the Naville group to return to the French section that he threatened to resign from the executive committee. And it was at this time, Cannon later reported, that Sneevliet tried to convince him the whole ICL should join the London Bureau in order to take it over and into the Fourth International.⁹

Thus this 1934 dispute accounts for the departure of two more members of the 1933 group of eight leaders: Bauer and Naville (although Naville was to return before leaving for good in 1939). Bauer's defection to the London Bureau and Sneevliet's illusions about the London Bureau in 1934 also tell us something significant about the quality of their commitment to the Fourth International only a year after they became two of the four signers of the Declaration of Four.

Things began to pick up after the October meeting. The brightest spots were in France and the United States.

The American section had decided early in 1934 that the way to apply the new 1933 orientation in the U.S. was to propose a fusion with the left centrist American Workers Party, headed by A.J. Muste. (Contrary to the legends, this proposal originated with the American leaders, not with Trotsky, who approved it; and it was made before the Musteites wrote a glorious page of labor history in the Toledo Auto-Lite strike and before the American section showed its revolutionary caliber in the Minneapolis Teamster strikes.) There had been attempts in 1933 to fuse the German and Dutch sections with centrist groups in the London Bureau but

8. See "The Present Situation in the Labor Movement and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Leninists" in *Documents of the Fourth International: The Formative Years (1933-40)* (Pathfinder, 1973).

9. See Cannon's 1945 speech, "The Workers Party and the Minority in the SWP," in *The Struggle for Socialism in the "American Century"* (Pathfinder, 1977).

they had fallen through. So the fusion of the American section with the AWP around a month after the October ICL meeting was the first time that this particular merger experiment was carried through. And it was a successful experiment, uniting the American cadre with an important group of effective mass workers and integrating most of them into the movement for the Fourth International.

One notable feature of the fusion was that the new Workers Party of the United States did not have any international affiliation at its birth. This was because the AWP had not had such affiliations and was not ready to adhere to the ICL. But this was only a temporary arrangement; seven months later virtually the whole leadership of the Workers Party voted to join with the ICL in working for the Fourth International. The success of the American fusion was contagious, at least in Holland, where the Dutch section and a centrist group headed by Peter Schmidt finally merged a few months later, early in 1935. This new Dutch party decided to belong to both the ICL and the London Bureau for the time being.

But the major advance took place in France, the key to the international situation. Within a few months, the Bolshevik-Leninist Group had tripled its membership and begun to influence thousands of left-wing Socialists; in the SP's youth organization they effected a bloc with the left-centrist leaders that soon had the reformist leaders worried. Even the die-hard sectarian Vereecken had to admit grudgingly that the Bolshevik-Leninists were doing good revolutionary work inside the French SP.

The Moscow bureaucracy finally began to junk its ultraleft third-period policies in the middle of 1934, when it gave permission to the French CP to form a united front with the SP. But neither Stalin, nor the French CP leaders, nor the French SP leaders, as it soon became clear, were interested in forming a united front of the workers against the capitalists. What they all wanted, for various reasons, was a front of the workers *with* some capitalists (bourgeois-democratic capitalists) against other capitalists (reactionary or fascist capitalists); that is, an alliance based on class collaboration instead of class struggle, which bore the name of People's Front when it came into existence. Stalin dropped the other shoe in May 1935 when he signed a non-aggression treaty with French imperialism and gave his blessings to French rearmament. What he was after was an alliance, in the name of "collective security," with peace-loving democratic imperialists (like France) against war-loving fascist imperialists (like Nazi Germany), and to get this alliance he was ready and eager to handcuff the French workers and deliver them into the custody of the French imperialists. That was the meaning of the People's Front that was organized by the bourgeois Radical Socialists, the Social Democrats and the Stalinists later in 1935.

All this put the French Bolshevik-Leninists in an extremely favorable position, precisely because they were inside the SP, to expose the real nature and aims of the People's Front and to rally the left wing workers to a revolutionary mobilization against the coming war. And this was also precisely why the SP leaders, egged on by the Stalinists, realized that they would have to expell the Fourth Internationalists from the SP and isolate them as much as possible as fast as possible.

Trotsky left France for Norway in June 1935, just as the SP leadership was preparing to move against the Bolshevik-Leninist Group. Sizing up the situation realistically, he advised his French comrades that their days in the SP were numbered and that they should orient quickly toward the construction of a new revolutionary party; for tactical reasons, they should take advantage of the democratic clauses in the SP's constitution to resist expulsions, expose the motives of the SP bureaucrats and solicit the sympathy of left wing workers, but all of this had to be subordinated to the political mobilization of an independent revolutionary party.

Trotsky also felt that the new social-patriotic policies of the Stalinists, which were universalized at the Seventh (and last)

World Congress of the Comintern in 1935, and the worsening of the war danger, illustrated by fascist Italy's open preparations for the invasion of Ethiopia later in 1935, required an intensification of public work for the Fourth International, which had temporarily been subordinated to the exigencies of the French turn in France, Belgium, Poland, and elsewhere. So he wrote the text of a new document, the Open Letter for the Fourth International, which reaffirmed the 1933 Declaration of Four and brought it up to date in the light of the new developments since then. This was published in the summer of 1935.¹⁰

Unfortunately, an important part of the French leadership, headed by Molinier, did not agree with Trotsky's views on what to do in France, and the rest of the leadership, following Jean Rous and Naville, proved incapable of providing decisive action toward the construction of a new French party. Molinier thought the SP experience was not concluded and that additional gains could still be won in the SP. He felt this so strongly that he violated discipline and began publishing his own paper. The French section was plunged into the worst crisis in its history. Molinier's group was expelled at the end of 1935 and set up its own party. Precious time was lost. Many of the new recruits and sympathizers gained inside the SP were demoralized by the factionalism and drifted away. The two groups were reunited in June 1936, and then split again a few weeks later. It was a real mess, and accounted in part for the insignificant role the French section played during the big 1936 strike wave that followed the electoral victory of the People's Front, and the reduced role it played inside the Fourth International from then until World War II.¹¹

In the heat of the dispute, which consumed much energy, Trotsky charged that the conduct of the Molinier group represented a capitulation to the social-patriotic pressures generated by the bourgeoisie in preparation for World War II and promoted by the Stalinists and Social Democrats. Then and later the Molinierists indignantly denied this charge, contending that the differences arose only over conflicting estimates as to how best to build a Fourth Internationalist party in France, and it is true that their subsequent evolution as an independent group did not have a social-patriotic character. But it seems equally true that if only tactical differences were involved, then splitting the French section at such a critical juncture was an irresponsible act that inflicted grave damage to the Fourth International in their own country and elsewhere, raising questions about the depth of their understanding about the need for the Fourth International as a united and disciplined movement. In any case, the splits resulted in the departure from the movement's leadership not only of Molinier but also of Pierre Frank, another of the group of eight in the 1933 international leadership. Frank did not return to the leadership until after World War II, during which the two French groups were finally reunited.

The French, Spanish and Belgian workers were radicalized in 1935 and 1936, but the radicalization was channeled into the People's Fronts, which came to power in France and Spain in 1936. People's Frontism became the central political issue, and the major obstacle to the growth of the Fourth International. Our movement produced a large body of propaganda and educational material on People's Frontism, but only a small vanguard was receptive to it at the time, although it represents political capital off which we are still living today. At the beginning nobody in the movement directly disputed the positions taken by Trotsky on People's Frontism, but again, as we shall see, it was a case for some members and leaders of abstract agreement at first, later followed by concrete serious divergences.

Before discussing the differences of People's Frontism, however, mention should be made of our international conference in July 1936. Although it was the only international conference we held

between 1933 and the founding conference in 1938, and although it casts light on the state of the movement around the halfway point in our story, it is rarely discussed in our literature.

The Open Letter for the Fourth International in 1935 had proclaimed the need for its supporters to correlate and unify their work on a world scale under the banner of the Fourth International and held out the perspective of an international conference when conditions permitted. In 1936 the ICL decided the time had come for such a conference, and set it for April. But the conference was poorly prepared. Sneevliet and Peter Schmidt of the Dutch section were put in charge, but instead of organizing the conference, they ignored or obstructed it, and it had to be postponed from April to July. In the final weeks the Dutch leaders even let it be known that because of organizational grievances against the IS and Trotsky they did not intend to attend the conference. The main resolutions had to be written at the last minute, chiefly by Trotsky in Norway, so that there was no real preconference discussion. Trotsky also organized pressure on the Dutch section, so that Sneevliet finally had to attend. Altogether, only eight sections were represented¹²; others were invited but could not attend or did not receive invitations.

The July 1936 gathering was held a couple of months after the big French strike wave, two months after the American section publicly announced its members were entering the Socialist Party, around a week after the start of the Spanish civil war, and a few days after the second split in the French section.

Designating itself as the First International Conference for the Fourth International, this conference dissolved the ICL, established the Movement for the Fourth International (MFI), and expressed hope that a first constituent congress of the Fourth International could be held in seven or so months, after further discussion and the preparation of programmatic documents. The minutes of this conference were lost. For the last nine years we have been trying to get a complete picture of its proceedings, but most of the delegates are dead and most of the others either do not remember what happened or won't discuss it with us. The excellent political resolution on the new revolutionary upsurge in France and Spain and the other resolutions adopted—on the need for political revolution in the Soviet Union, on the London bureau, etc.—are all available and in print.¹³ We also know about the structure chosen for the organization and its personnel: a General Council, equivalent to an international executive committee; an International Bureau of eleven; and an International Secretariat of five. But at least one aspect of the conference can now be clarified.¹⁴

The time has come to put to rest the principal legend about this conference, which I must admit with regret I have been helping to circulate for the last decade. I refer to the legend according to which Trotsky proposed that this conference should found or proclaim the foundation of the Fourth International and according to which the delegates to this conference rejected or refused to accept his proposal. How did this legend arise? There isn't the slightest basis for it in any of the surviving documents of the conference, or in the presently available correspondence about the conference in 1936 by Trotsky or anyone else.¹⁵ None of the conference delegates interviewed in the last decade could recall any "proclamation" proposal by Trotsky at the conference or any action by the delegates to reject such a proposal. And some correspondence by delegates in 1936, which has become available to us only in the last year, thoroughly contradicts the legend.

12. France, Belgium, Holland, Britain, Germany, Italy, the USSR, and the United States.

13. See *Documents of the Fourth International*.

14. The following three paragraphs were rewritten in 1979 to correct erroneous statements made in the August 1978 talk.

15. A useful example of such correspondence is Max Shachtman's report to Trotsky two weeks after the conference, printed here as Appendix B (page 17).

10. See *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1935-36)* (Pathfinder, 1977).

11. See *The Crisis of the French Section (1935-36)* (Pathfinder, 1977).

So what is its source? Probably the statement Trotsky made two years later, in 1938, when he was arguing in favor of dropping the name "Movement for the Fourth International" and in favor of establishing the International at the international conference later that year: "This name [Movement for the Fourth International] seemed pedantic, unfitting, and slightly ridiculous to me even two years ago, when it was first adopted." But all that says is that Trotsky didn't like the name adopted; it doesn't at all follow from this statement that he made any proposal or that the delegates rejected it. Stretch that statement however you like, it cannot offer the slightest scrap of evidence for the alleged proposal and the alleged rejection.¹⁶

Discarding the legend and its implications about the delegates should not lead us to the opposite error of imagining that the conference was marked by nothing but harmony and agreement on perspectives. Sneevliet, who already was steering the Dutch section away from the Fourth International and toward the London Bureau, was the main adversary of the ICL leadership at the conference. He did not discuss his views on the International at the conference; in fact, he walked out of it because he did not like the order of the agenda. It is not likely that he would have gotten any significant support at this conference for his views on the International, and I think it is likely that most of the other delegates would have voted for a "proclamation" proposal if Trotsky had made one. But Sneevliet was not the only delegate in 1936 who left the movement before the founding conference in 1938; the Fourth Internationalist convictions of several other 1936 delegates crumbled or expired in the next two years. We will get fuller details in 1980, when Harvard will open the last of the Trotsky archives, but we already know that there were different concepts in the movement about the nature of the Fourth International, and different degrees of commitment to it, three years after it was first proposed.

Returning now to the problem of People's Frontism: Trotsky called attention to a dangerous tendency in the French section as early as October 1935, a few weeks after the People's Front was organized. Some members, he noted, were against raising a slogan calling for the Radical Socialists to be ousted from the People's Front; they thought that the workers "had to go through the experience" of having the People's Front in power, and

16. The legend's earliest appearance in print that I have found was in Pierre Frank's short book, *La quatrieme internationale* (Francois Maspero, Paris, 1969); the 1972 English translation in *Intercontinental Press* was recently republished under the title *The Fourth International: The Long March of the Trotskyists* (Ink Links, London, 1979). It had only two sentences about the 1936 conference, one of which said: "Trotsky wanted the birth of the Fourth International announced then and there, but his proposal was not accepted by the conference, which called itself merely 'Movement for the Fourth International.'" Frank himself was not a delegate to the conference, nor did he attend it, so his statement was not based on eyewitness experience. Although he did not cite any documentary or other evidence, I accepted it as a factual statement, and repeated it in many books and other places, assuming that when he wrote on the subject with more room at his disposal he would fill in the information gaps. That occasion arrived at the end of 1978 when the first volume in a series called *Les congres de la quatrieme internationale* was published (Editions la Breche, Paris, 1978) with a substantial introduction by Frank that includes almost two pages about the 1936 conference. Alas, there are no more facts in these two pages than there were in his two 1969 sentences. The extra space is used by the author of the introduction for rhetoric and embroidery: "Why did he present this proposal? Why did the conference reject it? Why did the conference decide only to take the name of Movement for the Fourth International?" etc. But his answers, whether relevant or irrelevant, are locked so tightly between speculation and abstraction that mere facts cannot possibly wiggle their way in. Trotsky's May 31, 1938, letter, "'For' the Fourth International? No! The Fourth International!" is in *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* (Pathfinder, 1977). His 1936 views on when and how to found the new International are in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1935-36)* and *Supplement, Writings of Leon Trotsky*, and are discussed in Appendix C.

therefore we had to support the People's Front as a whole. These comrades were not for People's Frontism themselves, of course not, but they held that we had to go along with the workers who were going along with the People's Front, and therefore. . . . The people holding such and similar views were a minority of the movement, but are worth remembering as evidence that even on questions as elementary as People's Frontism, our present positions did not come to us automatically but as the result of struggle against rather strong pressures. Sad to say, this position was not limited to new members recently won from the Socialist Party; it was also advanced by Ruth Fischer, the former German CP leader who was then a member of the IS and the ICL executive committee, who wanted our movement to call for power to the People's Front (including the bourgeois Radicals).

But the principal and most disruptive division over People's Frontism came around the Spanish POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification), its adaptation to the People's Front, and the defense of the POUM by important MFI sections and leaders. The POUM was formed in September 1935 as a merger between the centrist Workers and Peasants Bloc led by Joaquin Maurin and the Spanish section of the ICL, led by Andres Nin. The Spanish section had supported the call for a new International in 1933, but its disaffection with the IS and Trotsky soon led it to withdraw from all activities in the ICL while not formally disaffiliating from it. In 1934 it denounced the French turn and refused to join the Spanish SP even when the SP's youth group passed resolutions calling for a new International.

After the merger the POUM voted to affiliate to the London Bureau. But the ICL did not terminate relations with the POUM until January 1936, when the POUM, using the pretext that this was the only way it could get on the ballot in coming national elections, publicly endorsed the electoral program of the Spanish People's Front. Trotsky called this a betrayal of the workers, and after the Spanish civil war began in July, this characterization became the focus of a bitter debate in the MFI.

The POUM played a prominent role in driving back the fascists at the start of the civil war, and for a short time the ICL leaders hoped that in the crucible of war the POUM would correct its mistakes and that a reconciliation would take place. Trotsky also supported such an approach, volunteering to help by moving from Norway to Barcelona if possible. But in September Nin accepted the post of minister of justice in the Catalan People's Front government, and Trotsky resumed implacable criticism of the POUM, calling for the establishment of a Fourth Internationalist party in Spain after the POUM prohibited a pro-Fourth International tendency in its ranks. It took longer before other leaders and the principal sections of the MFI gave up their hopes that the POUM could be reformed, as a reading of their press late in 1936 shows. And some of the leaders never gave up their hopes and sympathy for the POUM.

The most outspoken defenders of the POUM in the MFI were Sneevliet, Vereecken, and Victor Serge, an Oppositionist who was allowed to leave the Soviet Union in 1936 and was elected to the MFI's General Council at the 1936 conference. They did not advocate People's Frontism and on occasion they even criticized the POUM's "mistakes" in this respect, but they denied that these mistakes were decisive and demanded that the MFI give complete political support to the POUM as the only revolutionary force in Spain. Their adaptation to People's Frontism took the form of pro-POUMism. This was the issue on which Serge broke from the MFI in 1937 after a meeting of the International Bureau rejected adaptation to the POUM. This was one of the issues on which the Dutch section separated itself from the MFI, although the actual formal break did not come until 1938. And it was the issue on which Vereecken fought a rearguard action against the IS throughout 1937, although he too did not resign until 1938.

Two weeks after the MFI conference, and even before its

documents could be published anywhere, Stalin shocked the whole world by announcing the opening of the first big Moscow "confession" trial. Zinoviev and Kamenev were the chief defendants in the dock, but Trotsky and the Fourth International were the chief targets of this frame-up: its aim was to drive them out of the workers' movement throughout the world, to isolate them permanently as political pariahs whom no decent worker would talk to. Trotsky and the MFI had to, in effect, put everything else aside for almost a whole year in order to defend themselves in this life-or-death struggle. On the whole, they acquitted themselves well in exposing the frame-ups and their meaning. But little energy was left for other party-building and International-building activities in this period, and as a result the projected founding congress of the International had to be postponed.

The price of the Moscow trials went beyond that, however. The trials were a serious blow to the morale of revolutionary workers everywhere. Anti-Bolshevik tendencies appeared or were revived among workers previously sympathetic to the Russian revolution. Many activists, influenced by the joint bourgeois and Stalinist propaganda that Stalinism is the logical continuation of Leninism, became disillusioned with politics and withdrew to the sidelines. And the MFI was not immune to such defections and backsliding—neither its sympathizers, nor its members, nor its leaders.

It must seem strange to some that leading people who had been calling and working for the Fourth International should renounce and desert that work because of the crimes of Stalinism; after all, those crimes had been part of the reason they decided a new International was necessary. Yet that is precisely what happened with people like Muste and Schmidt, who had both been elected to the General Council at the 1936 conference. Barely a month after the conference and a few days after the first Moscow trial, they both resigned, Muste returning to pacifism and the church from which he had come originally, Schmidt returning soon after to the Social Democracy. Bourgeois pressures work in different ways on different people to destroy their belief in the capacity of the workers to liberate themselves from the oppressions of class society, and Stalinophobia, the fear and hatred of Stalinism to the exclusion of every other consideration, has been one of the most effective mechanisms for undermining and obliterating revolutionary consciousness during the last four decades.

We must remember that at the same time the Stalinists were murdering and imprisoning millions in the Soviet Union, they were winning millions of supporters in other countries by being the most active and ardent architects of alliances that they said would stop fascism and war. In 1939, of course, Stalin signed his pact with Hitler and that pact signaled the start of World War II, but in the preceding years many people were attracted to the Stalinists because they were the chief force calling for resistance to fascism and the coming war. Among these were not only newly politicized elements but political veterans like Alfonso Leonetti, a founder of the Italian CP, a founder of the Italian Left Opposition, and a member of the IS from 1930 to 1936 who was elected to the International Bureau at the 1936 conference. Leonetti had come to our movement during the Stalinist third-period and sectarian madness, and when the Stalinist line was switched he was as critical of People's Frontism as any other ICL leader.¹⁷ But seeing no other mass alternative to war and fascism, he began gradually to see possible positive features in People's Frontism, and soon after the 1936 conference he became inactive and then dropped away. The pressures operating on him became more evident during the war, when he collaborated with the Stalinists in France; and after the war he applied for readmission into the Italian CP, where he was accepted and is now a "Euro-communist."

17. Leonetti's articles on this subject in the ICL press used the pseudonyms J.P. Martin and A. Feroci.

Leonetti was the last of the eight leaders we singled out for 1933. To repeat: Three were murdered by the GPU (Trotsky, Sedov, and Klement); and one capitulated to the Stalinists (Leonetti). Two split away from the movement temporarily because of tactical differences (Frank and Naville, Naville later leaving permanently because of deeper differences). And two split away to join the centrist London Bureau (Bauer of the German section and Sneevliet with the Dutch section). Bauer was a sectarian formalist while Sneevliet adapted himself to POUMist opportunism but they both ended up in the same centrist pit, and Naville would have joined them if the London Bureau had not gone out of business before he got there. Leonetti's adaptation to People's Frontism led him to Stalinism while Sneevliet's adaptation to the POUM's participation in the People's Front led him to the London Bureau, but in both cases it led away from the Fourth International. Anyone who thinks the ICL and the MFI were immune to People's Front pressures has to overlook such evidence about what was impeding the Fourth International internally. Our list of defectors could be extended, but the losses among the eight are sufficient to show what a variety of pressures beat down on these people, with a force that drove some of them far from the goal of the Fourth International that they had set themselves only a couple of years before.

In Mexico Trotsky completed the major part of his historic exposure of the Moscow trials in mid-1937. Then he turned again to the internal problems of the movement, and he reached agreement with the IS on the need for another and better prepared international conference, tentatively slated for October 1937. But it had to be postponed, partly because the American section had been expelled from the SP and needed time for adequate preparation of the convention that established the SWP at the end of the year.

In March 1938 an SWP delegation, consisting of Cannon, Shachtman, V.R. Dunne and Rose Karsner, visited Trotsky in Mexico to discuss the proposed international conference. Transcripts of the major discussions, which also involved several important American problems, will be found in the books *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* and *Trotsky's Writings 1937-38*. They are worth reading, or rereading, on the occasion of this fortieth anniversary because they provide an excellent example of Trotsky's method of collaborating with other leaders of the movement. First of all, he did not just talk to them or at them—he also listened very carefully, and he learned as well as taught. Benefits of this approach are to be seen in the main programmatic document he wrote for the founding conference, but they extended far beyond the most important document. Because the method Trotsky used promoted the spirit of teamwork, which is indispensable for the creation of a collective leadership.

In the first of the discussions in Mexico agreement was reached on the nature and timing of the international conference, on the documents that had to be prepared, especially a programmatic series of transitional demands, and so on. Then Cannon said:

"On the organizational side of the question—shall we consider this conference as a provisional gathering or as the actual founding of the Fourth International? The prevailing opinion among us is that we would actually form the Fourth International at this conference. We think that the main elements of the Fourth International are now crystallized. We should put an end to our negotiations and maneuvers with the centrists and henceforth deal with them as separate and alien groupings."

Trotsky replied that he agreed "absolutely" with what Cannon said. And for the benefit of the SWP leaders who would be attending the international conference he listed the forces in the MFI that would or might be opposed to such a concept of the international conference: some of the Belgians, especially Vereecken; some of the French; Sneevliet and a majority of the Dutch. "Naturally we are a weak International," he said, "but we

are an International." He urged the Americans to push their position energetically.

Cannon then continued: "Some comrades have taken the tactic of maneuvering and making concessions to centrists as a permanent policy, whereas we think that all our maneuvers with the centrists have been exhausted by now. We were justified two, three, or four years ago in delaying organizational action, in order to complete the maneuvers and experiments with those people, but not now. We noticed in our discussions that there are some comrades who want to carry over the tactic indefinitely—some kinds of maneuvers which are doomed in advance to defeat. And for this reason I believe we have to explain this matter to the comrades."

Trotsky said he subscribed to every word of Cannon's along these lines. The exchange is significant only because it would not have taken place, and would not have been necessary, if the views it expressed were shared by everyone in the MFI. And remember, this was only five months before the founding conference.

In May Trotsky submitted a very emphatic letter to a Czech comrade as a contribution to the international preconference discussion. It was entitled, "'For' the Fourth International? No! The Fourth International!" On reading this letter Vereecken resigned from the movement. Sneevliet and the Dutch section had already departed. There was some French opposition to founding the new International but it was a minority view. At the conference itself nineteen of the delegates voted in favor of a statute proclaiming the founding of the International, while three voted against: the two delegates from the Polish section and Yvan Craipeau of the French section.¹⁸

The Polish delegates in 1938 were not opposed to founding the International, they said, but they were opposed to doing it at this time, because it would be a meaningless gesture, because we were too small, and because the first three Internationals had all been founded in periods of revolutionary upsurge.¹⁹ The three opponents of the founding did not specify how deep a revolutionary upsurge would have to be before they would agree to a new International, but in any case they did not wait around too long. One of the Poles became a Zionist, the other dropped out of politics, and Craipeau quit after the war to join a series of centrist outfits who were all opponents of the Fourth International. The supporters of the founding generally agreed with Trotsky's view that the existing national sections needed a clearly defined international organization and leadership, whatever its size might be.

It is tempting to speculate how the vote would have gone if Trotsky and the SWP had not taken such a strong stand. By the end of the war and the political holocaust it visited on the revolutionary movement, five of the fifteen International Executive Committee members elected at the founding conference had been killed, and of the remaining ten only two were still active in our movement: Cannon and Carl Skoglund of Minneapolis.

The other great achievement of 1938 was the transitional program, which Trotsky wrote and asked the SWP to sponsor in the international discussion. It is unquestionably the most valuable programmatic document produced by the revolutionary movement since Lenin's time. It draws upon the actual experiences of

the workers internationally in the epoch of imperialism, summarizes and synthesizes the lessons of their struggles, and projects a program and a method for leading the workers and their allies at their current levels of consciousness across the bridge to the struggle for workers' power. Despite different conditions, the transitional method is as relevant and usable today as it was forty years ago. The transitional program put an indelible stamp on our movement—the Fourth International and the SWP would be quite different and much weaker without it. I am not sure that they would have survived the crippling adversities of the forties and fifties without such a program and method.

That completes our narrative, but leaves us with a couple of questions to consider. One of these, almost poking us in the eye, is whether the Fourth International would have been founded at all in 1938 without Trotsky. His role was so overwhelming that our critics at that time derided it as a one-man International, certain to disintegrate and fall apart as soon as Trotsky was gone. This prediction was soon put to a test when Trotsky was murdered in 1940, and it was refuted in the maelstrom of World War II, when the International was badly maimed and mauled but succeeded nevertheless in holding fast to its principles and remaining the authentic continuator of revolutionary internationalism. As Cannon said at a 1940 memorial meeting, Trotsky had built this movement around ideas, not personalities, and the ideas survived after his death.

The question we are raising is very much like the one that is asked about Lenin: if, early in 1917, a brick had fallen off a roof in Zurich where Lenin was in exile and had fallen on Lenin and killed him, would the October revolution have taken place in Russia later that year? Most of the people who pose that question think it is very cute: if you say Yes, the revolution would have taken place without Lenin, that proves you are blind to the facts and dogmatically denying the importance of the role of the individual in history. If you say No, the revolution would not have taken place without Lenin, then you are convicted, in their eyes, of violating the doctrines of historical materialism, underestimating class forces and the role of the masses, and giving an exaggerated, unwarranted, and idealistic significance to the role of great individuals or heroes in history.

But leaving games aside, Marxists don't have to make concessions to anybody when they examine the concrete developments in 1917 and conclude that without Lenin the October revolution in all probability would not have taken place when it did or would not have been successful if attempted. Genuine Marxism finds no contradiction between the role of the revolutionary masses and the role of exceptional, even indispensable revolutionary leaders; both are needed for success. It is true that in the early years of this century, when much of the movement was still in its theoretical adolescence, some of its leaders propounded a version of Marxism that was steeped in fatalism, in a vision of socialism arriving through the inevitable advance of impersonal economic forces and ignoring or underestimating the crucial role of leadership. But since 1917 and the assimilation of Bolshevism as the revolutionary essence of Marxism in the epoch of imperialism, these errors have been corrected among authentic Marxists, who reject fatalism, understand the limits and pitfalls of spontaneism, and accord a more correct weight to the indispensability of leadership in theory and in practice, especially collective leadership.

In a 1935 discussion about underground activity in Nazi Germany, Trotsky warned the German comrades against what he thought was a tendency to take a supercilious or contemptuous attitude toward those members of our underground movement who were not well educated in Marxist literature and theory. I can't describe the whole discussion here, but I want to cite one passage from Trotsky that I think is pertinent:

"Moreover, one makes the revolution with relatively few Marx-

¹⁸ See "Minutes of the Founding Conference of the Fourth International in *Documents of the Fourth International*. Eleven sections were represented by regular delegates at this conference: the United States, France, Britain, Germany, the USSR, Italy, Brazil, Poland, Belgium, Holland, and Greece. Several other sections expressed their adherence to the new International even though they were unable to send delegates. There is no evidence that the Fourth International as a whole had any more members at the time of its founding conference than the International Left Opposition had in 1933.

¹⁹ In the United States around this time Walter Reuther was starting to explain that he was not opposed to the founding of a labor party, "but now is not the time."

ists, even within the party. Here the collective substitutes for what the individual cannot achieve. The individual can hardly master each separate area—it is necessary to have specialists who supplement one another. Such specialists are often quite passable ‘Marxists’ without being complete Marxists, because they work under the supervision of genuine Marxists. The whole Bolshevik Party is a marvelous example of this. Under Lenin’s and Trotsky’s supervision, Bukharin, Molotov, Tomsky, and a hundred others were good Marxists, capable of great accomplishments. As soon as this supervision was gone, even they collapsed disgracefully. This was not because Marxism is a secret science, it is just very difficult to escape the colossal pressures of the bourgeois environment with all of its influences.”²⁰

It would be totally misleading to read this passage as meaning that Trotsky was indifferent to the education and training of Marxist cadres; his whole life was dedicated to developing them. What he is actually saying, in my opinion, is that while we are engaged in training Marxist cadres, we must not set ourselves impossible or ideal standards but must recognize that as long as the bourgeois environment continues to press down upon all of us, not everyone is going to turn out to be a “complete” or perfect Marxist. We must use the forces available, even with their defects, attempting to strengthen, guide and supervise them so that they make the most effective contributions to our common revolutionary work. In addition, it seems to me, Trotsky is making the bigger point that while there are few “complete Marxists” their role is of decisive importance because on what they do or do not do depends the success or failure of all the others, the less-than-complete Marxists, and therefore of the movement as a whole. Far from belittling the role of Marxist leadership, Trotsky here was attributing to it, in a very concrete way, a centrality and decisiveness such as I have not found expressed elsewhere in his or Lenin’s writings. It is not an elitist conception at all, but an understanding of the unprecedented leadership responsibilities that the most competent Marxists bear. And this understanding permeated everything he thought and did about the Fourth International.

When Trotsky wrote in his diary in 1935 that he thought the building of the Fourth International was the most important work he had ever done, commentators like Isaac Deutscher found it impossible to believe that a person of Trotsky’s intelligence meant or could mean this literally. But Trotsky did mean it literally, and he acted accordingly, with every resource at his disposal.

We all knew that Trotsky was the theoretical leader of the movement; every one of our many conquests in this area in the thirties originated with him or bore his imprint. But we did not all know, until the recent publication of the *Writings* series, how much Trotsky was also the practical-political leader of the International. The circumstances of his exile did not permit him to attend our international conferences and he was able to participate in the meetings of the IS for only a few months while he lived in France. But despite all the legal restrictions and the obstacles of time and space, he succeeded in various ways in placing himself politically at the center of the leadership and of participating in all the major decisions, not only the strategic ones but very often the tactical ones too. His role in the active leadership of the Fourth International and its predecessors was bigger and lasted longer than that of Marx and Engels in the First International, Engels in the Second, and Lenin in the Third.

I also suspect that few of us have adequately appreciated how much the fate of the Fourth International in those years depended on the will of a single person. (I use the words will, will power, or determination to reach your goal where Trotsky’s critics would say “fanaticism” or “dogmatic stubbornness” or “doctrinal blindness to reality” or something like that.) Fortunately for the

movement, Trotsky possessed this element in great abundance—enough to keep him going against great odds, with enough left over to provide the stimulus for others whom he drew along, perhaps dragged along, beyond their normal capacities while he was alive, after which some of them wilted and dropped away.

I didn’t think I had to persuade this audience that revolutionary workers need to be organized internationally as well as nationally or that the founding of the Fourth International was necessary and progressive. But there is a corollary question that may need clarification here: Granted that the International had to be founded, why was its founding in 1938 so urgent, what difference would it have made if it had not been founded until later?

The main answer is World War II. It almost broke out in the Munich crisis the same month the conference was held, and it did actually begin just one year later. Next to revolution, war is the supreme test for revolutionary organizations. It submits them to overwhelming pressures, it often isolates them or isolates them further from their base, it strips them of illusions, it crushes the weak and wavering elements, it poses life-or-death challenges to the strong. Within weeks or months, World War II swept away the London Bureau and the remnants of the Brandlerite international like gnats in a hurricane.

The small and weak Fourth International was not immune to these destructive and disintegrative influences. On the European continent, the national sections were driven underground and reduced to a handful by ruthless repression. Some members of the 1938 International Executive Committee were murdered at their posts: Trotsky by a GPU agent in Mexico, Leon Lesoil by the Nazis in a concentration camp, Pietro Tresso by the Stalinists in France, Ta Tu Thau by the Stalinists in Vietnam. Others withdrew to the sidelines or defected. Pioneers like Shachtman, even before the United States entered the war, buckled under the weight of bourgeois-democratic opinion, rebelled against the perspectives of the Fourth International they had voted for at the founding conference, and led a damaging split of the movement. Slowly, our heroic comrades were able to reknit some of the European sections and resume activity against their formidable enemies, but they took over four years of the war before they succeeded in reestablishing connections among themselves in the form of a European secretariat of the Fourth International.

So it is safe to say that if the International had not been founded in 1938, it would not have been founded during the war. Eventually, sooner or later, it would have been founded, but it would have been a different and politically weaker body than the one that was established in 1938 and managed to survive the war with its banner and tradition unstained.

During the war itself, the existence of the International—cribbled, cabined and confined as it was when the center was moved to the United States—was an enormous factor in maintaining revolutionary morale and ideological continuity in the midst of adversity. I can report personally how much it strengthened me as a youthful activist to know that the International and its partisans, even though cut off from each other, were continuing the struggle for our common ideas and goals. Later in the war, after I had been drafted into the army and sent to France, where political conditions were much more difficult than here, I had a chance to talk with many European comrades, and to hear over and over again testimony about the unifying and inspirational effects that news (or even just rumors) about the existence and survival of the Fourth International had on the persecuted fighters in the concentration camps, prisons, armies and underground cells. They fought better because of this, and it would have been harder for them to keep on fighting without it. And without it, it would have been more difficult to establish the political and ideological homogeneity that was established soon after the war.

Hard as it was to found the International in 1938, with Trotsky’s help, it would have been harder to found it after the war,

20. See “Underground Work in Nazi Germany,” a transcript of a discussion held around June 1935, in *Supplement, Writings of Leon Trotsky*.

when the authority of the would-be founders would have been smaller and the precious continuity of the movement would have been sundered for several years. Not only would it have been harder to found it after the war, but it also would have been harder to maintain its unity after it was founded. Keeping the International together in the face of external pressures and internal disputes has never been easy, and sometimes it has not been possible, but it would have been much more difficult if the efforts to found it in 1938 had ended in failure.

The Fourth International, like the parties affiliated or sympathetic to it, is not yet strong or influential enough anywhere to complete the mission it undertook in 1938. But it is many times

larger than it was then, larger than it has ever been, and still growing. It does not have a Trotsky to guide it, but it has a collective leadership, which it lacked in Trotsky's time. It still has to cope with many serious problems, but none are the fatal sort that wrecked the First, Second and Third Internationals. It has lived longer than any of these predecessors, but it is still young, vigorous, able to learn and correct mistakes, and revolutionary in its outlook and practice. It embodies the revolutionary lessons, traditions, methods, and program of the past century and a third, and the destiny of humanity depends on its future. In large part this is due to the way it was conceived and nurtured in the five years we have examined. ■

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the American Federation of Government Employees, Service Employees International Union, Communications Workers of America, CLUW, and NOW.

Their efforts received a major boost in January 1986 when AFSCME announced that it had reached a settlement with Washington state. The \$482 million agreement obligated the state to carry out the comparable worth plan approved by Judge Tanner in 1983. Retroactive pay, requested in the original lawsuit, was not included in the settlement.

Other advances were made in 1986. City workers in San Francisco won a comparable worth agreement. The Florida state legislature appropriated \$18 million to begin implementing pay equity. The national Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees won a three-year contract which included a \$6 million a year fund to implement comparable worth gains for female health care workers employed by the state of Connecticut. State workers in Vermont started collecting increases won through a pay equity agreement negotiated by their State Employees Association.

More gains have been won over the last year. A new contract, requiring a pay equity study and \$100,000 a year in wage adjustments, was ratified by 2,600 Rockland County (New York) workers represented by AFSCME Local 1000. City clerical workers in Seattle, represented by Professional and Technical Engineers, shared \$2.3 million in pay equity increases won by the union. Employees in jobs paying below 85 percent of the average male-dominated positions' pay will receive a wage boost. At the same time, the union is pursuing wage hikes for all who suffer from sex-based wage discrimination.

Reducing the Wage Gap

Struggles for comparable worth or pay equity have not stopped the women's liberation and labor movements from carrying out successful campaigns for affirmative action, pregnancy disability benefits, and parental leaves. Other measures to benefit working women, such as affordable and accessible child care, have also been advanced by unions and women's groups. No *single* demand is sufficient to meet the various needs of women in the work force today. No *single* demand can adequately cope with the wage gap.

The problem of the wage gap cannot be resolved through affirmative action alone. Experience has proven that both affirmative action gains and comparable worth victories have helped narrow the wage gap for many women workers without lowering the pay scales of male workers. It will take a revolutionary transformation of society to actually *end* the wage gap. A higher degree of pay equity can be achieved, however, if women and their allies use every available tool to break down institutionalized sex discrimination. This process will be aided by: unionizing the unorganized, utilizing existing labor formations and the women's liberation movement, and building solid relations with other oppressed groups. With this collective power, women can improve their pay scales through affirmative action programs, comparable worth plans, and other provisions. ■

May 4, 1987

LENIN AND DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

by Paul Le Blanc

Few terms have been so endowed with almost magical connotations, and have been so grotesquely distorted by commentators from almost all points on the political spectrum, as that term which is sometimes said to be the essence of Leninism—*democratic centralism*.

According to the liberal anti-communist scholar Alfred Meyer, for the Leninist model of organization "decision-making . . . presents organizational problems. . . . The formula Lenin found for the resolution of the problems has become famous. It is the 'principle of democratic centralism.'" Suggesting that "the synthesis of such opposites might seem almost impossible," Meyer assures us that "the whole setup functioned pretty well, while the party was commanded by a strong leader who ruled it with an iron grip." Meyer writes: "Lenin liked to speak of the party as a genuinely collectivist organization, consciously, and joyfully submitting to the leadership imposed on it by the senior members."¹

According to the Stalinist ideologist J. Peters in his classic *The Communist Party, A Manual on Organization* (1935): "The Communist Party is organized in such a way as to guarantee, first, complete inner unity of outlook, and, second, combination of the strictest discipline with the widest initiative and independent activity of the Party membership. Both of these conditions are guaranteed because the Party is organized on the basis of democratic centralism. . . . On the basis of democratic centralism, all lower Party organizations are subordinated to the higher bodies: District organizations are subordinated to the Central Committee; Section organizations are subordinated to the District Committee; Party Units (shop, street and town) are subordinated to the Section Committees." Sociologist Philip Selznick, offering an unfriendly elaboration of this definition, writes that democratic centralism "refers to the pattern of a hierarchy of party organizations and committees, each of which is elected by the next lower body, but once elected the higher bodies exercise executive authority over the lower ones. Typically, it is the latter aspect which is

This is the seventh chapter of a larger work by Paul Le Blanc, entitled Lenin and the Revolutionary Party. More complete bibliographical references for the footnotes appear in the larger manuscript, which hopefully will be published soon. Readers may also wish to refer to Le Blanc's article "Luxemburg and Lenin on Revolutionary Organization" which is scheduled to appear in the next issue of the International Marxist Review.



stressed, elections becoming ratifications of choices made by the permanent leadership."²

Not surprisingly, many critical-minded activists have reacted to such conceptions by deciding that they want nothing to do with "democratic centralism." Yet these conceptions have little to do with the Bolshevik organization that was developing into a force capable of providing leadership for the Russian Revolution. Recent scholarship has done much to undermine this mythology, even compelling Leonard Schapiro to add this demystifying footnote to the revised edition of his anti-Leninist history *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*: "It will be recalled that, in the Russian context, the phrase was of menshevik origin. Historically, the phrase originated in the German Social Democratic Movement, and was first used in 1865 by J.B. Schweitzer, one of the principal followers of Lassalle."³ Considerable light will be shed on the meaning of this term if we examine the manner in which it was defined by those who began to utilize it within the RSDLP.

Democratic Centralism in the RSDLP

The term *democratic centralism* was first put forward and adopted at the Mensheviks' All-Russian Conference on November 20, 1905. The Menshevik resolution "On the Organization of the Party" stated:

The RSDLP must be organized according to the principle of democratic centralism.

All party members take part in the election of party institutions.

All party institutions are elected for a [specified] period, are subject to recall and obligated to account for their actions both periodically and at any time upon demand of the organization which elected them.

Decisions of the guiding collectives are binding on the members of those organizations of which the collective is the organ. Actions affecting the organization as a whole (i.e., congresses, reorganizations) must be decided upon by all members of the organization. Decisions of lower-level organizations are not to be implemented if they contradict decisions of higher organizations.⁴

The term surfaced in the Bolshevik Conference of December 12-17, 1905, in a resolution "On Party Reorganization," which stated:

Recognizing as indisputable the principle of democratic centralism, the Conference considers the broad implementation of the elective principle necessary; and, while granting elected centers full powers in matters of ideological and practical leadership, they are at the same time subject to recall, their actions are given broad publicity, and they are to be strictly accountable for these activities.

As has already been noted, the Bolshevik-Menshevik convergence seemed to be taking place on a deeper level than simply organizational terminology. In the wake of the 1905 revolution, Menshevik leader Paul Axelrod asserted that "on the whole, the Menshevik tactics have hardly differed from the Bolshevik. I am not even sure they differed from them at all." Trotsky put it more eloquently: "The differences of opinion between our factions are so insignificant, so uncertain, so minute, that they seem like chance wrinkles on the great brow of the revolution." Nor did Lenin disagree: "The tactics adopted in the period of the 'whirlwind' did not further estrange the two wings of the Social Democratic Party, but brought them closer together. . . . The upsurge of the revolutionary tide pushed aside disagreements, compelling Social Democrats to adopt militant tactics."⁶

At the RSDLP Unity Congress of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks on April 25, 1906, therefore, it didn't seem surprising that such "Leninist" organizational rules as these were adopted without controversy:

1. A member of the party is one who accepts the party program, supports the party financially, and belongs to some party organization.

2. All party organizations are built on the principles of democratic centralism.

3. All party organizations are autonomous with respect to their internal activities. Every approved party organization has the right to issue party literature in its own name. . . .

7. The Central Committee and the editorial board of the Central Organ are elected at the [party] congress. [It should be noted here that the Bolsheviks had pushed unsuccessfully to make the editorial board of the central party publication subordinate to the Central Committee.] The Central Committee represents the party in relations with other parties; it organizes various party institutions and guides their activities; it organizes and conducts undertakings of significance for the party as a whole; it allocates party personnel and funds, and has charge of the central party treasury; it settles conflicts between and within various party institutions and it generally coordinates all the activity of the party. . . .

8. The congress is the supreme organ of the party. Regular congresses are summoned annually by the Central Committee. An extraordinary congress must be called within two months upon the demand of not less than one-half of the party membership. . . . All approved party organizations are represented at the congress. . . . Elections to a congress are conducted on democratic principles. . . .⁷

With relatively minor variations, these remained the fundamental organizational principles of Bolshevism up to and beyond the Bolshevik revolution.

Interestingly, the report of the commission which drafted these statutes was given by a Menshevik, Zagorsky-Kokhmal, who informed the delegates at the Unity Congress: "The disagreements which once divided us on this question (of membership) have disappeared, and we accepted the formula for membership unanimously." Thus, the old dispute which first divided Lenin and Martov at the 1903 Congress was finally resolved unanimously in Lenin's favor. Zagorsky-Kokhmal continued: "We must say the same for the second paragraph. The principle of democratic centralism is now acknowledged by all. As for the details of applying this principle, the commission did not think it necessary to work them out, since it found it would be better for people to work it out on the spot."⁸

In fact, the application of the principle of democratic centralism by the Bolsheviks was to vary significantly, depending on the specific circumstances which they faced.

Almost immediately after the adoption of the rules in 1906, Lenin offered this clarification:

In a revolutionary epoch like the present, all theoretical errors and tactical

deviations of the Party are most ruthlessly criticized by experience itself, which enlightens and educates the working class with unprecedented rapidity. At such a time, the duty of every Social Democrat is to strive to ensure that the ideological struggle within the party on questions of theory and tactics is conducted as openly, widely and freely as possible, but that on no account does it disturb or hamper the unity of revolutionary action of the Social-Democratic proletariat. . . .

We are profoundly convinced that the workers' Social-Democratic organizations must be united, but in these united organisations there must be wide and free discussion of Party questions, free comradely criticism and assessment of events in Party life.

. . . We were all agreed on the principles of democratic centralism, guarantees for the rights of all minorities and for all loyal opposition, on the autonomy of every Party organization, on recognizing that all Party functionaries must be elected, accountable to the Party and subject to recall.⁹

Not long after this, Lenin published some additional thoughts on the meaning of democratic centralism. The Central Committee of the RSDLP had proposed "limits within which the decisions of the Party congresses may be criticized." It assured "full freedom to express personal opinions and to advocate individual views" in the Party press and at Party meetings, but *not* at public meetings. Lenin complained that this was too restrictive. He wrote: "The principle of democratic centralism and autonomy for local Party organizations implies universal and full *freedom to criticize* so long as this does not disturb the unity of a definite action; it rules out *all* criticism which disrupts or makes difficult the *unity* of an action decided on by the Party." Lenin argued that "the Central Committee has defined freedom to criticize inaccurately and too narrowly, and unity of action inaccurately and too broadly." He insisted: "Criticism within the limits of the *principles* of the Party Program must be quite free . . . , not only at Party meetings, but also at public meetings."¹⁰

It is worth remembering that on the eve of the Unity Congress Lenin, who was not confident that the Mensheviks would prove to be consistent partisans of the revolutionary program, confided to A.V. Lunacharsky: "If we have a majority in the Central Committee we will demand the strictest discipline. We will insist that the Mensheviks submit to Party unity." And if the Bolsheviks were a minority? "We won't permit the idea of unity to tie a noose around our necks," Lenin replied, "and we shall under no circumstances permit the Mensheviks to lead us by the rope."¹¹ As it turned out, the Central Committee emerging from the Unity Congress had a Menshevik majority. This may help explain why Lenin favored giving significantly

greater weight to the democratic component of democratic centralism at this time.

Yet Lenin's formulations are hardly a cynical maneuver. First of all, it is clear that at all times his touchstone is the revolutionary program. In his comments to Lunacharsky it is that program that Lenin is talking about safeguarding from the Menshevik tendency to rely upon the liberal bourgeoisie. In his most elastic formulation of democratic centralism the limits he sets are "the principles of the Party Program." Indeed it was the apparent leftward shift, in words and practice, among the Mensheviks in 1905 that had been the basis for the healing of the factional split in the RSDLP. It should also be remembered that the 1905 upsurge had loosened the repressive grip of tsarism and had brought a massive working class influx into the RSDLP, creating conditions which Lenin felt necessitated greater openness in the party. (Despite the defeat by the end of 1905, many of the liberal reforms granted in that year remained intact throughout 1906.) Lenin believed that a dramatic increase in party democracy would help to "enlighten and educate the working class," particularly the new cadres, the only limit being that this should not "hamper the unity of revolutionary action of the Social-Democratic proletariat."

Lenin put it succinctly: "Freedom of discussion, unity of action—this is what we must strive to achieve." This was consistent, he felt, with the need to "wage a most determined, open and ruthless ideological struggle" against certain Menshevik positions through "the widest possible discussion of the decisions of the [Party] Congress . . . in the press, at meetings, in circles and at group meetings." Yet in regard to RSDLP participation in the 1906 Duma (parliamentary) elections, participation decided upon over Bolshevik objections, Lenin asserted: "The Congress has decided: we will *all* take part in elections, wherever they take place. During the elections there must be no criticism of participation in elections. *Action* by the proletariat must be united." Another example would be an insurrection: "Here unity of action in the midst of struggle is absolutely essential. In the heat of battle, when the proletarian army is straining every nerve, *no* criticism *whatever* can be permitted in its ranks. But before the call for action is issued, there should be the broadest and freest discussion and appraisal of the resolution, of its arguments and its various propositions."¹²

An essential component of democratic centralism for Lenin was that the organization would be under the control of its membership: "The Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party is organized on democratic lines. This means that all the affairs of the Party are conducted, either directly, or through representatives, by all the members of the Party, all of whom without exception have equal rights; moreover, all officials, all leading bodies, and all institutions of the Party are subject to election, are responsible to their constituents, and are subject to recall." He also

stressed that when the party was dealing with significant disputes, *all* the members of the organization should have an opportunity to "express their opinion on the point at issue before the whole organization."¹³

Related to this was the need "to work tirelessly to make the local organizations the principal organizational units of the Party in fact, and not merely in name," a point which Lenin stressed more than once. "The Rules of our Party very definitely establish the democratic organization of the Party," he wrote. "The whole organization is built from below upwards, on an elective basis. The Party Rules declare that the local organizations are independent (autonomous) in their local activities." While "the Central Committee coordinates and directs all the work of the Party," Lenin insisted that "it has no right to interfere" with local activities which are consistent with the basic decisions of the Party Congress.¹⁴

Marcel Liebman, in his useful and influential study *Leninism Under Lenin*, sees 1905-1906 as the golden age of Leninism, when "the river that during the dry season had been only mud was then once more flowing broad and full of life." Liebman contrasts this to the period of 1907-1912 in which it all once again turned to mud. "One could go on indefinitely," he writes mournfully, "accumulating examples of the invective indulged in by Lenin in his pursuit of what he himself called an 'implacable campaign.'" Liebman describes the period in this way:

It was in a party such as this, turned in upon itself for a long time by force of circumstances, cut off from its working-class hinterland, often reduced to the sluggish conditions of exile, enfeebled, split and scattered, that sectarian tendencies developed which were destined to set their imprint upon the subsequent history of Communism. Among these must be mentioned first and foremost, a deliberate striving to transform the Party into a monolithic bloc. This resulted from an attitude of strictness on two fronts—against Menshevism, and against those tendencies within Lenin's organization whose strategy, or merely tactics, conflicted with Lenin's own ideas.¹⁵

Liebman's error here is one that we must avoid. He has found Lenin quotes that he likes from 1905-1906, and he elevates these to fashion a "good Leninism" counterposed to a "bad Leninism" of nastier quotes from other periods. (Another variant would be to see the 1905-1906 quotes as "authentic Leninism" and pretend that the nastier quotes don't exist.)¹⁶ Despite Liebman's superficial references to the historical context, however, this is an ahistorical approach which badly mutilates the Leninist organizational perspective. What Lenin did in the muddy years of 1907-1912 is central to the whole meaning of Leninism. Only by

comprehending this will we be able to grasp the revolutionary organizational principles that are vitally relevant for our own time.

In Chapter VIII we will examine the evolution of Leninism and the Bolshevik organization in the years over which Liebman renders his somber judgment. But it may be worth skipping ahead to get some sense of the flexibility as well as the continuity in the Bolshevik application of democratic centralism.

Democratic Centralism in the Bolshevik Party

In 1912 the Bolsheviks split totally from the Mensheviks and other elements of the RSDLP by establishing their own party—the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (Bolsheviks). They did this by calling a Congress of the RSDLP and—on their own—organizing it in such a manner that their opponents in the party refused to recognize the Congress's legitimacy or participate in it. The Bolsheviks then declared the bulk of these opponents to be outside of the party. All of this constituted, obviously, a departure from the *normal* functioning of the democratic centralist principle. The Bolsheviks justified their actions by referring to programmatic resolutions adopted in 1908 and 1910 by congresses of the RSDLP as a whole which, however, the Mensheviks and others had been systematically violating. (These were resolutions condemning those in the RSDLP who were working to liquidate the underground party apparatus and establish a purely legal workers' movement. Lenin believed that this was no mere tactical difference, but involved a "disagreement concerning the very *existence* of the party."¹⁷ He labeled as "liquidators" those who were condemned by the 1908 and 1910 resolutions as well as those willing to shield such elements within the RSDLP. Details on this controversy will be found in the next chapter.)

After a year and a half of existence as an independent party, the Bolsheviks were pressured by the Second (Labor and Socialist) International, in conjunction with various Russian socialists, to reunify with the other elements of what had once been the RSDLP. In response to this, Lenin acknowledged that "the workers do need unity," but he added: "Unity cannot be 'promised'—that would be vain boasting, self-deception; unity cannot be 'created' out of 'agreements' between intellectual groups. To think so is a profoundly sad, naive, and ignorant delusion." He went on to refer to the principle of democratic centralism: "Unity without organization is impossible. Organization is impossible unless the minority bows to the majority."¹⁸

By 1914, Lenin went on to emphasize, the majority of class-conscious workers in Russia (measured by adding up members of workers' groups supporting either the Bolshevik or Menshevik newspaper) were identifying with the Bolshevik RSDLP. He insisted: "It is for this unity, for submission to this four-fifths majority of the workers, that

we must go on fighting. *There is not, nor can there be*, any other way to unity. The workers are not infants to believe that this four-fifths majority will allow the minority of one-fifth, or intellectuals who have no workers' backing at all, to *flout the will* of the majority of the workers!" Lenin also stressed the importance of party program: "The decisions of 1903, 1908 and 1910 were adopted *prior to any splits* between the Marxists and the liquidators. These decisions are the banner of all Marxists. If any agreement between the Russian Social-Democratic Labor group and the 'Social-Democratic group' is at all possible, then it is of course possible only on the basis of the unqualified recognition of these decisions, which were adopted before the split."¹⁹

It should be noted that of these two points—majority support of the workers and the revolutionary Marxist program—Lenin viewed the latter as being more decisive. As he put it "If, for example, the Socialist-Revolutionary Party (left Narodniks), whose program and tactics differ from ours, were to win over the majority of workers in Russia, that would not in the least induce us to depart from our line." Lenin added that the Bolsheviks themselves would not abandon their views on the need for an underground apparatus under tsarism (a position with profound programmatic implications) even if the liquidators had won a majority of workers to such a position. He commented that "certain Social Democratic groups and some liquidators assert that there are no irreconcilable disagreements on principle between us. We are obliged to point out their inconsistency to these groups and individuals, when they refuse to submit to the majority."²⁰ Obviously, he believed that it would be necessary and possible to win a working class majority to a correct revolutionary program, which precluded any compromise on basic political principles; the Bolsheviks were in the process of accomplishing precisely that in 1914. But there is more implied in Lenin's argument. The logic of his comment is that the existence of principled programmatic differences necessarily makes the principle of democratic centralism inoperable. The logic of Lenin's actions indicate that in such a situation two separate organizations should exist, rather than two irreconcilably opposed political currents attempting to coexist (in perpetual factional conflict, compromising themselves, and making a mockery of the principle of democratic centralism) within a single party.

Lenin made an additional comment on the connection between political program and majority support which is of interest: "We have been convinced of the correctness of our line on tactics and organization primarily by our long years of acquaintance with the workers' Social-Democratic movement in Russia, and by our participation in it, as well as by our theoretical Marxist convictions. But we are of the opinion that the practical experience of the *mass* working-class movement is no less important than theory, and that this experience alone can serve as a serious *test* of

our principles. 'Theory, my friend, is grey, but the tree of life is eternally green' (Faust). Therefore, the fact that, after two-and-a-half years of struggle against liquidationism and its allies, four-fifths of the class-conscious workers have expressed themselves in favor of Pravdism [*Pravda* being the name of the Bolshevik paper of that period], strengthens our conviction that our line is correct and makes this conviction unshakable."²¹ This conveys, with almost telegraphic brevity, the dynamic tension in Lenin's view of the interplay between revolutionary program and the movement and struggles of the working class. There are, inevitably, ambiguities here which can only be resolved through engagement with specific situations. Similarly, *democratic centralism* is a living reality only through its application in specific contexts, contexts which necessarily require variation in the manner that the principle is applied.

At this time Lenin articulated requirements for party membership and democratic centralism designed to preserve the Bolshevik party and to sharply delineate it from the liquidators and those inclined to compromise with the liquidators. Not surprisingly, then, these seem considerably more restrictive than his formulations of 1906. In the intervening eight years, of course, much had changed: the political divergence between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had deepened and widened dramatically; through years of discussion and debate a number of major issues had been clarified within the workers' movement; substantial numbers of working class activists had been won to Bolshevism; and the Mensheviks had conclusively demonstrated their unwillingness to abide by majority decisions with which they disagreed. Now a cohesive mass organization, adhering to a revolutionary program, existed in the form of a distinct Bolshevik party, and Lenin was determined to prevent its dissolution into a heterogeneous tangle of squabbling factions.

Thus a number of positions were "deemed deserving of condemnation and shall not be tolerated in the ranks of the illegal RSDLP." These included deprecating the role and importance of the "underground," failing to devote all efforts to promoting the development of the illegal press and illegal leaflets, supporting the creation of a purely legal workers' party in tsarist Russia, opposing revolutionary mass strikes and demonstrations, denigrating the slogans of a democratic republic and confiscation of landed estates, entering into unauthorized alliances with non-Social Democratic parties, advancing positions on the question of oppressed nationalities at variance with the 1903 Congress decisions of the RSDLP, and advancing positions in the trade unions and other broad workers' organizations at variance with the positions of the RSDLP.²²

Lenin also insisted that "the principle of federation, or of equality for all 'trends' shall be unreservedly rejected, and the only principle to be recognized shall be that of loyal submission of the minority to the majority." He added: "The

minority shall have the right to discuss before the whole Party, disagreements on program, tactics and organization in a discussion journal specially published for the purpose, but shall not have the right to publish, in a rival newspaper, pronouncements disruptive of the actions and decisions of the majority."²³

Absent from all of this is the almost unlimited openness and free-wheeling tone which seems to characterize Lenin's discussion of democratic centralism in 1906. At the same time, there is an essential continuity between the principle which he advocated for the unified party of 1906 in which Bolshevik and Menshevik factions were to coexist and for the uncompromisingly Bolshevik party established in 1912. And, although the term democratic centralism was apparently absent from Lenin's vocabulary before 1906, the same principle runs through his thinking on organization from the 1890s onward.

At this point we can fruitfully summarize Lenin's organizational perspective:

1. The workers' party must, first of all, be based on a revolutionary Marxist program and must exist to apply that program to reality in a way that will advance the struggle for socialism.

2. The members of that party must be activists who agree with the basic program, who are committed to collectively developing and implementing the program, and who collectively control the organization as a whole.

3. To the extent that it is possible (given tsarist repression), the party should function openly and democratically, with the elective principle operating from top to bottom.

4. The highest decision-making body of the party is the party congress, made up of delegates democratically elected by each party unit. The congress should meet at least every two years and should be preceded by a full discussion throughout the party of all questions deemed to be of importance by party members.

5. Between congresses, a central committee (elected by and answerable to the congress) should ensure the cohesion and coordinate the work of the party on the basis of the party program and the decisions of the congress. In addition, the central committee has a responsibility to keep all local units of the party informed of all party experiences and activities, while the local committees have a responsibility to keep the central committee informed of their individual experiences and activities. Under conditions of severe political repression and in the midst of major struggles, the authority of the central party leadership may assume much greater weight than at other times; yet that leadership is always bound by the revolutionary Marxist program of the party, by the decisions of the party congress, and by a responsibility (and accountability) to the membership as a whole.

6. It is assumed that within the general framework of the revolutionary program there will be shades of differences on various programmatic, tactical, and practical questions. These should be

openly discussed and debated, particularly (but not necessarily exclusively) before party congresses. Within limits—which vary depending on time and place and circumstance—such differences can be aired publicly. All members should be encouraged to participate in this discussion process and should have an opportunity to make their views known to the party as a whole. It is assumed that at times groupings will be formed around one or another viewpoint or even around a full-fledged platform which certain members believe the party should adopt. This—as opposed to groupings based on personal likes and dislikes, and ill-defined moods and biases—provides a basis for ongoing political clarity and programmatic development which are essential to the health and growth of the party.

7. All questions should be decided on the basis of democratic vote (majority rule), after which the minority is expected to function loyally in the party and particularly to in no way undermine the specific actions decided on.

8. Local units of the party must operate within the framework of the party program and of the decisions of the party as a whole, but within that framework they must operate under the autonomous and democratic control of the local membership.

This describes an organization functioning according to the principle of democratic centralism. It also describes the way in which Lenin thought an organization should function—in 1900 as well as in 1906, as well as in 1914 and afterward. The manner in which this could or should be applied would vary depending on the specific circumstances. But the Bolshevik party functioned according to the democratic principle from 1912 until well after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

Lenin's 'Iron Grip'

We have noted Alfred Meyer's view that democratic centralism operated successfully only "while the party was commanded by a strong leader who ruled it with an iron grip." As we can see, such a notion is inconsistent with the democratic centralist principle. But what about the actual practice? Lenin was the central leader of the Bolsheviks from 1903 until his illness and death in 1923-24. Why was this the case? Does it indicate an element of truth in Meyer's assertion? Perhaps democratic centralism applied equally to all but Lenin was "more equal than others." It's worth asking if in some sense he operated "above" the democratic centralist principle or somehow saw to it that it was applied in a manner which guaranteed his rule over the organization. Scholars such as Robert V. Daniels have asserted that "despite Lenin's verbal obeisance to democratic principles, his centralist conceptions when consistently applied rendered the democratic ideal an empty illusion." The problem was that "Lenin was a man who could bow to no contrary will."²⁴

Actually, Lenin continually faced disagreements and opposition from his comrades. We have seen that he by no means "called the shots" in the

Bolshevik faction of 1905, but was compelled—despite his leadership role—to operate as part of a dynamic collective in which his opinions did not always prevail. Far from establishing the line of the Bolsheviks in the pages of *Vperyod*, he sometimes found his articles rejected by the editors of this Bolshevik organ! (The same was true with later Bolshevik periodicals such as *Proletary*, *Social Democrat*, and *Pravda*—much to Lenin's chagrin.) Far from ruling the Bolshevik organization with an iron grip, he often found himself in a minority. Not only was this true in 1905, but also initially in an internal struggle among the Bolsheviks in 1907-09; it was the case immediately after Lenin won this particular struggle and in the period leading up to the founding of the Bolshevik party in 1912. It was also the case in the spring of 1917 when Lenin concluded that Russia needed a socialist (not simply a bourgeois-democratic) revolution, and in the autumn of 1917 regarding certain tactics of the Bolshevik insurrection. In the period immediately following the Bolshevik revolution, first around the manner in which Russia should withdraw from the First World War and then around a number of other issues, Lenin's views aroused fierce opposition among Bolsheviks. His authority was always considerable, but his positions were questioned by his comrades time and again throughout his political career, and it was not uncommon for Lenin to find himself outvoted.

More often than not, after initial defeats Lenin was able eventually to win majorities to his positions. In some cases—when he believed that questions of fundamental principle or life-and-death tactics were involved—he was prepared to openly break with his comrades rather than submit to majority decisions. Aside from such exceptional cases, he was fully prepared to test what he felt to be a mistaken majority line while patiently working to win his comrades to his own views within a democratic centralist framework.

At the same time, it is undeniable that Lenin's stature among the Bolsheviks was unequalled. There were several qualities which contributed to this.

Certain of these qualities were noted by the late Menshevik historian and archivist B.I. Nicolaevsky, who had an opportunity to observe Lenin closely over an extended period. One of Nicolaevsky's colleagues has recounted: "Boris Ivanovich also admired Lenin as a good *khroziain* or party manager. With the exception of V.N. Krokhnal, Boris Ivanovich felt that among the Mensheviks there was no good *Iskra* type of organizer. The Mensheviks were more in the tradition of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, that is, they knew how to start a movement but not how to weld together the kind of organization that gave the party strength in underground conditions." There was a related aspect to Lenin's character which helped play a role in the cohesion of the Bolshevik organization: "Boris Ivanovich often wistfully reminisced about how skillfully Lenin generated loyalties by showing, in little things, that he cared for and remembered the ser-

vices of party activists. For instance, Krupskaya would write a letter to an exile to which Lenin would add a short note, thus forging a lasting bond between the exile and the party leader who remembered him. Nobody ever received such notes from Martov or Dan." In addition to Lenin's skills as a party manager and his comradely warmth, there was what Lunacharsky has called "his astonishing vitality. Life bubbles and sparkles within him."²⁵

While such qualities naturally made Lenin attractive to revolutionary activists, they were hardly enough to give him the influence and authority he attained in the revolutionary movement. The historian M.N. Pokrovsky, who was also a Bolshevik activist, mentions "his immense erudition in theory" but adds that this "is not so much the quality of Vladimir Ilyich himself as an indispensable quality of every political leader." What was essential was the way Lenin utilized this mastery of Marxist theory, which Lunacharsky referred to in describing his "extremely firm, extremely forceful will capable of concentrating itself on the most immediate task but which yet never strayed beyond the radius traced out by his powerful intellect and which assigned every individual problem its place as a link in a huge, world-wide political chain." Trotsky also referred to this: "It was Lenin's peculiar gift, which he possessed to the highest degree, that with his intense revolutionary gaze, he could see and point out to others what was most important, most necessary, and most essential. Those comrades who, like myself, were given the chance to observe Lenin's activity and the working of his mind at close quarters could not help but enthusiastically admire . . . the perspicacity, the acuteness of his thought which rejected all that was external, accidental, superficial, and reached to the heart of the matter and grasped the essential methods of action. The working class learns to value only those leaders who, having opened new paths, go forward with determination even if the proletariat's own prejudices temporarily hinder their progress."²⁶

Related to this is the comment of Pokrovsky that "the essential quality of Ilyich, when you look back at the past, is his colossal political courage. . . . The characteristic trait of Ilyich was that he was not afraid to assume the responsibility for political decisions of any size. In this respect he did not retreat in the face of any risk; he took upon himself the responsibility for steps on which hung the fate not only of his own person or of his party, but that of the whole country and to some extent of the world revolution. Because this was such an unusual phenomenon, Ilyich always launched all his actions with a very small group, in as much as there were very few people to be found who were bold enough to follow him."²⁷ By this Pokrovsky was referring especially to Lenin's capacity, when he believed he was right, to forthrightly take a stand and follow it through to the end, in the face of great pressures exerted by comrades and opponents and awesome (but transient) external events.

Pokrovsky added: "But, of course, that alone was not enough. Here it is necessary to speak of those qualities which supplemented the first. . . . First of all, his colossal insight, which towards the end filled me with certain superstitious feelings. I often quarreled with him about practical matters, got into a mess each time, and after this operation was repeated about seven times, I stopped arguing and submitted to Ilyich, even when logic was telling me you must not act that way—but, I thought, he understands better. He sees three *arshin* deep in the ground and I cannot. . . . He reached depths that none of us ever had occasion to reach."²⁸

Such qualities as these helped to ensure Lenin's unique position of leadership within the Bolshevik organization. Yet rather than attempting to secure his own "iron grip" over the organization, Lenin sought to establish ever more securely the principle of democratic centralism, grounded in the revolutionary Marxist program. He seemed convinced that only this could ensure the health and growth of an effective revolutionary organization that would be best able to utilize his own remarkable abilities and those of his comrades. Democratic centralism meant majority rule, freedom of discussion, unity in action. ■

NOTES

1. Alfred Meyer, Leninism, pp. 92, 93, 100.
2. J. Peters, The Communist Party, A Manual on Organization, pp. 23, 24; Philip Selznick, The Organizational Weapon, p.62.
3. Leonard Schapiro, The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1970), p. 75.
4. Ralph Carter Elwood, ed., Resolutions and Decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Vol.1: The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, 1898-October 1917, p. 83.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
6. Axelrod and Trotsky quoted in Boris Sapir, "Notes and Reflections on the History of Menshevism," in Leopold H. Haimson, ed., The Mensheviks, p.354; Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 10, pp. 251-252.
7. Elwood, ed., Resolutions and Decisions . . . , pp. 93-94.
8. Michael Waller, Democratic Centralism, p. 30.
9. Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 10, pp. 310-311.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 442-443.
11. Lunacharsky's account quoted in Tony Cliff, Lenin, vol. 1, pp. 277-278.
12. Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 10, pp. 380, 381.
13. Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 11, p. 434.
14. Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 10, p. 376; Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 11, p. 441.

15. Liebman, Leninism Under Lenin, pp. 61, 59, 55.
16. See, for example, the interesting contribution by Steve Zeluck in Mel Rothenberg, Steve Zeluck, and David Finkel, The Problem of the Party. It is reprinted in Against the Current as "The Evolution of Lenin's Views on the Party: or, Lenin on Regroupment."
17. Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 20, p. 499.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 319.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 320-321, 351.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 528.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 528-529.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 515-518, 521.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 518, 519.
24. Robert V. Daniels, Conscience of the Revolution, pp. 12, 26.
25. Ladis K.D. Kristof, "P.I. Nicolaevsky: The Formative Years," in Alexander and Janet Rabinowitch, eds., Revolution and Politics in Russia, p.29.
26. M.M. Pokrovskii, Russia in World History, p. 184; Anatoly V. Lunacharsky, Revolutionary Silhouettes, p. 39; Trotsky, On Lenin, pp. 193-194.
27. Pokrovskii, p. 189.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 195, 197.

(Continued from page 18)

ial" unionism. It rejected out of hand any suggestions to give "concessions" to the company and refused to participate in "quality circles" or any other class collaborationist schemes. The plant was well organized, with a strong stewards system elected by the membership. Members were kept informed and drawn into activities by frequent leaflets, shop papers, and lunchroom meetings. The Minneapolis workers fought a tough strike and held mass rallies and leafleted Litton dealers in solidarity with the Sioux Falls workers' struggle for a contract. Even when the plant was finally shut down for good, there were no recriminations about the militant rejection of concessions. Litton workers demonstrated that given the slightest degree of encouragement by their leadership, rank-and-file unionists can be mobilized for a fight to the finish against concessions.

Another positive contribution by the union—unfortunately also unique—was the clear demonstration that it is possible to organize the unorganized, even in small towns in "right to work" states. For the past forty years the union bureaucracy has written these areas off as "hopeless."

But, inescapably, we must recognize that even these militant struggles of the Litton workers were unable to stop Litton's union-busting. The fact of the matter is that local unions cannot stem the tide of the employers' offensive through collective bargaining—even with an honest, militant leadership and rank-and-file participation. Greater national and international solidarity are required—by workers within specific industries, between workers in different industries, and between industrial workers and the growing number of those in the service sector of the economy. Only by a collective fight to upgrade the wages and working conditions of less desirable, lower paid jobs can the organized sector of the working class hope to maintain and defend its past gains.

Ultimately, it is only by entering the political arena can the working class stop not deindustrialization, but the deunionization of industry. One of the most pressing tasks for revolutionary socialists and all militant unionists is to develop a fighting transitional program to meet this challenge. Steve Bloom's article serves as a good introduction to this long overdue discussion. ■

NOTEBOOKS FOR THE GRANDCHILDREN

by Mikhail Baitalsky

10. Ideological Content and Calvinism

In repeating to Yeva "I love you," I was confirming my love for the Komsomol: Yeva epitomized a Komsomol woman of the first years of the revolution with remarkable completeness. She had everything that distinguished Komsomol women then and she had nothing that all our girls didn't have. And her main feature, her Communist moral fiber—totally without calculation, as with the rest of us—was always burning with feeling, unwittingly kindling the passions of those around her.

Her every action, her every move, Yeva devoted only to the revolution. And her every move was made with zeal whether it was Saturday work hauling coal to the port or studying Russian grammar in our club circle. Deprived in childhood of the opportunity to go to school, she began to study grammar late. But she was deeply convinced that she needed to study not for herself but for the benefit of the proletarian revolution. Reliving our pasts in my mind, I see that most of Yeva's behavior should properly be called religious rites. It is not only I who think this; that is the way contemporary youth perceive us.

The zeal of our friends did not require new knowledge to sustain itself. It is true that in our club we were always studying in the circles for political literacy, in the teams of agitators, and in the political economy study groups. Subsequently, Yeva also studied in the provincial party school. But we justified this matter to ourselves as follows: we need to know more in order to do better political work among the masses. Those who studied to gratify their individual interests were thinking only of themselves. It is another matter to study because you are aware that the revolution requires it. Thus was uniquely combined in us an internal, heartfelt zeal and a sense of duty—a habit always signifying self-imposed constraints, subordination of oneself to something outside and above us.

I do not remember if any of us had read Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?* But if we had, we would have spurned with distaste his "enlightened egoism."¹ There must be no egoism of any kind. Everything must be in the name of the collective. Surely such an attitude was natural for the beginning period of the revolution, a time when one must give much more than one receives. Our lives above all had to be sacrificed, and least of all used to our own advantage. Without such an attitude among the masses, the revolution could not have won, and the revolution itself

In 1977, a manuscript totaling hundreds of pages arrived in this country from the Soviet Union—the memoirs of Mikhail Baitalsky, who was in his middle 70s at the time and living in Moscow. His work consists of a series of nine "notebooks" which describe his life as a Ukrainian Jewish revolutionary militant. He narrates how, as a teenager inspired by the October revolution, he joined the Communist Youth, tells about his participation in the Red Army during the Civil War years that followed 1917, his disenchantment with the developing bureaucracy under Stalin, and his subsequent experiences in Stalin's prison camps.

To the very end of his life Baitalsky remained devoted to the ideals of the October revolution. He says that he is writing "for the grandchildren" so that they can know the truth of the revolution's early years.

The first installment and an introduction by the translator, Marilyn Vogt-Downey, appeared in Bulletin IDOM No. 36, December 1986.

spontaneously created this attitude—this is in its nature.

Even the slightest thought about our own welfare seemed to us ingratitude with respect to the revolution and to the masses. And the study of Marxism was necessary to every one of us since it was the torch with which we would light the road for the masses.

Scientific knowledge that has as its clearly designed immediate aim to light the road for the masses can be nothing other than a rote dogmatic mastering of the popular principles of science. Even if we could not think so then, there is no reason we should not admit it now. But again, for the first years of the revolution, it was totally natural for the center of gravity to shift toward the popularization of the social sciences, even if their true development was subsequently halted for some time. Truth which is popularized inevitably acquires a finished form and is not subject to further development. How will I get the masses on my side if I do not passionately and, moreover, categorically maintain every position?

We made ourselves into agitators and propagandists, and neither doubt nor criticism was required of us. Moreover, both would have been harmful to our success among the masses.

Almost all of my friends from those years (I am speaking of those who survived) retain the

features of agitators and propagandists to this very day. And I myself am guilty of it. How many times have I heard from my eldest grandchild: "Grandpa, don't try your agitating on me!"

Yeva could have served as a model worker among the masses. She was not particularly educated. What of it? She knew everything necessary for her work in a hard, finished, and incontestable way. She read the newspapers and even more regularly, the directives. However, later on the time came when the difference between them was obliterated. In the 1920s, all the instructions from the higher organs of the Komsomol were distributed as directives (we called them circulars) retyped (usually on cigarette paper). Having received a circular from the provincial committee, we would accordingly process it for the cells. Red-haired Averbukh sat at the typewriter and copied. In the evening, the secretaries, arriving at the club, received at least several circulars.

All the years of her work in the central uniform shops (what would later be called the textile factory), Yeva was secretary of the local Komsomol cell. Having completed the provincial party school, she was again made secretary of a cell at another enterprise. Becoming too old for the Komsomol, she became an activist in the Women's Department (in the 1920s a special department existed for mass work among women). Later she shifted to party work again as a secretary. And that is what she was almost until her death. However, Yeva was never in her life an apparatchik fossilized in leadership work. On the contrary, she always remained a zealot. It was simply staggering how little she changed. As she began from faith, so she remained a believer to the end.

And because over the course of many years I knew or could guess her every heartfelt impulse, I can tell about her more accurately than about all the others. And perhaps through her, we will get to know them better.

She could not think of herself outside of the revolution. For her the revolution was totally merged with the party, and she could not think of herself outside the party, which in her heart was always written with capital letters: The Party, One and Only, Sacred and Infallible. Once the party sanctioned the execution of yesterday's leaders as spies and murderers, that meant they were assuredly spies and murderers. No other proof was required for Yeva if there was a decision by the Party Majority (which rather soon became a Unanimous Decision).

Yeva never dared to place her own intelligence above a party decision. For her such a decision was a direct continuation of the Komsomol she had begun to worship as far back as the time when the Komsomol raised her up, a semiliterate, shy, inconspicuous young woman working in a textile factory, made her a member of a collective, and inspired her with the idea of world revolution. The essence of her zeal was, if you think about it, the renunciation of her personality and her powers of reason in the name of the collective and its unapproachable authority.

Neither Yeva nor I nor the overwhelming majority of my Komsomol friends knew that at the beginning of the revolution the Bolshevik party was by no means the only party of Soviet power. And if anyone knew about it, no one attached any significance to the fact that in the first months of October the Left Social Revolutionaries were a fully legal Soviet party.² By the 1920s, this brief historic episode was forgotten and it was considered understood that the party could only rule alone. That which over the course of history arose in Russia alone, we quickly elevated into a universal historical law. Even now, reading the program of the CPSU on the possibility of parliamentary roads to the advent of the world socialist revolution in a number of capitalist countries, many of us who are hardly clear on this will say: One party or several?

But Yeva, of course, would never have dreamed of asking such a question in her worst nightmare. And we were all so internally disposed that the very word "party" engendered within us an image about something all-embracing, absolute, and finished, to which you neither add nor take away anything. Yeva was not the only one who wrote "Party" in her heart with a capital letter.

Yeva worshiped this finished entity (which, by the way, comes from the Latin word *pars*, meaning "part") as a Moslem worships Allah—not fearing that he would be angry if she repeated his name with every step. In the Jewish religion, there is a restrictive commandment: "Don't take the name of the Lord in vain." But Moslems, on the contrary, approve of the uninterrupted repetition of the sacred name. Yeva was like a Moslem, only she was a Communist. And so was I.

Party spirit as we understood it totally permeated Yeva. It always seemed to me that she made every move with this in mind: "What will the party say?" This motive, subconscious for her but so much the more commanding, underlay her every action, from the most exalted to the more prosaic: to put on silk stockings—what would the party say?

Was Yeva good, did she love people? This is a question that I find difficult to answer with a simple "yes." Cruelty sickened her, to make people suffer so as to relish the sight of their suffering was something she could not do by nature. For many people, their sense of good often comes into conflict with their sense of property: they are good until it concerns their pocket. For Yeva, such conflicts never arose—I found almost no sense of property in her. She managed to suppress such feelings. But her goodness retreated before another feeling, which blossomed incredibly within her soul: it was the sense of duty that she acquired over the years. The notion of good and evil in Yeva's consciousness was built on the firm foundation of political knowledge that she got in Komsomol circles, in the provincial party school, and later in party "circulars."

Believers must be ready to scorn not only their own suffering but also that of others when the articles of their faith demand it. And if the

object of faith is the revolution, that is, a cause being carried out for the people, then blind faith has the result that concern for the cause overshadows concern for the people whom the cause is supposed to serve.

Yeva, with her faith, did not demand clarity in her own thoughts; she undoubtedly felt that such clarity was dangerous for her bright, serene faith. Yeva needed only clarity in the instructions sent from above: Do this, don't do that. Tenets of faith must be indisputable. Therefore, there is no more convincing theoretical argument than a resolution, a decision, a decree.

Yeva learned the fundamentals of the social sciences from the best known textbook of those years: *The ABC of Communism*, by Bukharin and Preobrazhensky. Subsequently, all copies of this book in circulation were confiscated and burned, and Yeva then began to learn and teach other principles according to the *Short Course of the History of the AUCP(B)*,³ approved by the Central Committee of the party. This was printed on the title page of the book: "Approved by the CC AUCP(B)." Did many who used the *Short Course* ponder the meaning of this line? Yet in it was expressed the whole system of thought, and it also reflected the fact that this system was already becoming rooted in the consciousness of the students.

Popular textbooks, in general, may be categorical; you cannot escape that fact. But at least they are not canon. The approval of the supreme textbook council lends a book weight and authority but doesn't make it the last word. It does not take away any learned scholar's right to doubt the book, to criticize it, and to write a new and possibly better book. But approval by the highest party organ turns a scientific book into a party document, a resolution, not subject to doubt or to alteration. Even if those on the textbook council are the same people who are on the Central Committee, the problem is not who these people are but on whose behalf they are "approving" a book, which despite its popular form is still a scientific work. Canonized truth is incompatible with science. Science is not a church, where an ecumenical council made up of its highest priests discusses and resolves to canonize four gospels as sacred, and to reject others as apocryphal. Religious thought will accept without hesitation the very fact of the canonization of books, consoled by the fact that the council consists of the most learned men of the church. However, the problem is not in their scholarly qualifications, but in the declaration of gospel truth in finished form. There are no finished truths in science.

The 1920s invested Yeva with a noble love for the people and the party (for her they were one and the same); a devotion to the revolution; and a respect for scientific truth. But almost all of Yeva's shortcomings derived from these great virtues of hers. Love became routine, expressed in unceasing repetition of the words "our party." Devotion, with unusual speed, took on the character of religiosity. And the allegedly scien-

tific *Short Course* was turned into the gospel, which she accepted without hesitation. She bore in mind that she had also considered *The ABC of Communism* to be the gospel, but it had turned out to be apocryphal; now one could worship the new work without qualms, because it had been approved, approved by the Central Committee of our party.

But there were among my comrades people far more educated than Yeva. Last year I met one of my comrades from those years, one of the Komsomol members of the 1920 levy, who on that same day, May 25, 1923, was presented to the party along with me, Yeva, Maryusa, and the others. A lucky one, he did not have the same experiences that almost all my friends had had. He had never once tempted fate, but not out of consideration for his career—not at all; he had worked all his life as a middle-level engineer and to this day lives in a communal apartment. He and I talked—argued—until midnight. He left, obviously satisfied with himself.

To still believe in Stalin's virtues is difficult and in the course of our argument he did not try to cover up this problem as others have tried again and again to do. But there are a sufficient number of things he still believes in and refuses to analyze.

But it seemed to me that the main thing which he clings to with all his strength is pride in the qualities he had in those young, ardent years. He does not want to admit to me or to himself that it was precisely these qualities, which through a series of rather simple transmutations, fostered his internal readiness to accept everything, positively everything, up to and including the execution of his closest comrades. And the higher education that he had received in no way prevented him from believing for half a lifetime that there is a bourgeois biology and a proletarian biology; that Tukhachevsky was nothing but a German spy; that the collective farm peasantry by the end of the 1930s had begun to prosper; and on top of that many, many other things that a boy of ten would not have believed if normal conditions of the press had prevailed.⁴

However, my friend did have some knowledge of Marx and Lenin—his ideological-theoretical level had risen in many ways since the 1920s, when our ideological level stood at a very high mark but our knowledge of theory was at zero.

"Ideological-theoretical level" was one of those magical, verbal, purely formal categories in which we were trained to think and which under Stalin were invented in great numbers with a single purpose in mind: to cast a shadow on a clear day. In one person it is possible to combine high ideology and a vast knowledge of theory. But no less possible are other variants: much ideology and little theory (that is how we were in our youth), or much theory and little ideology. Between the two parts of this artificially stuck-together formula there is a certain link, but they are not and cannot be one so proportional that a person's ideology and his theoretical knowledge should be able to reach some sort of common level.

All the same, the formula was not conceived for no reason. Stalinist practice led to a continual lowering of the moral level of those who surrendered to it. It forced each to learn hypocrisy and bigotry, obsequiousness, and the practice of informing, plus indifference to the fates of those arrested and eternal terror over one's own fate. Having learned all this, a person cannot be left with the same ideology that he had had when his conscience had not yet been subjected to scrutiny. This is what "ideological-theoretical level" was for: self-consolation. Go to a study circle on party history, study the resolutions of the last plenum, and while you are raising your truly theoretical knowledge you receive a certificate of higher ideology.

I would like to hope that the comrade with whom I argued that night remained just as honorable as he was before he raised his ideological-theoretical level.

That same evening, looking at the photograph of our collective in the 1920s, I felt love for the boys and girls in their identical coats and jaunty hats. How quickly the jauntiness became obedience! My friend wishes that today's youth would be raised with the same cherished spirit, not noticing the changes that have occurred within his own spirit. Only the photograph of that spirit remains unchanged.

Ah, those dear photographs of our years of youth! How impassioned we were, how brave! In Odessa I have another friend, the oldest of the former Komsomol members, who experienced a great deal and survived by a miracle. There is no reason to mention his name. It is enough to say "Potato" for all my friends immediately to guess who it is—this name is 50 years old. This great fellow (a kid yet, despite his more than 70 years) is dear and direct. While visiting Odessa, I stopped in to see him. He took from the shelf a huge album of photographs. He is collecting portraits of all the old Odessa kids. Each one is reprinted and pasted in separately, and under it is the name, written with the old hand of our eternally young Potato. Except for the names and the long noses on the photos, faded from repeated reprintings, I can make out nothing. But neither the names nor the noses interest contemporary historians of the Odessa revolutionary movement.⁵ Potato complains to me about the indifference of historians toward his work, and he performs the work with devilish intensity, searching for photos after half a century. Yet all his work has been turned into a strange pensioner's hobby, of value to him and to no one else.

I think there is no essential difference between historians altering history in order to create silence about those noses and my old comrade friend who wants to educate the youth in his spirit through an old photograph. The youth, as I have noted, are interested not in our external portraits, but in our internal portraits, and not even our portraits, but the cardiograms of our heartbeats, the movement of our spirit, the building of our thoughts, and the system of our feel-

ings. They need to understand: How did it end up like *this*?

* * *

Today's youth are able to think not so formally and metaphysically as we did: Yes-yes, No-no, Red-white; What is not red is white; Everything is developing in only one direction and nothing is being transformed into its opposite.

For Yeva, again Yeva, this peculiar way of thinking stood out very sharply, taking the form of extreme rigorousness. Her selflessness was not tranquil and happy but on the contrary intense and serious. But the issue here is not character. Maryusa, full of life and with a gift for sarcasm, had a character that was very different from Yeva's, but her zeal also had a Calvinist hue.

We quickly and firmly learned a few popular formulas of Marxism and for us they took the place of the entire philosophy: being determines consciousness (most important and frequently repeated of our dictums); the proletariat has nothing to lose but its chains; religion is the opiate of the people; bourgeois marriage is prostitution; whoever is not with us is against us. And the more often we used these words, the smoother they became, like coins, and it was no longer possible to make out the ideas minted beneath the hammer and sickle.

NOTEBOOKS FOR THE GRANDCHILDREN

Memoirs of Ukrainian
Left-Opposition supporter
Mikhail Baitalsky

A new chapter in every issue of the
Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

Having become for me absolute way before I was able to understand the entire doctrine from which they were culled, these formulas closed me off from the doctrine as a whole. In my best years, when a normal youth has a craving to learn everything, I imagined that I already knew it all.

At age 17, I read *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, by Lenin. What did I really understand in it? Nothing! And goodness knows how much I overestimated my own knowledge. If I remembered even five or six definitions, then it did not benefit but hurt my further self-education. Thus, I was punished because I considered myself to be a *priori* what I could have become only after long years of reflection over books. The cause was not my conceit—there were people among us who were less

confident in themselves than I. The cause was the apriority of our way of thinking itself—where there's smoke, there will without fail be fire. And in subsequent years, such a method of thinking appeared most often in a very habitual way of reasoning, whose strangeness we no longer noticed: Since you're sitting, you may as well eat something.

Youth today have mastered the ability to think critically, not because they were born smarter than we were, but simply because another ability, the capacity for enthusiastic faith, has been destroyed by the lies and crimes of Stalinism. What happened, happened, and it is no longer possible to repeat our faith.

But on the other hand, they can repeat some of our shortcomings that derive from that faith. And such a danger is the more real the more stub-

bornly we depict ourselves as angels in leather jackets.

We, the rank and file Komsomol members and Communists, and our leaders and the members of the Politbureau—we were all diverse types of people with varying merits and shortcomings. Mikhail Yakubovich with his exceptionally interesting and deep unpublished notes gives a sharp, precise, and clear idea of what Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, and Bukharin were like. They were people. They had human shortcomings, at times even great ones. But Stalin, and all those whom he chose as his executors, were inhuman. Inhuman people cannot be idealistic fighters even if they learn *Capital*, *Anti-Duhring*, and *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* by heart. ■

[Next month: "I Saw My Homeland"]

NOTES

1. Nikolai G. Chernyshevsky (1828-1889) was a radical journalist, literary critic, and social philosopher of 19th century Russia whose ideas and philosophical methods affected and reflected the growing revolutionary ferment of his day. His "enlightened egoism" referred to a sort of purposeful, utilitarian self-development through radical political activities, as distinct from more intellectually isolated and esoteric self-cultivation.

2. The Social Revolutionaries (SRs) were an influential peasant and populist party before the 1917 revolution. In 1917 the party split and its left wing supported the Soviet government until the signing of the peace treaty with Germany at Brest-Litovsk in 1918. The Left SRs remained a legal party until they supported the anarchist uprising at the Kronstadt

naval garrison in 1921.

3. The All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) or AUCP(B) was the name adopted by the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1925. It was renamed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1952.

4. Mikhail Tukhachevsky (1893-1937), a veteran commander of the civil war and a marshal of the USSR, was one of the first military figures charged with treason and executed in June 1937, at the start of Stalin's purge of the Soviet armed forces.

5. This is a reference to anti-Semitic attitudes in contemporary Soviet society and the consequent tendency to ignore the role of Jews in the revolution. Baitalsky's book Russian Jews, Yesterday and Today, published in Russian in Israel, deals with this question among others.

(Continued from page 4)

sing political confidence in the bourgeois liberals, ignoring the harsh reality: that the liberals, especially the "New Nats," are in favor of ending the formal discrimination of apartheid only because doing so will better enable them to defuse the South African tinderbox and make profits from the exploitation of Black labor.

Of course, the "New Nats" and PFP liberals' ideas find little positive response among the white skilled workers and farmers who are not directly sharing in the profits of South Africa's new industries. Apartheid has given *all* whites privileges relative to the Blacks, and most whites, unfortunately, remain comfortable with the present system. Had the election been limited to big businessmen, the liberals might have done well, but that was not the case. More whites who opposed Botha did so because they believed he is not intransigent enough against the Blacks, not because they had any opposition to apartheid. There are South African whites who do oppose Black oppression and are willing to oppose it in action, but they are to be found mainly on the university campuses, certainly not in the halls of Parliament or in the corporate boardrooms.

The militancy of South Africa's Black workers needs to be directed towards an independent *political* struggle—that is, a fight for governmental power. COSATU has done admirably in organizing strike actions against the capitalist class in the factories, mines, and transportation systems, and those strike actions must continue. However, that fighting spirit needs to be reflected on the political level as well as the industrial level. If the election proves anything at all, it proves that the ANC is not capable of the political leadership necessary. It does not have a proletarian program; it does not understand that majority rule without socialist revolution will degenerate into neocolonialism, as it has throughout most of the African continent.

The South African working class will need strong revolutionary leadership if it is to break the double bonds of racial and class oppression. The business and political leaders in Britain, the United States, Germany, and other advanced countries take South Africa very seriously. Its mineral resources, human resources, and strategic location are far too important to allow bourgeois rule to be ended without a serious fight. ■

International Defense Campaign Roundup:

LEA TSEMEL TO VISIT U.S.

ON BEHALF OF MICHAEL WARSHAWSKY AND ALTERNATIVE INFORMATION CENTER

by Bill Onasch

While the Alternative Information Center in Jerusalem—which remains closed after an Israeli police raid on February 17 (see articles in *Bulletin IDOM* Nos. 40, 41, and 42)—is struggling to continue exposing violations of human rights, criminal proceedings against Michael Warshawsky, the center's director, drag through the Israeli court system. Warshawsky has been released from jail, but the conditions attached to his bail prohibit him from doing any work involving publication activity.

The U.S. Committee to Defend Michael Warshawsky and the Alternative Information Center in Israel has already accumulated an impressive list of sponsors, and many messages of protest against the actions of the Israeli government have been sent from the U.S. The defense committee is now making plans for a public meeting to take place in late June featuring Lea Tsemel, well-known defense attorney in Israel and the wife of Warshawsky. Anyone wishing more information should write to: Committee to Defend Michael Warshawsky and the Alternative Information Center, Topping Lane, Norwalk, CT 06854.

Due to the raid on the AIC's office there are 150 to 200 subscribers to the center's publication, *News From Within*, whose names have been lost. If you are a subscriber and have not been receiving your copy, let the defense committee know so you can be reinstated on the list. ■

WASHINGTON CONTINUES HARASSMENT OF LOS ANGELES PALESTINIANS

by Walter Lippmann

Continually shifting tactics in light of legal setbacks, the United States government is maintaining its political vendetta against seven Palestinians and a Kenyan in Los Angeles.

On April 24 the government withdrew "subversion" charges against six of the eight. They had been charged with "membership in" or "affiliation with" the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a component of the Palestine Liberation Organization. All have denied the charges.

Nevertheless, immediately after the Immigration and Naturalization Service *withdrew* these charges, William B. Odenkrantz, regional counsel for the INS, told the *Los Angeles Times*, "These eight are the same as they always were—they're PFLP [whose presence] in the United States is prejudicial to the national interest. They have the same potential to do [violence] in the United States as they do in any other country of the world. Do we wait for people to blow up the Federal Building?"

On May 11, when the INS failed to bring into court the official who had signed the original deportation order against the eight, Immigration Judge Ingrid Hrycenko threw out all charges against *all eight defendants*. The INS then announced it would immediately refile the same charges, which it did. The refusal of the INS to bring the official who had signed the original documents, it now appears, was a government maneuver to try to prevent the defense from questioning the government's original basis for its accusations.

A highlight of defense efforts up to May 11 was the court appearance of Edgar Chamorro, a former Nicaraguan contra leader who had been recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency while still a temporary U.S. resident. Chamorro explained that he first heard from the INS when he resigned from the contras' in June 1984. Only then did the INS send him a letter challenging his status and ordering his deportation. This order was later withdrawn. However, it shows how the government uses the INS, in politically selective ways, against those with whom it politically disagrees.

The struggle to defend the rights of the L.A. eight, and with them the right of all legal residents of this country to exercise First Amendment rights, is continuing. Support for the work of the Committee for Justice is urgently needed. Please send contributions to: P.O. Box 4631, Los Angeles, CA 90051, or call 213-413-3209. ■

JUDGE CHAN PAVES WAY FOR REVIEW OF CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES IN FREEWAY HALL CASE

On May 14, Washington State Superior Court Judge Warren Chan issued a novel legal decision in a three-year battle over First Amendment rights. Chan signed a default order against the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP) for refusing to divulge its minutes in a lawsuit brought by former FSP member Richard Snedigar, but in a surprise move announced that he would delay filing the order while the Washington State Court of Appeals considers whether to accept discretionary review of the constitutional issues in the case.

This was hailed by defendant and FSP National Secretary Guerry Hoddersen as a "breakthrough." She said: "Finally a judge has admitted that there is a question of constitutional rights in this case. Judge Chan's decision not to turn us into instant criminals for asserting First Amendment privileges is due to one thing: the thousands of people who signed petitions and the many others who wrote letters to the judge on our behalf."

For further information on this case write to the Freeway Hall Case Defense Committee, 5018 Rainier Ave. South, Seattle, WA 98118, 206-722-2453. ■

Based on News Release, May 19, 1987

WE REQUEST YOUR HELP

Dear Reader,

This issue of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* marks an entire year since we initiated our new look, using a computerized typesetting system and a laser printer. If you remember our old style, we're sure you will agree that the magazine has been far more attractive and easier to read as a result, and—after the initial start-up expense of purchasing the laser printer—we have been able to give you significantly more news and analysis for the same overall cost. (Our present typeface takes up 25 percent less space on a page than the system we used previously.)

With our last issue, No. 42, we took another major step forward. We have now gone to offset printing (rather than photocopying) and a new binding procedure. This will allow us to increase the use of pictures and other graphics. It will also make the magazine more durable and usable for you. Unlike the move to the new type style, however, this step will mean increased expenses on a continuing basis. It will also mean a slight additional delay in mailing each month's issue to subscribers, but we think the overall improvement is well worth it.

We have been able to take all of these steps in the past only because of your generous response to previous appeals for funds. We get many letters from readers who appreciate the kinds of articles which they find only in the *Bulletin IDOM*. We agree that we fill a unique and important place in the vast sea of left-wing publications—providing a programmatic analysis which is neither so esoteric that it cannot be understood by working people, nor so simplistic that it cannot contribute to the growth and development of Marxist theory. If you agree, it is once again time for us to ask you for assistance.

Of course, the first thing which you can do is contribute financially. We are pleased to receive both one-time contributions and the regular pledges which many of you have been able to make. Any amount, from \$10 to \$1,000 is greatly appreciated. Checks should be made out to the *Bulletin IDOM* and mailed to our post office box: 1317, New York, NY 10009.

We also ask your aid in helping to expand the circulation of the *Bulletin IDOM*. All of us know people who ought to be reading this magazine, but who do not yet subscribe. Consider buying some introductory subscriptions for your friends and acquaintances, or, better still, convince them to make the purchase themselves.

We thank you in advance for any help you are able to give. We know that many of you are, like us, anxious to contribute to the growth of the revolutionary Marxist vanguard in the United States on a strong programmatic and theoretical basis. By helping us to continue publishing and improving the *Bulletin IDOM* you will be participating in that process.

The Editorial Board

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AGITATE

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Rebuilding the Socialist Movement in the United States

September 4-6, 1987

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**An Educational Conference
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● "Problems of Labor Activism": a panel of participants in union and unemployed struggles.

● "The Revolutionary International": a talk on the present situation of the world socialist movement by a representative of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. Also planned are presentations by Fourth Internationalists from Mexico and Canada.

● "The Dialectics of the Transitional Program": an examination by David Weiss, New York, of how Marxist methodology is indispensable in bridging the gap between day to day struggles of working people and the revolutionary reorganization of society.

● "Building the Revolutionary Party in the U.S.": an assessment by Evelyn Sell, Los Angeles, of the present stage and the necessary next steps in the process of building a mass revolutionary Marxist party in this country.

If you would like to attend this educational weekend, get in touch with the F.I.T. Local Organizing Committee nearest you, or write to:

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