

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.

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# SOUTH AFRICAN MINERS END 3-WEEK STRIKE

## Mine Owners and Government Fail to Break National Union of Mineworkers

by Tom Barrett

On August 30 the National Union of Mineworkers agreed to a settlement with South African mine owners. That settlement ended the three-week strike, which has cost the mining companies nearly a quarter of a billion dollars—and cost the miners 9 dead, 300 wounded, and 400 arrested.

If the results of the South African miners' strike is judged by American or British standards it would have to be called a defeat, since the miners settled for the same wage increase offered by the mine owners before the strike began. The only contract improvement was an increase in death benefits—an ironic gain in light of the accident which killed 50 miners on their first day back at work. However, the strike should not be judged by American or British standards. Black South Africans have never enjoyed the same trade union rights which workers in Europe and North America do. In South Africa no strike of Black workers had ever lasted more than 48 hours before being brutally crushed. This time, however, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), the most powerful member union of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), achieved a settlement without being broken apart, humiliated, or driven underground.

According to the NUM the mine owners have agreed to reinstate all miners dismissed during the strike, though further struggle may be necessary to force them to comply. Such a settlement between white businessmen and Black workers is unprecedented in South Africa's history. Judged by South African standards, the miners have every reason to be proud. The strike's outcome was not an unalloyed victory by any means, but it was a step forward for the entire South African labor movement and for the anti-apartheid struggle.

### Why the Miners Went on Strike

The last serious miners' strike in South Africa took place in 1922 in the goldfields of the Witwatersrand (near Johannesburg). At that time the miners were white immigrants, mainly from Britain and Ireland, and their own racism led to a total defeat. The South African government (at that time a dominion within the British Empire) together with the mine owners brought in Black workers to break the strike. Rather than organizing the Black workers into the union and fighting for *their* human rights as well, the white miners claimed the exclusive right of white men to work in the mines. In an obscene caricature of labor radicalism, they raised the slogan, "White Workers of the World, Unite!"

The government, headed by Jan Smuts, was successful in its attempt to smash the miners' union. Since then, the labor force in the mines has been overwhelmingly Black.

The *apartheid* system, which has been in place throughout the period of South Africa's industrial-



ization, has insured maximum profits for South Africa's capitalists and for foreign investors. By insuring that Blacks have the status of "aliens" in their own country, the mining companies have been able to pay Black workers the equivalent of \$250 or less per month for hard, dangerous labor. What makes it worse, a white man in the same job would earn three times that amount.

The NUM believed that it was time to challenge South Africa's ruling class in its most important (and therefore most vulnerable) industry. After five years of organizing work, the NUM leaders decided that now was the time to fight. At the beginning the union demanded a pay increase of 30 percent, 30 days' vacation, and May Day and Soweto Day (June 16) as holidays. Safety was another issue: nearly a thousand miners die every year in accidents.

The most important issue, however, was the basic issue of trade union rights. If the miners' strike proved nothing else, it showed that South African Blacks now have the right to strike—though it will obviously still be necessary for them to fight in order to defend it.

### The Class Struggle and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle

Over 300,000 miners actually went out on strike and stayed out on strike—a significant victory for the NUM in the face of considerable

violence carried out by the Chamber of Mines, the police force, and their shadowy sublegal agents. Pickets were fired on by police, union offices were bombed, and hundreds of strikers were fired. The union held firm in spite of all this, and an important reason why the strikers were willing to keep fighting in the face of such adversity was that the strike had not only a trade union character, but an anti-apartheid character as well. Their action had overwhelming support among South Africa's Blacks.

Human rights were as important to the miners as their pay increase. The United Democratic Front and African National Congress both supported the strike, and there was important international solidarity—including fund-raising by the United Mine Workers here in the United States. The South African Chamber of Mines and the government also recognized the political character of the miners' action, and consequently did their utmost to defeat it.

In the end the NUM basically settled for what they could have had without going on strike. Though the strike's duration and the union's continued existence in the South African police state are victories in themselves, the agreement reached was not. This must be understood. The union leadership recognized that after three weeks it could not ask its members to sacrifice any longer. This cannot in any way be considered a "sell-out." However, the defeat on the contract level shows that the battle will not be won on the picket line alone. As long as the government is controlled by the financiers it will continue to impose police violence on any struggle to improve Black workers' living condi-

tions. As NUM general secretary Cyril Ramaphosa said at the time negotiations were resumed, "there are no liberal bourgeois." When it comes to basic class interests, political differences among the capitalists disappear.

So far in the South African struggle, the anti-apartheid movement and labor movement have supported one another, and have recognized the importance of one another. But they have not forged the close links which are objectively called for. It is not enough that Ramaphosa speak out against apartheid and that Bishop Tutu speak out for labor rights. Labor's fight on the political battlefield has to be organized. A revolutionary party is a burning necessity—one which understands and explains that Black oppression is rooted in South Africa's economic system and class structure and that the struggle against both of these evils is a combined one, inextricably linked together. Both apartheid and South African capitalism will have to be overturned before Black oppression can be ended.

Labor cannot succeed in ending the poverty of the Black working class without fighting for an end to apartheid and all forms of racial oppression. In the final analysis that adds up to a fight for governmental power. The state has to be transformed; the guns have to be wrested from the hands of ruling rich and white supremacists and taken over by the Black majority. Only the South African socialist revolution will finally be able to accomplish that. ■

September 1, 1987

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## YEAR OF DECISION FOR U.S. LABOR The Hormel Strike and Beyond

by Dave Riehle and Frank Lovell

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\$2.50

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.

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

# THE CENTRAL AMERICA PEACE PLAN AND THE U.S. ANTI-INTERVENTION MOVEMENT

by Bill Onasch

The Arias peace plan, tentatively agreed to by the heads of state of five Central American countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua), has evoked varying responses among opponents of U.S. intervention in that region, and among the left in this country.

At this time there remain many unresolved details and negotiations are continuing among the Central American states. It is too early to establish whether this effort will live up to its promise, or merely end up as another diplomatic episode on the order of past Contadora agreements. A detailed analysis of the plan, assuming that it goes forward, will have to be deferred. The purpose of this article is to consider what the response of the anti-intervention movement, and especially its socialist wing, should be to present developments.

## Role of Negotiations

Only a hopeless ultraleft "purist" could condemn the Sandinistas for engaging in negotiations that might grant concessions to the imperialists and the puppet governments in the region. The Nicaraguan revolution has been under the gun for six years and has suffered heavy human and material losses. More than half of the Nicaraguan economy is devoured by the military defense effort. The U.S. embargo, and the refusal of the Soviet bloc to provide adequate assistance, has created a severe economic crisis in Nicaragua, resulting in real hardships for the Nicaraguan people.

There is ample precedent for revolutionary governments to engage in diplomatic maneuvers to buy time for their survival. The Bolshevik leadership of the Russian Revolution negotiated the infamous Brest-Litovsk treaty with Germany in 1918—a treaty which gave up vast amounts of territory. There was much controversy about this agreement even within the Bolshevik party. But there is little question that the Russian Revolution would have been crushed by German militarism without it. (The treaty was subsequently renounced after Germany's defeat in the First World War.)

In 1973, the Democratic Republic (North) of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front concluded the Paris accords with the U.S. imperialists and the puppet regime in Saigon. These accords paved the way for U.S. withdrawal and by 1975 the revolutionary forces had won complete control of the country.

In both of these cases revolutionaries bought time understanding full well that treaties, like union contracts or any other episodic truce in the

class struggle, merely codify a relationship of forces at a given moment. As the relationship of forces is altered, treaties can be swept aside.

## Attitude of North Americans

The largest sector of the Central America solidarity and anti-intervention movements in this country, far from condemning Nicaragua's effort at negotiations, believes that the movement should give its support to the specific agreement which has been reached. The August 19 *People's Daily World*, the paper of the Communist Party U.S.A., enthusiastically notes the activities of Days of Decision, a lobbying campaign aimed "against contra aid and in support of the regional peace initiative." *PDW* also quotes Mary Preston of the U.S. Student Association as saying, "We think our ambassadors should be supporting Central America's own initiatives."

A similar tone is set in an editorial in the August 28 issue of the *Militant*, the weekly paper reflecting the views of the Socialist Workers Party. "The signing of a preliminary peace agreement . . . has dealt a huge blow to the U.S. rulers' war against Nicaragua," says the *Militant*. The editorial also uncritically supports the Days of Decision lobbying efforts, which include endorsement of the peace plan.

Yet giving support to the peace plan, and especially the call for the U.S. government to be a party to the process, is a serious departure from the elementary obligation of North Americans to support self-determination in the Central American region. If the Nicaraguans, or others in Central America, feel compelled—under the threat of war—to negotiate compromises regarding their sovereignty that is one thing. It is quite another for us to *support* this process, or its fruits.

Our obligation is quite simple—to continue to assert that the U.S. government is entitled to no role, direct or indirect, in deciding the affairs of the Central American peoples. Our sole demand, if we are to be consistent supporters of self-determination, is for the U.S. government to end all forms of intervention and interference in the region.

## Legacy of Vietnam

There was a rich debate around the principles involved in this question during the anti-Vietnam war movement. In the early days of that movement there was a sharp polarization between those who advocated a "negotiated settlement" and those calling for immediate unconditional U.S. withdrawal.

Initially the immediate withdrawal forces seemed to be in the minority within the organized antiwar movement.

In 1966 Caroline Lund (then writing under the name Caroline Jenness) wrote an excellent pamphlet entitled *Immediate Withdrawal Vs. Negotiations*. Lund was a leader of the *Bring the Troops Home Now Newsletter* Caucus, which was a key component in the later founding of the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (SMC)—a major force in the mass mobilization of students against the war in the late '60s and early '70s. Lund was also a leader of the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA), the youth group in solidarity with the Socialist Workers Party.

In her pamphlet Lund writes: "Critics of the war fall into two main categories. Some criticize the war on the basis that the right of Vietnam to self-determination is being violated by the U.S. This group thinks the U.S. has no right to control what goes on in Vietnam or to dictate the type of government the Vietnamese should have. Other critics of the war, including the *New York Times* and several congressmen, agree with the assumption that the U.S. does have the right to intervene in other countries if it is necessary to stop 'Communist expansion,' but they simply do not think that the war in Vietnam is being carried out in a way which will most effectively stop Communism, or that Vietnam is worth the risk of a land war with China."

Daniel Ortega



Today's critics of Reagan's Central America policy certainly divide into categories similar to those which Lund describes. The "peace" Democrats in Congress are all opponents of the Sandinistas, and adamant in demanding "democratization" in Nicaragua. Many liberal critics express their concern about Nicaragua going down the road to communism. Many of the religious pacifists instinctively favor negotiations and compromise as a way of ending conflicts. As a result of the Arias plan there is bound to be intensified pressure on the anti-intervention movement to support a negotiated settlement in Central America. But that would be a trap.

Movement activists should ask themselves an important question: What if the Arias plan fails? What if the Sandinistas find that it is impossible for them to carry out an "interpretation" of that agreement which "satisfies" the conditions that remain to be worked out with the other governments involved? This is no small danger since the U.S. will undoubtedly put a lot of pressure on the regimes in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Honduras, and El Salvador. If the movement's efforts are centered around the peace plan we could easily suffer a

severe setback under such circumstances. It doesn't take much imagination to see the opportunity for Reagan to score a propaganda coup, denouncing the Sandinistas for "backing out of their agreement," and using the events to lend new credibility to his contra aid effort. Having focused all of our attention on the peace plan instead of on the principled issue of "U.S. Hands Off," the movement would be in a much weaker position to counteract this.

Even from a purely "practical" point of view, even if we limit ourselves to the desire to see Washington abide by the provisions of the Arias plan, the best way to accomplish that goal is *not* to support the plan itself, but to continue to put mass pressure on for the U.S. to keep its money, equipment, and troops out of Central America. By making that demand in as forceful a manner as possible we may be able to compel the U.S. imperialists to compromise. But it will only weaken us if we reduce our demand to one that calls for a compromise in the first place, or if we try to spell out the specific form of compromise which the U.S. government should accept. The anti-intervention movement in this country is not, nor should we be, a party to negotiations in Central America.

Lund's pamphlet also dealt with the "practicality" of recognizing that there would be some form of negotiations preceding U.S. withdrawal, citing an effective quotation from the late Sid Lens: ". . . perhaps the National Liberation Front will agree to something less than full self-determination and immediate withdrawal of American troops. If that is the case, we hold no quarrel with people who have fought and bled for a quarter of a century against French, Japanese and now American intervention. In their circumstance an honorable compromise may be warranted. But for decent Americans to call for such a compromise in advance is an immoral apologia for the criminal deeds of our Administration."

Utilizing clear, logical arguments such as Lund's pamphlet, and basing themselves on growing public sentiment against the war, the immediate withdrawal forces eventually won over the organized antiwar movement during the Vietnam period, and indeed the majority of the American people, to their position. Building mass demonstrations and winning support among active-duty GIs, that movement was a powerful factor in forcing Washington to abandon its goal of physically destroying the Vietnamese revolution.

#### Crisis of Perspective in the Movement Today

Unfortunately there is no substantial group within the anti-intervention movement today with the kind of perspective that was advanced by the SMC. The organized movement is comprised mainly of religious forces, solidarity groups focusing on material aid for Central American revolutionary forces, and multi-issue political organizations oriented in large part toward the Rainbow Coalition. Only a few local coalitions and the Emergency National Council Against U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean (ENC) on a national level—a relatively

small formation—have organized around a consistent perspective of building mass actions in support of self-determination similar to the way the "Out Now" wing of the Vietnam movement operated.

A major reason for this weakness of the anti-intervention movement is that the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance—which played a crucial role in giving political leadership and supplying organizational forces during the Vietnam period—refrain at present from attempting to play any leadership role. The SWP is content to leave the initiative to the movement establishment, an establishment which has offered no *consistent* perspective of mass action.

On April 20, 1985, significant demonstrations took place in a number of cities across the country. When they were over, the "leaders" of the movement decided to go back to their lobbying/material aid/civil disobedience/community organizing perspective. Future plans for demonstrations were shelved and a two-year gap took place without any coordinated national effort—two years in which the contras stepped up their criminal war and the Reagan administration won some important victories in Congress on the aid question.

Then, last April 25, nearly a quarter of a million people demonstrated in Washington and San Francisco. The action was initiated and most of the participants were mobilized by labor unions and church groups (the college campuses also organized many) having little connection with the self-proclaimed leaders of the movement—though all sectors of the movement participated in and helped build the actions, which contributed to their success. By April 26 the movement was again adrift. Despite the partial exposures of Washington's criminal war by the Iran/contras hearings, and the promise of another bipartisan effort to secure aid to the contras, the national coalition was demobilized and there are no plans for coordinated mass actions against U.S. intervention this fall, or at anytime in the future.

This state of affairs does not appear to upset the SWP. The August 28 *Militant* editorial, in addition to praising the peace plan, speaks favorably about work brigades for Nicaragua and the Days of Decision. There is no mention of the need for mass action that can once more draw hundreds of thousands of workers and students—people who are not necessarily prepared to go to work in Nicaragua, as valuable as that work is, and who are understandably less than excited about sending postcards to their congressional representatives—into visible activities.

Referring to the lobbying-oriented Days of Decision the *Militant* comments: "Actions like these—large or small—contribute to drawing new forces into the fight and keeping the pressure on the administration and Congress to end the dirty war against Nicaragua." But experience has shown that petitions and postcards don't draw many new forces into the fight. As a matter of fact they tend to

demobilize those previously involved in mass struggles.

In 1966, when Caroline Lund wrote her pamphlet, the self-determination, mass action wing of the movement was a small and much maligned minority. Within a few years it was leading a mass movement, mobilizing hundreds of thousands.

Today the self-determination, mass action wing of the anti-intervention movement is also in a small, isolated minority and must undertake a campaign similar to the *Bring the Troops Home Now Newsletter* Caucus. That is the importance of a group like the ENC at the present time, even though its forces are limited. Whether or not the new peace plan results in a breathing spell for the Nicaraguan revolution, or even an end to the contra war and overt U.S. aggression, our task remains to patiently explain the principles involved—gradually winning over movement activists and new militants to a principled perspective centered around the question of defending the right to self-determination in Central America. Unfortunately, this time around, we will not have the participation of the SWP/YSA. ■

August 26, 1987

## Toronto Antiwar Conference Planned

by Barry Weisleder

Plans are now underway for a major Ontario-wide Central America solidarity and anti-intervention conference, tentatively scheduled to occur February 6 and 7, 1988, in Toronto. The purpose of the gathering is to bring together individuals and organizations actively involved in solidarity and antiwar work, including such activists in church, labor, feminist, peace, and community groups. Discussion will center on future directions for Central America related work, the needs and goals of the solidarity movement itself, and the desirability of greater coordination in a movement that has grown considerably in size and diversity over the past two years. The initiative for this conference comes from the Central America Solidarity Network (Ontario Region) and the Toronto Anti-Intervention Coalition (TAIC).

TAIC, at its inception nearly three years ago, adopted the perspective of extending the mass action oriented anti-intervention movement beyond Toronto, across Ontario, and throughout the rest of the country to promote coordinated and timely protest activities to stop the war and halt Canadian complicity with U.S. militarism. The February 6-7 conference could be an important constructive step in that direction.

# DON'T 'ACCOMMODATE' DEMOCRACY TO THE LABOR BUREAUCRACY

## An Answer to Nat Weinstein

by Samuel Adams

How can a national coalition be constructed to unite all anti-intervention forces, plan and carry out large mass demonstrations, and build a movement capable of stopping the U.S. war against Nicaragua? That is the question that continues to be of paramount concern to Central America activists. The abrupt dissolution of the national coalition that sponsored the successful April 25 demonstrations indicates clearly that the answer has yet to be found.

In an article "The United Front in Action: Anti-Vietnam War Movement Gives Vital Lessons for Today" (*Socialist Action*, March 1987), Nat Weinstein expresses a point of view on the subject that differs fundamentally from the ideas advanced by the writer in a piece entitled "On Democratic Decision Making in the U.S. Anti-Intervention Movement" (*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, No. 40, April 1987). The basic difference is whether a national anti-intervention coalition should have a decision-making process that is open, nonexclusionary, and thoroughly democratic, as I advocate; or whether that process should be restricted and confined, with democracy accommodated to the labor bureaucracy, as Weinstein urges.

My purpose here is to respond to Weinstein and to generate further thought and discussion on this vital subject.

### What Are the Lessons of the Vietnam Movement?

Weinstein begins his article by reviewing some of the major controversies debated within the Vietnam antiwar movement. He discusses independent mass action versus dependence on capitalist politicians; the slogan of "Negotiate Now!" versus "U.S. Troops Out Now!" and single-issue versus multi-issue. On all of these questions Weinstein is on solid ground, both in his analysis of the differences and the conclusions he reaches. But when he turns to the subject, "Democracy in Antiwar Coalition," he goes completely awry.

Weinstein says the dispute over democracy in the Vietnam antiwar movement centered on whether the structure of a coalition should be based on "one representative from each organization" or on "one person, one vote." This, however, was not the basic difference. The issue during Vietnam was basically

the same as it is now: whether all activists—regardless of the particular voting system adopted—should have a meaningful voice in making decisions, or whether a select group of organizations and leaders should make the decisions.

An outstanding example of how these two concepts came into head-on collision occurred in the organizing of a national conference held in Cleveland, July 4-5, 1969, that gave birth to the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam and resulted in a call for a November 15 march on Washington that year. Antiwar leaders like Sid Peck and Dave Dellinger insisted that attendance at the conference be confined to a relatively small list of invitees. Otherwise, they said, they would not participate. Those who favored an open conference, including representatives of the Socialist Workers Party, argued that every antiwar group should be permitted to have delegates. Eventually a compromise was worked out: invited delegates would have a vote but observers would be welcome. When the conference convened, many of the 800 observers—who represented viable antiwar groups but who were not on the select list of invitees—demanded with good reason that they also have voting rights. The near chaos that resulted in trying to decide whether they should vote nearly led to the undoing of the conference. Eventually many were made voting delegates and the conference concluded by calling for a mass action. (The episode is fully described in Fred Halstead's book, *Out Now!*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1978, pp. 450-474.)

Differences over democratic procedures were never fully resolved during the course of the Vietnam antiwar movement. In fact, this was a contributing factor to a split in the movement and to the formation of two coalitions: the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC) and the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice (PCPJ). The former was open, nonexclusionary, and democratic; the latter adopted the "by invitation only" brand of decision making.

### Differences Persist Today

Weinstein, who supported "one person, one vote" during Vietnam, considers that system inappropriate for today's anti-intervention movement. He argues as follows: during Vietnam there were large numbers of students actively involved in the antiwar movement. However, there was only limited union support. Today, the commitment of the labor movement to the anti-intervention cause is unprecedented. The unions provide office space, donate thousands of dollars, publish articles in their newspapers, and take on

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*This article was written and submitted in July, but due to space limitations we were unable to print it in our September issue. It is being published in its original form, without updating to take recent developments into account.*



other coalition responsibilities. It's essential that the antiwar movement do what it can to enhance the decision-making role of the unions in the coalition.

But, continues Weinstein, there is a problem. Speaking of the situation in the San Francisco Mobilization for Peace, Jobs, and Justice, he says that labor officials are either unable or unwilling to bring more than a few of their members to general coalition meetings. At the same time, the legions of students that were active during Vietnam aren't coming around either. So "small coalition meetings [can] easily be dominated by tiny sectarian political currents seeking to impose their own political platform on the coalition—with no concern for the consequences of their actions." Weinstein's conclusion insofar as the San Francisco coalition is concerned: "It was necessary to accommodate the needs of democratic participation in this new situation."

Unfortunately, Weinstein does not spell out the form that this "accommodation" has taken. Top organizers of the coalition selected about 35 people who are empowered to make *final* decisions on the matters before the coalition. These 35 represent unions and some of the major groups in the Bay Area. But what about the hundreds of organizations which endorsed the April 25 demonstration in San Francisco, for example, but are not represented on the coordinating committee? They can, if they wish, send representatives to coalition meetings. They might even be permitted to speak. *But they cannot vote.*

The limitation on voting rights is so extreme that it even applied to other area coalitions on the West Coast. For example, the Los Angeles coalition, which organized a demonstration of 10,000 people in Los Angeles on November 1, 1986, endorsed and helped build the April 25 action. But their representative attending the San Francisco coalition's meeting was denied voting rights. Under the system imposed, no one other than the 35 has the necessary credentials to vote.

It is obvious from the above that many more than the "tiny sectarian political currents" are excluded from decision making. Of course, anyone may submit a "suggestion" to the coalition's coordinators as to what the coalition should do. And the suggestion may—or may not—be considered by the full steering committee. Weinstein seeks to justify this system by pointing to the 50,000 people the San Francisco coalition turned out for April 20, 1985. No doubt he would contend that the even larger turnout for the April 25, 1987, action in San Francisco provides further evidence that the structure works.

Weinstein's thesis prompts three questions that will be discussed here: Is it necessary to abridge democratic rights of movement activists in order to have a large antiwar demonstration? Is that the best way to build the movement? Can it be reconciled with the basic democratic principles of working class movements?

### Democracy and Mass Demonstrations

It has heretofore been a universally accepted proposition that people are most motivated to build a demonstration when they are part of the action,

i.e., when they have a voice in the decision-making process. That was certainly the case in San Francisco when an open and democratic coalition there organized an outpouring of a quarter-million people in an antiwar demonstration on April 24, 1971. That demonstration was far larger than anything organized to date by the present San Francisco coalition.

To be sure, as Weinstein points out, this is a different period. But what evidence does he offer that the *denial* of voting rights helped build attendance at the San Francisco coalition's recent demonstrations? How does he know that the turnout would not have been *larger* if the coalition had functioned in a completely democratic fashion? How does he explain the sharply reduced turnout of trade unionists in San Francisco on April 25, 1987, as compared to previous demonstrations?

It should be emphasized here that when the coalition was first organized it had a democratic structure. A slate of officers and steering committee members, together with a program, was proposed to an open meeting of 300 activists and was approved there. But the right of the entire coalition to make decisions was arbitrarily denied by the leadership when a dispute erupted over the issue of having an FMLN/FDR speaker at the April 20, 1985, rally. To this day Weinstein justifies the abrogation of democratic voting rights for all because of that incident. He refuses to recognize that there were a number of alternative ways of dealing with the problem. He rejects the idea that discussion and debate open to all activists working to build the demonstration was in order.

Contrary to Weinstein's simplistic schema, there are many more people active in the San Francisco movement than labor officials and ultralefts. There are rank-and-file workers, hundreds of Central America activists, a growing number of students, and people from a large number of diversified constituencies, including political radicals. Weinstein does not trust all of these groups and the coalition as a whole to decide. The "chosen" 35 must decide.

Just how strong are the ultralefts in San Francisco? They of course have a vocal faction. But when straw votes are taken in the coalition's occasional open meetings, they carry little weight. For example, at a January 1987 meeting called to plan the Western States Mobilization for April 25, the "tiny sectarian political currents" that Weinstein warns of showed up to push their perspective. But they were able to garner very little support for their positions. Carl Finamore, like Weinstein a leader of Socialist Action, describes the reaction at the meeting to proposals by one of their especially outspoken representatives, Lenni Brenner: "Fortunately, his objections to the march are not shared by many people. In a mass coalition meeting of over 200 people in January, Brenner's motions received around 10 votes" (*The Daily Californian*, May 29, 1987).

The anti-intervention movement has spawned coalitions around the country. There were 200 local coalitions for April 25. And we know of no reports from any, except San Francisco, where there was an outright denial of voting rights for both individ-

uals and participating organizations. Of course, the San Francisco coalition is different from other coalitions in that labor leaders in the Bay Area play much more of a leadership role than they do elsewhere. That is a very positive factor and did provide the opportunity to build an extremely broad and powerful coalition.

Two things were needed for the coalition to attain maximum effectiveness. One was programmatic unity. The other was an organizational meshing of the labor and other constituencies in the context of democratic decision making. In both areas, major problems developed. The Middle East proved to be a divisive issue; and, as noted, the dispute over speakers resulted in an end to full democratic participation by all sectors of the coalition.

Weinstein writes, "It was in the interest of the antiwar movement to increase this participation [of labor leaders] and to enhance the decision-making role of the unions in the coalition." That is a statement with which we emphatically agree. But there is a corollary proposition: It was in the interest of the antiwar movement for the labor leaders entering the movement to have a proper appreciation and respect for the many other groups and activists in the movement—some of whom had been working hard as the movement's foot soldiers the preceding several years to end U.S. intervention in Central America—and share with them in the decision-making process. (Such an appreciation, we might add, is also in the interest of strengthening the labor movement itself and the growth of its influence by winning allies.) And if this meant special organizational safeguards to prevent a takeover of meetings by sect groups, then something other than the denial of the right to vote might have been possible—for example, quorum requirements, 2/3 or even 3/5 vote before certain measures could be approved, etc.

Many committed Bay Area activists worked hard to make the 1985, 1986, and 1987 demonstrations in San Francisco successful, despite their disagreement with the coalition's controlled and exclusionary decision-making process. They had their eyes on the larger picture: to organize a massive outcry against U.S. war policies in Central America, against U.S. support for apartheid, etc. Similarly, 100,000 people turned out for an anti-intervention action in Washington, D.C., on May 3, 1981—a far larger number than the San Francisco coalition has been able to mobilize to date—despite disagreement with the way that demonstration was organized (a monopoly of decision making by one political tendency). Only the most backward and narrow-minded pragmatist would contend that if the turnout is large, the decision-making process must have been correct.

### Building the Anti-Intervention Movement

The kind of coalition that the anti-intervention movement needs is one that unites the movement for major demonstrations, then convenes meetings of the movement to evaluate the actions and plan the next ones, and then ensures that a democratic structure is established that will faithfully carry out

the decisions arrived at. The coalition must sponsor and organize *continuing* actions—not only demonstrations planned months in advance but also timely picket lines, teach-ins, conferences, educational events—to constantly mobilize and build opposition to U.S. interventionist policies. In the course of all this, the coalition must always be striving to reach out to and integrate new social forces and activists into its ranks. All of that is required to counter a government that pours out immense resources in pursuit of its Central America wars and intervention, and that works relentlessly on a non-stop basis to secure the support of the American people for its policies.

Weinstein is utterly oblivious to the impact on building the anti-intervention movement that results from accommodating democracy to the labor officialdom. Pandering to the bureaucratic tendencies of union officials—instead of struggling against such tendencies and insisting on thoroughgoing democracy—contributes to the disruption of the movement through the loss of continuity.

A case in point is the national coalition that came together to sponsor April 25. It is a fact that this coalition's structure was basically patterned after the one in San Francisco: a small, selective, and exclusionary steering committee with final decision-making authority; no voice for any of the 200 local coalitions, etc. The coalition was put together by national labor and religious leaders. That is enough for Weinstein. He says, writing in March, that "The upcoming antiwar mass actions in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco [were] made possible by an intelligent application of the united-front tactic." He makes no criticism whatever of the structure. That is no surprise, since it is the kind of structure he advocates.

But what happened to the April 25 coalition after the demonstration was over? It was dissolved. Instead of building the anti-intervention movement on an ongoing basis to strengthen the struggle against U.S. war policies in Central America by planning further actions, the leadership washed its hands of all responsibility and the top-heavy structure collapsed. At an especially critical moment for the movement, with a contra aid vote scheduled for September and with the issue of the U.S. government's war against Nicaragua being hotly debated as a result of the Iran/contra hearings, the coalition's leaders departed the scene and left a vacuum. This was a repeat performance of what coalition leaders did after the April 20, 1985, demonstrations.

*In both cases it was done without any discussion by the ranks of the anti-intervention movement. The top leaders decided the coalitions were no longer needed and that was that!*

Is this what Weinstein believes is the "intelligent application of the united-front tactic"?

Now, of course, if April 25 had resulted in the end of U.S. interventionist policies in Central America, or even a massive influx of trade union activists in the anti-intervention movement, then perhaps Weinstein could more rationally argue for accommodating democracy in the coalition. But neither

one of these objectives was realized. So in view of the way the national coalition was summarily dismantled, he ought to address the question: Would it not have been better to have had a democratic structure so that movement activists could have debated the advisability of maintaining the broad coalition and having it call fall actions?

Fortunately, a number of anti-intervention organizations, especially the solidarity groups, have joined together to call actions in September demanding a cutoff of all aid to the contras. Everything possible must be done to build these and other actions. At the same time, it is clear that the *ad hoc* formation that announced them is no substitute for the broad, national, ongoing anti-intervention coalition that is so critically needed.

The entire anti-intervention movement enthusiastically welcomed the initiative taken by labor and religious leaders in sponsoring a coalition and calling the April 25 demonstrations. But unlike Weinstein, movement groups like the Emergency National Council Against U.S. Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean (ENC) were critical of the coalition's undemocratic structure. And they warned that it could abruptly fold its tent after April 25 without consultation with people around the country who built the action. The point was lost on Weinstein.

An observation by a working class leader of an earlier epoch is relevant here. In an essay, "Lessons of the Civil War in Berlin," Karl Radek wrote in 1919:

There is nothing that deludes revolutionaries like a successful demonstration. They do not perceive the dimensions of the mass actions and they may go wrong in estimating their size, even by a factor of ten. *They forget that the masses represent a solid force only when they are organizationally linked together.* (*The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power*, Pathfinder Press, N.Y. 1986, p. 281. Emphasis added.)

That is what is lacking here: the continued organizational linking of the forces that came together to build April 25.

Why did the national anti-intervention coalition fold after April 25? Undoubtedly capitalist politics was a major factor. The 1988 election campaign is already underway and the labor bureaucracy is deeply involved in helping select the Democratic candidates at the expense of building mass actions.

Weinstein makes clear he opposes this. He writes, "Almost all of the antiwar, anti-nuclear, and solidarity groups decided to support Walter Mondale and other Democratic Party candidates in the 1984 elections. This was done instead of building mass demonstrations to answer the U.S. invasion of Grenada and the increased war moves against Nicaragua and El Salvador. The movement became totally demobilized during election time."

That was 1984. But what about the summer and fall of 1986, another election year, when many of

the anti-intervention groups were intensely busy organizing protest actions against contra aid? During this period the San Francisco coalition was deactivated as a result of a topside decision—with no opportunity for rank-and-file activists to challenge it—so that the labor bureaucracy could direct all its energies to electing Democratic politicians. It was during this period that \$100 million for aid to the contras was appropriated by Congress. It was in the fall that Los Angeles organized an action of 10,000 denouncing that aid.

Weinstein says nothing about the deactivation of the San Francisco coalition after April 1986 for the rest of that year. Of course, he could justifiably maintain that nothing that Socialist Action could have done would have prevented the hiatus in activities of the San Francisco coalition during that period. But that is not the point being raised here. *The question rather is why did Socialist Action independently fail to criticize what the labor bureaucracy did in 1986, which was basically no different from what Weinstein criticized the "antiwar, anti-nuclear, and solidarity groups" for doing in 1984?*

The publication *Socialist Action* is quite forceful in arguing that neither the labor movement, the antiwar movement, nor any oppressed sector of the population should place any confidence whatever in capitalist politicians. But there is an inconsistency in Socialist Action's work inside the anti-intervention movement when it does not conduct an open struggle against the position of labor leaders who decide a coalition shall be placed on ice pending congressional elections. Instead of uncritically announcing the suspension of activity (see *The Guardian*, November 26, 1986), was it not obligatory for Socialist Action's leaders in the coalition to have said, "While many of the labor leaders, who have actively led the coalition, will not be involved in the same way in the period ahead, we urge ongoing picket lines, rallies, demonstrations, and other visible actions against U.S. war policies in Central America"?

There are two unavoidable conclusions to be drawn from the above. The first is that labor leaders today with rare exceptions cannot give consistent leadership to the anti-intervention movement because of their predilection to work to elect capitalist politicians. The second is that democracy is essential to the anti-intervention movement so that a struggle against these predilections can be conducted and so that the movement can be won to the position that demonstrations should be organized before, during, and after elections, independently of the capitalist political parties.

Having traveled so far down the road of adaptation to the labor bureaucracy—even to the extent of "accommodating" democracy to them—Weinstein is unable to draw either of these two conclusions.

#### Basic Democratic Working Class Principles

The right of every worker to participate in the life of the union is guaranteed in virtually every

union constitution. The crisis of the labor movement today stems largely from the stifling of that right by the union bureaucracy. The fight for rank-and-file control of the unions is today crucial for the labor movement's survival and for its defense of workers' living standards and working conditions.

Weinstein would undoubtedly agree with that. He would fight for the right of *all* members of a union to have their say and cast their vote.

But when it comes to the mass movement, what was a right suddenly becomes a privilege to be bestowed by labor officials and others who share in the leadership of the San Francisco coalition on those they deem worthy.

As Weinstein has explained it, it was all right for students to have the vote during the Vietnam antiwar movement because there were so many of them around the movement at the time. But now their numbers are fewer so they cannot vote. Nor may other rank-and-file activists or representatives of the less prominent organizations in the anti-intervention movement vote. All of these should gracefully accept their disenfranchisement and should understand that otherwise, with everybody voting, the sectarian groups might take over the coalition and drive out the labor officials.



Historically there have been any number of rationalizations for denying people their democratic rights. Weinstein's schema, at least insofar as he develops it in regard to students, is novel, if nothing else.

But the basic objection to the Weinstein argument is that it is unprincipled. The Vietnam antiwar movement helped establish the *right* of all activists to participate in decision making. *No one has the right to deny anyone else the right to vote.*

Participants in the working class movement who are committed to democratic principles did not need to learn this from the Vietnam experience. In fact,

they considered the right of all to voice and vote to be one of the basic principles guiding the struggle of workers against the corporations and banks. They participate in broad social movements imbued with the same conviction.

But Weinstein, in violation of principle, favors "accommodating" democracy in order to garner greater support of labor officials *for a particular demonstration*. And when the national April 25 coalition set up an undemocratic structure, he was satisfied that that was an "intelligent" application of the united front tactic.

### Democracy and the Road Ahead for the Anti-Intervention Movement

It is essential that the anti-intervention movement not only acquire experience but learn from its experience. After seven years the movement has yet to achieve national cohesion and unity. It painfully creates coalitions for national actions, then rank-and-file activists watch helplessly as the coalition leaders dissolve the coalition after the action takes place. Each time the task of bringing the movement together, selecting staff, acquiring mailing lists, relating to local coalitions, erecting a structure, raising funds, etc., must start anew. In between coalitions there may be a gap of years.

Meanwhile the U.S. government continues without letup its brutal war against Nicaragua and its intervention throughout Central America. The anti-intervention movement cannot put in place the kind of ongoing coalition it needs unless it recognizes the central importance of democratic decision making. In his book *Out Now!*, Fred Halstead observes:

I always had difficulty understanding [Dave] Dellinger's concept of democracy, which usually did not include resolving disputed issues by debate and vote of the rank and file. Avoiding large conferences did not eliminate either power scrambles or fiascos. It just confined the scrambles to leading circles in isolation from the ranks and their collective feel of what was going on in the broader mass and in the workaday world. That increased the likelihood of fiascos, in my view (p. 369).

Sadly enough, Halstead's voice is silent now, as is the Socialist Workers Party's, on the question of democratic decision making in today's anti-intervention movement. The challenge of taking this issue to the movement and convincing activists of the indispensability of democracy for the movement's growth now falls to others. Socialist Action, it is hoped, will reconsider its position and provide some of the necessary leadership. ■

# PETER CAMEJO AND THE BALLOT BOX MYTH

by Paul Le Blanc

Once Peter Camejo was one of the most talented and dynamic spokespeople of the revolutionary socialist movement in the United States. In 1976 Camejo ran for president on the Socialist Workers Party ticket. Among his accomplishments was a classic debate with America's foremost social democrat Michael Harrington over whether or not socialists should join the Democratic Party. Camejo brilliantly articulated the revolutionary Marxist position.

"There's a lot of good people in the Democratic Party," he observed. "That's the truth. But the question is, who runs the party?" More sharply, he asked: "Is the Democratic Party the institution through which working people, women, Blacks, and Chicanos can make gains; or is it an institution that is run in the interests of the ruling class?" Camejo's answer was unambiguous: "We must go out and tell people the truth about the Democratic Party. It's a war party; it's a racist party; it's a sexist party; and it's antilabor. And the minute you start telling people to join such a party, you've undermined your entire ability to have a strategy for social change." (Duncan Williams, ed., *The Lesser Evil? The Left Debates the Democratic Party and Social Change* [New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977], pp. 32, 40, 20-21)

Much has changed over the past decade. The core leadership of the Socialist Workers Party centered around Jack Barnes lost confidence in its previously held Leninist-Trotskyist ideas and in the democratic norms which had typified the SWP under previous leaderships. Camejo was one of many who was pushed out of the organization. Unlike those who held to the traditional principles, however, Camejo also abandoned Trotskyism and sought what he considered a "less sectarian" orientation. As a leader of a new formation, the North Star Network, he has helped develop a position in many ways similar to that against which he polemicized.

In an article in the Spring 1987 issue of *The North Star*, entitled "Jesse Jackson, A New Rainbow Challenge in 1988?," he asks: "Will Jesse Jackson run for president in 1988?" Almost breathlessly he continues: "The answer is yes. He has to. The millions who supported Jackson in 1984 are counting on him to speak for them in 1988." (p. 2) Yet the thinking in Camejo's article rises to a higher level than this and merits serious attention.

## Valid Points

As one would expect from someone with his background and experience, Camejo offers a number of shrewd observations. One important point which

U.S. socialists cannot afford to lose sight of is that "Jackson's campaign . . . moved directly against the rightist course of the Democratic Party," and that Jackson's own rhetoric has a radical thrust. Camejo quotes him: "We make a fundamental mistake to let civil rights just be a Black movement, or ERA just be a women's movement, or for the peace movement just to be for some college students and some college professors on campus. We must see the interrelationship of all these things. . . ." Nor does Camejo argue that Jackson's leftward shifts on a variety of issues signify that he is necessarily a reliable radical leader. Or as he puts it "Whether these shifts meant a new understanding for Jackson personally, or a decision on his part that he could take a more radical posture without isolating himself, is largely irrelevant." What is significant has been his ability to attract mass support around a relatively radical pole within the framework of "mainstream" politics. Not surprisingly, but worth stressing, is the fact that "the largest Black voter turnout in history brought a landslide for Jackson in the Black community." (pp. 4, 11)

Camejo goes on to identify the contradictory pulls within Jackson's Rainbow Coalition. These remarks are quite perceptive and worth quoting at length:

The problem with the Rainbow's participation in the Democratic Party is that it limits the growth of class consciousness and political self-confidence among those involved in the Rainbow. This problem is important because in the last analysis only through the development of a mass independent political movement can lasting headway be made in defending the interests of the majority in our country.

The Rainbow can move forward towards the development of a genuine independent political mass movement or it can retreat back into purely pressure group bargaining for concessions in return for its cooperation in containing popular struggles. The very success of the Rainbow—for example, Jackson's victory in 61 congressional districts during the primaries—makes the Rainbow a potential feeding ground for opportunists seeking to promote their personal electoral ambitions.

The Rainbow thus has within it contradictory currents. One current includes those who seek to increase popular independent political power because of their commitment

to the interests of working people, oppressed nationalities, women, or specific progressive issues. The other includes those who want to tame the Rainbow to make it acceptable to the powers that be and thus useful for their personal ambitions. The second course would eventually lead to the collapse of the Rainbow, just as previous Democratic reform movements have collapsed back into the mainstream. The logic of the first course eventually leads to a break with the Democratic Party and the formation of a new party based on a program evolving out of the movements that the Rainbow seeks to represent and the struggles it tries to build. (p. 5)

We can see here that Camejo's estimate of the Democratic Party is similar to his earlier view. He also acknowledges—although somewhat obliquely—that central to the purposes of Jackson's Rainbow Coalition has been a determination to *enhance* the fortunes of this proimperialist, racist, sexist, antilabor party. Or as he puts it, the Rainbow Coalition "was unacceptable, rejected and despised by the leadership of *the very party it tried to strengthen.*" (p. 2, emphasis added)

### Contradictions

Ten years ago, Peter Camejo would have drawn the obvious revolutionary socialist conclusion from all of this: although the Rainbow Coalition reflects and gives expression to an important and progressive development among substantial sectors of workers and the oppressed, its commitment to the Democratic Party represents a fatal contradiction. Perhaps in the future he will be prepared to draw such a conclusion. For now, however, he draws the opposite conclusion: socialists must throw themselves into the Rainbow Coalition and help build the Jackson campaign's effort to secure the Democratic Party's presidential nomination.

"A few on the left continue to rule out the possibility that the Rainbow is a progressive force because it originated and remains, at this stage, inside the Democratic Party," Camejo writes. These few, he assures us, are very, very wrong. They fail to understand the "key point" which he explains in this way: "The principle involved here is whether a struggle, movement, or campaign is promoting class struggle or class collaboration, not where the struggle is taking place." (p. 6) This vague truism is used to advance a simplistic proposition which is contradicted by Camejo's own analysis. The Jackson campaign *has* given expression to aspects of the class struggle in our society, but it has also facilitated class collaboration. The bottom line in the 1984 Rainbow Coalition effort was to mobilize left-of-center support behind the candidacy of Walter Mondale and other procapitalist Democrats.

Camejo appears to believe that this was necessary and should be repeated on an even bigger scale the next time around: "The learning experi-

ence about the Democratic Party that began in 1984 should develop on a more massive scale in the 1988 campaign." He adds: "An increased vote for Jackson would open the door in the 1992 or 1996 campaigns for an entirely new dynamic." Does this mean that socialists should remain in the Jackson wing of the Democratic Party for the next five or ten years? Camejo seems to be saying perhaps they should. His rationale: "Given a shift in objective circumstances, nonelectoral movements could once again explode on the North American scene—movements with the mass momentum of the 1930s and 1960s, yet in a totally different context that, combined with the development of the Rainbow, could unleash powerful forces towards mass independent political action." (p. 11)

The mass labor upsurge of the 1930s, however, generated a left-liberal coalition in the Democratic Party around the New Deal of Franklin D. Roosevelt, with progressive reforms and radical-sounding rhetoric designed, ultimately, to channel working class radical impulses into the project of saving American capitalism. Substantial sectors of the civil rights and antiwar and feminist leaderships in the 1960s and '70s had a similar orientation of supporting liberal Democrats. Given the Democratic Party commitments of Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, one would expect it to play a similar role of helping to give bourgeois politics a radical face during the upsurges of the future.

Camejo doesn't tell us why he feels this class collaborationist dynamic will not be triumphant. In fact, he offers useful hints on why the Rainbow Coalition may feel incapable of breaking from the Democratic Party:

Unlike Europe, where political parties are far more defined by programs, the U.S. two-party system simultaneously plays the role of both political party and electoral apparatus. The two parties and their primaries are in reality institutionalized parts of government itself, and the electoral laws have been consciously written to perpetuate their dominance. . . .

The labor and socialist movements . . . have perhaps failed to realize just how much winner-take-all elections depoliticize society, helping to lower political consciousness and participation by narrowing political debate and the options for political action. Any attempt to run as a third party or independent candidate appears to people to be a spoiler campaign that in effect favors one of the two major candidates. (p. 5)

Camejo offers, perhaps inadvertently, a means by which to test Jesse Jackson's commitment to the goal of genuinely independent politics. He tells us: "If the United States had proportional representation, the Rainbow would not hesitate to run an independent slate and would undoubtedly win a bloc of 50 or more Rainbow representatives and

several senators." This estimate of the Rainbow Coalition's aspirations, strength, and level of organization is something which Camejo doesn't bother to substantiate. He goes on to make this point, however: "The struggle for independent working class politics is thus directly intertwined with the struggle to democratize the electoral system, and Jackson's campaign has helped increase our understanding of this problem." (p. 5)

Thus, it would seem that if Jackson is genuinely committed to the struggle for independent working class politics, he will initiate—over the fierce objections of Democratic Party leaders and local stalwarts—a campaign to fundamentally reform the electoral system in the United States. Will he be inclined to do this even though it would substantially weaken his ability to maneuver within the Democratic Party in 1988, 1992, and beyond? This seems highly unlikely. Given Camejo's line of argument, however, that is what will be required if the Rainbow Coalition strategy is to transcend the confines of the Democratic Party.

The great French novelist Romain Rolland once coined a phrase which was further popularized by Antonio Gramsci: "Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will." Camejo's will is still pulled toward political action independent of the two capitalist parties, and he expresses optimism about the Rainbow Coalition's trajectory towards independent politics. But the analytical fruits of his intellect indicate that we should be very pessimistic about the likelihood of this happening. This contradiction is never reconciled in a "higher synthesis" in his article. Socialists who follow his advice seem destined to be drawn into the Democratic Party while kidding themselves about where they'll end up.

### Unity and Disunity

Camejo advances a perspective of utilizing the Rainbow election campaign of 1988 to strengthen and unify insurgent forces. The possibilities, as he describes them, are breathtaking:

Workers trying to organize in difficult areas such as the semiconductor plants might find a Jackson campaign committee as a way to bring together progressive workers in ways that can build struggles around common interests and around the needs of the specially oppressed.

Students on campus will find Jackson's campaign an excellent way to unify progres-

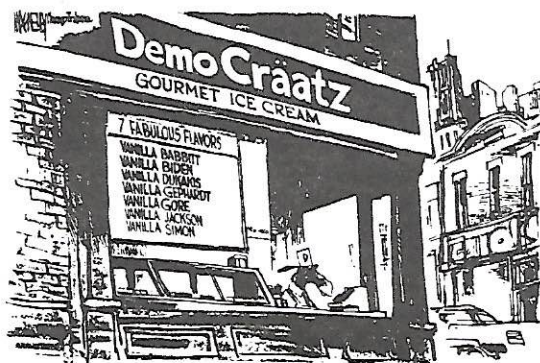
\* It would weaken his ability to maneuver in at least three ways: 1) it would involve such a massive effort that substantial resources and energies would be withdrawn from electoral work; 2) it would create an abyss between those Jackson supporters who want to split the Democratic Party and those who don't; 3) it would demonstrate Jackson's own "disloyal" intentions to the rest of the Democratic Party.

sive students and to initiate activities on a variety of important political questions. Once again Jackson's campaign offers a vehicle to create multiracial activity.

The campaign will offer a special opportunity to issue-oriented groups that have difficulties in getting their views before the public. Jackson's campaign could be an effective vehicle to generate interest and reach broader audiences.

The '88 campaign should see the early beginnings of making the Rainbow really an alliance between the most plebeian layers and those seriously committed to progressive issues such as nonintervention in Central America, protection of the environment, and women's rights. (p. 6)

But the attempt to force all these struggles into the Rainbow framework can create the very opposite of the unity Camejo envisions. What of the working class militant, the progressive student, the antiwar activist, and the feminist who are not inclined to jump on the Rainbow bandwagon? There are many of these—people who think it's best to support a different liberal Democrat; people who distrust all politicians; people who are committed to supporting only socialist or "minor party" candidates; people who are prepared to fight long and work hard on one or another issue, or set of issues, but who don't want to commit their energies to a dubious electoral process.



Peter Camejo used to be one of the most eloquent advocates of the *united front* concept. He would have said: Yes, we must work as closely as we can with Jesse Jackson and members of the Rainbow Coalition on those issues where we agree. But to try to subordinate the larger struggle to a particular election campaign or political current will divide and narrow the base of the labor struggle, the antiwar struggle, the antiracist struggle, the women's rights struggle. We want to involve the broadest number of people in these struggles—those who strongly support Jesse Jackson, but also those who don't. The key is to mobilize everyone who cares about the issues of peace and social justice, regardless of political affiliation. The Rainbow activists can put forward their ideas, others can put forward different ideas, and in the context of a democratic movement and a unified

struggle we'll see whose ideas make sense and who proves to be most effective in struggling for the common goals. On some things we'll agree to disagree, in order to wage a unified and effective struggle for the things on which we see eye-to-eye.

Today Camejo tells us: "Organizations and individuals who have such doubts [about the wisdom of channeling energies into the Rainbow Coalition] should note that all international pro-working class currents that have won mass support—whether in Latin America, the Caribbean, or elsewhere—see the Rainbow as important to the future of all progressive struggles in the United States." (p. 6) The Camejo of yesterday (and hopefully of tomorrow) would respond: First of all, it's not clear that Jesse Jackson's electoral strategy is endorsed by "all international pro-working class currents that have won mass support." Those who see the Rainbow Coalition as important, however, are right. We think it's important, too, and we want to build united fronts with it whenever we can. It may be the case that some genuine revolutionaries in the world believe that U.S. socialists should join the Rainbow Coalition. But not even pragmatic-minded revolutionary leaders like Fidel Castro are always right about everything—whether it's supporting "progressive" nationalist army officers in Peru or Salvador Allende's popular front in Chile or certain liberal Democrats in the United States. What's most important to understand is that the activists who are engaged in the struggles *here* will have to think through—largely on the basis of their own experience, and with their own critical minds—what makes sense and what it will take to advance their struggles most effectively.

There is an important link between effective unity in mass struggles and the practice of democracy. Camejo used to talk about this with great clarity and eloquence. With his migration into the Rainbow Coalition, however, it's a point he chooses not to stress. This is not surprising, given the fact that without Jesse Jackson there would be no Rainbow Coalition and that therefore, on the fundamentals, Jackson calls the shots—for example, on the questions of when and how much and in what ways to maneuver and compromise with the proimperialist, antilabor, racist, and sexist elements which dominate the Democratic Party. In contrast, the Peter Camejo of 1976 asserted: "I say it's about time that working people, the majority, started putting up our own candidates and putting our own people, that we control democratically, in office. The Democratic Party is the least democratic of any party in this country." (*The Lesser Evil?*, p. 26)

### The Trap of the Ballot Box Myth

Today Camejo explains that, "given the lack of an organized mass-based socialist alternative, any nascent movement to oppose Reaganomics with or without Reagan will inevitably find its first mass electoral expression within the existing two-party structure—just as the electoral expression of

opposition to the Vietnam war developed within the context of the existing parties." (p. 3) In 1976 Camejo effectively refuted this line of thought

To us, it is the independent mass movements of the people themselves—like the antiwar movement in the streets—that affected American history in a positive way. Like the mass civil rights movement, like the mass labor movement, like the mass women's movement—these are the social forces that have made America move forward and this is the key to our entire strategy. This is why we challenge and disagree with the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee [the predecessor of Michael Harrington's Democratic Socialists of America], whose strategy is to join the Democratic Party, a party which is not known to have called a single antiwar demonstration or a single pro-civil rights demonstration. (*The Lesser Evil?*, p. 17)

Through the political pressure created by *independent* mass movements, which are in no politician's hip pocket, changes have been brought about in the policies of our government and the positions of the two capitalist parties. Only this gives us the leverage—limited as it is—to "set them right and keep them honest." That will not *solve* the problems of capitalism, to be sure. The politicians and government policymakers will continually seek ways to advance the interests of the corporations which dominate our economy, placing corporate profits before human needs. But only through independent movements, not through capitalist parties, can we make limited gains in the here-and-now while at the same time beginning to create the preconditions and consciousness for fundamental change. Camejo put it very well before he lost his way:

We can't fall into the trap of the ballot box myth: You pull the curtain, no one can see what you're doing, then you vote for one of them or vote for another of them. They announce they won again, and you think you decided something.

That is a myth. The decisions are made by much broader social forces, and the key to it is that the workers' movement must be independent. We must favor that the unions break from the Democratic and Republican parties and form their own party. (*The Lesser Evil?*, p. 42)

As things stand today, it seems that this development will be a long time coming. And so it may be. But this perspective helps to orient us in waging effective struggles in the here-and-now while preparing for the future. And it promises to bear fruit sooner than Peter Camejo's new orientation—which is really not so new and whose hopelessness he so effectively exposed when he was guided by revolutionary Marxism. ■



## NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE USSR

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

There are indications that with glasnost—the new policy of openness introduced in the USSR by the Soviet government under Mikhail Gorbachev—the ruling bureaucratic caste is moving toward more revelations of Stalin's crimes, the rehabilitation of more of the Bolshevik party leaders and cadre murdered during the Stalin era, and a lessening of the falsification of the revolution's history.

The Soviet government daily *Izvestia*, July 12, 1987, noting that the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution was only several months off, launched a column "Thus We Began." Its first feature, "The First Government," lists the Bolshevik leaders who were assigned posts in the first Soviet government and includes "L.D. Bronstein (Trotsky)."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, his name appears with none of the slanderous adjectives or comments that have characterized the bureaucracy's references to him since the 1920s. The article identifies all the figures as having been self-sacrificing revolutionists. Pointing out that they had all been underground, illegal, imprisoned, and had no previous experience heading a government, the *Izvestia* reporter Yegor Yakovlev continues:

However, the very head of the government Ulyanov-Lenin, having heard someone complain about their inadequate experience, burst out laughing: "And do you think that any of us has enough experience?" Yes, they had long become accustomed to the fate of professional revolutionaries; for decades they



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remained illegals; experiencing tragedy of family and close friends to whom they inevitably, not wanting to, had caused sorrow; giving up friends from youth who shunned them in fear, . . . free only during intervals between arrest. And all they could expect in return was punishment of prison, exile, hard labor, or a death sentence.

Then comes a paragraph naming each figure and describing their prerevolutionary past. Of Trotsky Yakovlev says: "in the workers movement since age 17, exiled to Siberia at age 19." Of the 18 leaders named in the article besides Lenin and "I.V. Dzhughashvili (Stalin)" four died of natural causes by 1933, one survived a labor camp term and was rehabilitated after Stalin's death, and ten were shot or perished during the purges. Two besides Trotsky—Aleksey Rykov and Aleksandr Shliapnikov—were victims of the Moscow purges and have not been rehabilitated.

Yakovlev continues:

All that distinguishes these individuals is where they were exiled, for how long, and how many times they escaped. They were like a single person, a chain of fighters stretching to the furthest edge of the horizon. . . . They had not been educated to carry out technical tasks—but they were able to defend their point of view, without counting heads to see who was for and who was against. More often than not, they were familiar with all the finer points of the work they came to direct; but in any case, every decision was guided by one thing above all—their dedication to the interests of the workers and peasants. Any other approach would have seemed a betrayal of themselves and of their lives.

They all made mistakes more than once, even Lenin—Vladimir Ilych never concealed this.

Yakovlev wants us to appreciate that these revolutionary giants were also fallible human beings. Implicitly this means that Trotsky, as well as Stalin, had his good and bad points. The article nevertheless finds it necessary to dredge up the following quote about Trotsky: "Long before the Revolution, he [Lenin] wrote: 'It is in essence impossible to argue with Trotsky since he has no views of any kind.'"

## Lenin's Testament

Yakovlev then switches his focus to Lenin's "Letter to the Congress," written in December 1922, with subsequent notes in January 1923. This is the Russian revolutionary leader's last written statement to the Central Committee before his death and has come to be referred to as "Lenin's Testament." In it he expresses strong criticisms of Stalin and recommends his removal from the post of general secretary of the party, while expressing more positive appraisals of other Central Committee members, including Trotsky.

This material was intended for the 12th Party Congress of April 1923, but was not read until the 13th Congress in May 1924, after Lenin's death. The testament was subsequently suppressed until after Stalin's death and the 20th Party Congress of 1956, where Khrushchev made his famous denunciation of the crimes of Stalin. It was then distributed to members of the apparatus, but all copies were later recalled.

Lenin's testament has been persistently referred to by hard-core Stalinists as a "Trotskyist fabrication," and for decades was only available through illegal underground channels. Yakovlev, editor of *Moscow Evening News*, published the document in the English, French, and German language editions of that paper last January,<sup>2</sup> and the text was also included in the 1961 edition of Lenin's collected works.

Taking advantage of the fact that this letter is not readily available in the USSR, Yakovlev chooses in his *Izvestia* article to quote from the section that expresses doubt about Stalin (December 25, 1922), but leaves out Lenin's January 4, 1923, postscript proposing Stalin's removal from the post of general secretary. When quoting Lenin's comments about Trotsky, however, Yakovlev skips the first portion ("Comrade Trotsky, on the other hand, as his struggle against the Central Committee on the question of the People's Commissariat of Communications has already proven, is distinguished not only by outstanding ability. He is personally perhaps the most capable man in the present Central Committee,") and picks up the quotation here: "but he has displayed excessive self-assurance and shown excessive preoccupation with the purely administrative side of the work."

Yakovlev then volunteers Lenin's comments about Yuri Pyatakov, a leading Bolshevik during the revolutionary and postrevolutionary periods, and for a short time in the 1920s a supporter of the Left Opposition. Pyatakov was one of the 17 defendants convicted at the second Moscow trial January 1937 and shot. His name has since been expunged from history. "As for Pyatakov, then deputy chairman of Gosplan: 'He is unquestionably a man of outstanding will and outstanding ability, but shows too much zeal for administrating and the administrative side of the work to be relied upon in a serious political matter.'"

Yakovlev continues to use Lenin's "Letter to the Congress" as his point of departure and tries to



Trotsky

make analogies between Lenin's task then and the tasks of the present party leadership. There is an obvious irony here. Lenin then was concerned about *neutralizing* the growing influence of the bureaucratic apparatus by strengthening the state-controlled sector of the economy and the State Planning Commission. Today Lenin's letter is being used to *defend* the policies of the bureaucratic caste that managed to take over the state power.

The Soviet ruling aristocracy's antidemocratic policies, its effort to plan the economy and run the society by bureaucratic fiat, have led to stagnation—both economic and cultural. Unable to implement true democratic planning without also endangering its privileges, the Gorbachev wing of the bureaucracy hopes desperately to find a way out of its dilemma through measures of restructuring—*perestroika*—which will weaken the nationalized sector and the State Planning Commission.

Yakovlev's article raises no political ideas. Since it presents the October Revolution as something Lenin and a small group of trusted individuals carried out (isolated in Room 36 of the Smolny Institute) and subsequently announced to the masses, there is no sense of the role of the Petrograd workers and soldiers in the process. However, despite its other shortcomings, the fact that the names of Trotsky, Pyatakov, Shliapnikov, and Rykov are restored to official history in this account of October may indicate that additional revelations will be forthcoming, helping further to restore a small portion of real history from the rubble of falsification and slander of the Stalin and post-Stalin period.

### Nikolai Muralov

A second item points even further in this direction. The July 5, 1987, issue of *Socialist Industry* also featured an article in commemoration of the revolution, one in a series. It announces the rehabilitation of Nikolai Muralov.

Muralov was a hero of the 1905 Petrograd uprising, and a Bolshevik in Petrograd at the time of the October Revolution who led the Moscow Red Guards over to the side of the Soviets. He continued to defend the Bolshevik government as a soldier in the Red Army during the civil war, supported the Opposition in its struggle against the bureaucracy from

the Opposition's inception in 1923, and was expelled from the party with other Left Opposition leaders and supporters at the 15th Party Congress, December 1927. He was then exiled to Siberia. Arrested in 1936, Muralov was one of the 17 defendants at the second Moscow trial in January 1937. He was convicted and shot.

The introduction to the *Socialist Industry* article is by S. Vologzhanin, who was assigned by the Control Committee of the CPSU to review Muralov's case as a result of an appeal by Muralov's relatives in 1985. He writes:

A study of the materials of the case of N.I. Muralov showed that the accusations that had served as the basis for raising criminal charges against him were falsified. On April 17, 1986, the plenum of the Supreme Court of the USSR reviewed the case. The sentence of the Military Board of the Supreme Court of the USSR of April 30, 1937, with respect to N.I. Muralov, in light of the newly revealed circumstances, has been revoked, and the case against him in the absence of a verifiable crime has been dropped. . . . Muralov has been posthumously rehabilitated.

This introduction is followed by an article by Muralov's grandson, N. Poleshchuk, "a sculptor." It is mainly an account of Muralov's role in revolutionary events, with numerous references to Lenin's praise and collaboration with him, to buttress a defense of Muralov as a good Bolshevik. The most unusual part of the article is Poleshchuk's comment on Muralov's right to be a supporter of "the opposition"—which in this case would be the Left Opposition:

Here is what S.I. Aralov, a party member since 1918 wrote in 1961 to the Control Commission of the CPSU: "It should be noted that in the course of the entire period of Lenin's and the Party's struggle against Menshevism, Trotskyism [The Stalinist bureaucracy struggled against the Opposition led by Trotsky but Lenin never did. Lenin formed a bloc with Trotsky against the bureaucracy—M.V.D.] and the other various opposition groups, N.I. Muralov emerged as an active and consistent Bolshevik-Leninist. . . . Muralov's adherence to the opposition was in essence a consequence of his protest against the violations of Leninist norms in Party life.

I am not an historian, and I will not undertake a deep evaluation of Muralov's activity in that complicated setting. But here is what he himself said from the platform of the 15th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) [December 1927, the Congress which expelled the Opposition]:

"Comrades, I think that many misfortunes have occurred because we did not have

a party congress for two full years . . . our 15th Party Congress should place the blame for this on the Central Committee. . . . During the dictatorship of the proletariat after the October days, there was not once during Lenin's life that the Party did not meet annually. . . . And if you consider the fact that the 14th Congress saw the greatest conflicts, and that the problems which caused these conflicts were not attended to, but driven inward, then it was a necessity to foresee that misunderstanding and misfortune would arise in the party."

Rodchenko: "For whom?"

Muralov: "For whom? I think for the party and for the revolution."

Voice from the hall: "For the opposition."

Muralov: "We had congresses earlier without feeling embarrassed about criticizing or having preliminary discussions, even about conditions in the military or matters of the utmost gravity within our party milieu and our highest party organizations. We were always criticizing. We were not even afraid to criticize our great leader Lenin himself. . . . When I criticize (noise, a voice: 'Enough, step down!') it means that I am criticizing my own party, my own activity. I criticize out of an interest in resolving the problem at hand and not to be groveling."

In his summary remarks, I.V. Stalin declared: "As to the speeches of comrades Yevdokimov and Muralov, I had nothing essential to say because they presented no evidence. All that can be said about them is: 'Father, forgive them their sins for they know not what they say.' (laughter, applause.)"

By the decision of the 15th Congress, N.I. Muralov and a number of others were expelled from the Party. . . . Muralov was sent to Siberia.

The article goes on to report that after the 22nd Party Congress, Muralov's name was again allowed to appear in historic literature but he was not rehabilitated. It does not appear in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* issued throughout the 1970s.

### The Moscow Trials

The rehabilitation of Muralov is particularly significant. At that trial, the defendants (others included Radek, Pyatakov, Serebriakov, and Sokolnikov) were charged with collaborating with Trotsky and the Left Opposition to conduct military and industrial sabotage, and assassinate Stalin and others. The accusations included conspiring with the Japanese and German fascists to restore capitalism in the USSR. There was no evidence presented and the

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Drastic changes in the world system of capitalism have adversely affected the living standard of the working class in Western Europe and North America. The latest technology in commodity production and distribution has created financial and political crises that plague the imperialist powers. Nowhere are these effects of the structural reorganization of capitalism more politically volatile than in the United States.

In a previous issue of the *Bulletin IDOM* (No. 43, July/August 1987) Steve Bloom described the internationalization of the capitalist productive process, and listed some of its consequences. My purpose here is to review briefly a series of events leading to the present impasse of labor unions in the U.S., to call attention to some recent efforts to revitalize the unions as basic working class defense organizations, and to introduce *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, where most of the answers to labor's problems can be found.

## I. U.S. LABOR, 1971 TO 1987

On August 15, 1971, the Nixon administration abruptly announced what soon became known as its "new economic policy." One feature decreed a 90-day wage/price freeze. George Meany, then AFL-CIO president, called it "patently discriminatory" against working men and women. Leonard Woodcock, president of the United Auto Workers at the time, was more bombastic. "If this administration thinks that just by issuing an edict, by the stroke of a pen, they can tear up contracts, they are saying to us they want war. If they want war, they can have war."

This seemed to imply that the union officialdom would defend the interests of the workers and mobilize the ranks to fight against rising prices and growing unemployment.

Nothing of the sort happened. Instead, top union officials agreed to serve on a government-sponsored tripartite *Pay Board*, consisting of representatives of business, labor, and "the public." The ostensible purpose was to "fight inflation." In this way the union movement was tricked into accepting Nixon's wage freeze and blocked from mobilizing against unemployment and for general improvement in the standard of living of poor people, the "underprivileged."

An analysis by Les Evans in the Socialist Workers Party's monthly magazine *International Socialist Review* (October 1971) pointed to the changing economic relations among the imperialist powers. Evans said: "The continuing inflation and the U.S. balance of payments deficit are only symptoms of the fundamental crisis. . . . Corporations everywhere today are striving to find areas for capital investment and for sales—under conditions of market saturation and generalized overproduction." He warned: "The conditions are ripening for a revival of the escalating trade wars and competitive devaluations that characterized the 1930s."

## LABOR'S ANSWER

by Frank

### The Antiunion Offensive

In the ensuing years the crisis of capitalism intensified, and the drive to lower wages and weaken the unions in this country kept pace. Top officials of the union bureaucracy adjusted to the increasingly hostile environment by seeking allies among "fair" employers and "friendly" politicians—with disastrous results for the unions, and for unorganized workers as well as union members.

This policy and its consequences were accurately summarized in 1979 by Douglas Fraser when he was UAW president and momentarily a disappointed practitioner of class collaboration. The occasion was the breakup of the Labor-Management Group, a top level, quasi-governmental committee of eight major corporation executives and eight ranking labor leaders, including Fraser. This group met regularly under the guidance of Professor John T. Dunlop, a former secretary of labor, and tried to find agreement on such issues as energy problems, inflation, unemployment, rising health costs, labor legislation, etc. The group split when the corporate executives reneged on their implied promise to support the Labor Reform Bill that was being pushed in Congress at the time by the union bureaucracy. The bill was defeated. Fraser charged that "Corporate leaders knew it was not the 'power grab by Big Labor' that they portrayed it to be."

He concluded that "the business community, with few exceptions, have chosen to wage a one-sided class war today in this country—a war against working people, the unemployed, the poor, the minorities, the very young and the very old, and even many in the middle class of our society. The leaders of industry, commerce and finance in the United States have broken and discarded the fragile, unwritten compact previously existing during a past period of growth and progress."

Fraser went on to explain how the "unwritten compact" worked:

For a considerable time, the leaders of business and labor have sat at the Labor-Management Group's table—recognizing differences, but seeking consensus where it existed. That worked because the business community in the U.S. succeeded in advocating a general loyalty to an allegedly benign capitalism that emphasized private property, independence and self-regulation along with an allegiance to free, democratic politics.

## TO TODAY'S PROBLEMS

Lovell

That system has worked best, of course, for the "haves" in our society rather than the "have-nots." Yet it survived in part because of an unspoken foundation: that when things got bad enough for a segment of society, the business elite "gave" a little bit—enabling government or interest groups to better conditions somewhat for that segment. That give usually came only after sustained struggle, such as that waged by the labor movement in the 1930s and the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

The implication is that the union movement should again organize "sustained struggle" as in the 1930s. But the union bureaucracy—including Fraser and his UAW successor—proved incapable. Union bureaucrats are conditioned to seek collaboration with the employers. They do not understand how to fight against the employers and do not believe in the wisdom or success of class struggles.

### Labor Under Reagan

The 1980s brought the most unrelenting attack on the bastions of organized labor by the employing class since the rise of the CIO in the 1930s. It began in 1981 with the Reagan administration's bashing of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). Not only was the air traffic controllers' strike broken and all strikers barred from future employment in that capacity, but the leaders were prosecuted and the union outlawed. In this way the government signaled all employers—large and small—that open season on the unions had arrived. The objective was to roll back the union movement to the open-shop days of the pre-CIO resurgence.

This process began long before Reagan and proceeded at a steady pace. But the Reagan administration made it official policy. The union bureaucrats ran for cover at every turn. The result, over the years, has been a decline in union membership and a withering of union influence within the unorganized sector of the working class. Since 1968 the percentage of organized workers relative to the total eligible workforce has declined from around 25 percent to no more than 18 percent. The decline in total membership has been less precipitous, down from a 1968 peak of 20.7 million to the present level of around 17 million. These 17 million organized workers (13 million dues-paying AFL-CIO affiliates) are an influential social factor and a potentially powerful political force. The decline

in the influence of union ideology and leadership standing within the working class—and especially within the unorganized sector—has been more detrimental than the decline in membership. The two, of course, are related. The fact is that today many workers who never experienced the advantages of union protection do not believe that union membership will raise their wages, secure their jobs, or improve their conditions of life. They have little confidence in the power of unionism.

### The Restructuring of Commodity Production

The continuous attack on the unions was both prompted and facilitated by the deepening economic crisis of the capitalist system and the restructuring of commodity production on a world scale. As noted by Evans in his 1971 analysis of Nixon's "new economic policy," the search for new areas of capital investment had intensified and competition among the industrial nations for new markets was growing. But the flow of capital at that time was already beginning to find new channels of investment.

Technological advances in transportation systems, improvements in the means of communication, foreseeable possibilities of the new "computer science," and the growing awareness on the part of industrial investors of a vast pool of cheap productive labor throughout the colonial and semicolonial world created what then became known as "the multinational corporation." Mostly they were spawned by U.S. capital seeking investment opportunities.

Old plants and equipment in the pre-World War II industrial centers of Europe and North America soon became obsolete in the rapidly expanding and internationally coordinated world of new manufacturing ventures. Much of the industrial machinery of Europe was destroyed by the war, but the modernized facilities that were built after the war on the old models no longer adequately served the profit demands of capitalist investors. The same was found to be true in North America (Canada included) where modernization had lagged because of the early post-war advantages of U.S. industrial capacity and military might.

The restructuring process proceeded erratically, often with false starts and reevaluations. But the trend was retrenchment, elimination of outmoded operations, reduction of the workforce, dispersal (especially in the auto industry and in light industries such as garment and home appliances) of parts manufacturing and, increasingly, basic units of the finished product. Final assembly plants were shifted to new locations, frequently for no immediately apparent reason. But the end result today is that General Motors advertises a car in its Pontiac line which is designed in Germany (for style) and built entirely in Korea (for low labor cost in production and competitive pricing in the world market).

All U.S. heavy industry is hit by the changes. Obsolete plants are closed. The industrial heartland surrounding the Great Lakes, where ore mines, steel mills, auto plants, and tire factories were once the mainstays of the economy, has been transformed into the "rust belt." The auto industry, while continuing to manufacture and distribute more cars and trucks than ever before, no longer depends on the assembly lines in Detroit, Toledo, Cleveland, and Buffalo.

The steel industry has undergone the most visible devastation. Old mills stand idle, relics of a past era, in Chicago, Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Buffalo, and Cleveland. The Youngstown, Ohio, area which was once almost entirely dependent on the thriving steel industry no longer produces steel. The industry moved away, leaving behind abandoned furnaces.

### The Class Struggle Today

This transformation period which accelerated in the mid-1970s and reached high speed by 1985 unsettled the workforce and produced pockets of mass unemployment. In the beginning it brought on a large number of isolated strikes, many provoked by the employers. Most were lost by the workers. In addition to their newly developed ability to quickly shift production operations from a struck plant to another where no union existed or where the representative union was bound by a no-strike contract, the employers also had the repressive power of federal and state government on their side.

The courts routinely issued injunctions against mass picketing. Strikebreakers were protected. Strikers frequently came under physical attack by police and national guard units. Many strikers were jailed, heavy fines were imposed on unions, and in some instances union members were fined for refusing to work. These legal strikebreaking techniques became standard practice under the Reagan administrations, but they had been carefully prepared long before Reagan's appearance on the political scene, going back at least to passage of the 1947 Taft-Hartley law. Since then the U.S. Congress and state legislatures have systematically put in place anti-labor laws that can be used effectively to break strikes. The Reaganite administrators in government agencies have encouraged the aggressive use of this unchallenged discriminatory legislation.

Even though the changing features of capitalist production were not yet clearly recognized nor fully understood, the industrial workers discovered soon enough that forces beyond their control were closing in on them. Their jobs were disappearing. Their wages were shrinking. Their entitlements (family health care, guaranteed annual wage/supplementary unemployment benefits, wage escalators geared to rising prices, pensions and other old-age assistance) secured by union contract were fading away. Their ability to hold either the employers or the government responsible was gone. The weapons of union protection—most importantly the strike or threat of strike—that seemed effective in earlier

times no longer worked. Many blamed the union bureaucracy (and very often the union) for their inability to strike back, their impotence when faced with disaster. One of the lessons they drew is *strikes don't pay*.

In the 1960s and 1970s strikes of at least 1,000 workers for one full shift averaged 285 a year. In 1985 there were 54 such strikes, the lowest in four decades according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This does not mean the workers had grown passive during this period. They had become more cautious. And they were looking for better methods of struggle.

## II. REVITALIZING THE UNIONS

When the steel industry left Youngstown, the United Steel Workers of America closed its offices and discarded its long established Youngstown District. It had been the center of some early struggles of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee in the 1930s upon which the USWA was founded. Local leaders of the union, loyal to its militant tradition, began almost immediately to reconstitute an organization for unemployed steel workers and others. They sought help and support of church and civic groups, and ad hoc committees against mill closings and for unemployed relief were created. Some of these committees became permanent organizations with dues-paying members. They demanded attention from local politicians and developed a variety of plans to take over the idle mills.

These efforts became common in the 1980s to all the blighted areas where the steel industry had once flourished. Union-church-civic coalitions formed in Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and elsewhere. They gave themselves appropriate names: Ad Hoc Plant Closing Coalition (Cleveland); Upper Ohio Valley Reindustrialization Project; Mon-Valley Unemployed Committee (Pittsburgh); Coalition Against Plant Shutdown (Canton, Ohio); etc. These coalitions formed at different times under pressure of local circumstances, with varying degrees of stability. Some waged militant and highly publicized struggles against the banking interests in their localities. A few mills were reopened or remained in operation for awhile under an arrangement with the banks that allowed for "workers' ownership," and the workers stayed on the job at reduced wages. Such schemes were inevitably short-lived because the obsolete facilities were neither socially nor economically viable.

In Detroit and other auto centers locals of the UAW, in collaboration with concerned church groups and liberal politicians, have called demonstrations against plant closings. These have publicity value, but were never intended to mobilize the workers and the unemployed to protect their own interests.

One of the most unexpected products of the ferment in the working class generated by the anti-union climate and the reactionary political drift in this country has been the emergence of union organizing consultants, the best known of which is Corporate Campaign, Incorporated. This consulting firm,

headed by Ray Rogers, established a reputation for imaginative propaganda techniques and effective organizing methods when it was hired by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) to help bring the notorious J.P. Stevens Co. to the bargaining table. Rogers' innovative "corporate campaign" strategy extended the fight against the antiunion textile firm beyond the traditional picket lines and boycotts to the corporate boardrooms, including stockholders and financial bank lenders. J.P. Stevens agreed to a contract covering 3,500 workers at its plant in Roanoke Rapids, N.C., in 1980.

An increase in strike activity in 1986 seemed to indicate a new mood of self-confidence in some sectors of the union movement, a determination on the part of union members to halt the tendency of their officials to grant concessions in the form of lower wages, fewer fringe benefits, and worse working conditions without any sign of opposition. This reversed the steady decline in strike activity during the previous several years. City workers were again on the picket lines in Detroit and Philadelphia. AT&T was struck across the country by 155,000 telephone workers. The Aluminum Company of America was struck by its 15,000 workers who belong to the steel workers union. For the first time in 27 years U.S. Steel (now called USX Corp.) was picketed in nine states by 22,000 USWA members facing massive layoffs. This action was deliberately provoked by the corporation. The union called it a lockout.

Several other strikes were called at scattered auto plants, on the waterfronts of both the East and West coasts, in a California cannery organized by the Teamsters union, and in other workplaces around the country. None of these strikes recorded great immediate gains for the workers involved, but in every instance they served notice on the employers that workers were reaching the limits of endurance, that more was being demanded of them than they would bear.

Another result of the combined government-company attacks was a minor revolt against entrenched union officials, which continues to smolder. At the local level more militant representatives are being elected. The elections are usually bitterly contested, and they are *not* fought over "who is the bad guy." More often they turn on debates about union strategy. What is our relation to the company? How should we treat the employer? What kind of action will most benefit us? These questions divide the workers and determine the outcome of many union elections today.

### A Model of Working Class Militancy

In 1984 Jim Guyette, a militant at the George A. Hormel Co. meatpacking plant in Austin, Minnesota, was elected president of Local P-9, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). The company had forced wage concessions from the workers and was demanding more. The new leadership at Local P-9 sought help from the International officials of the UFCW, from the seven other UFCW locals, and from

the labor consulting firm that had won praise for helping win a union contract at the J.P. Stevens Co., Ray Rogers and his associates. Local P-9 adopted the "corporate campaign strategy" recommended by Rogers.

In August 1985 Hormel demanded concessions that could not be met, thus provoking a strike. The union's corporate campaign strategy involved direct participation in the strike by a fully informed membership. All members and their families enrolled in the campaign to explain to the entire community in Austin and the surrounding area what the issues in the strike were and how the Hormel Co. was tied to and supported by local banking interests and other corporate connections. P-9 members asked for support from all other unions in Austin and from farmers who sold beef to Hormel. As the strike continued P-9 strikers visited other UFCW locals in the Hormel chain and set up picket lines. This won sympathy and support throughout the Hormel chain, and in plants operated by other companies.

The Hormel company responded by rounding up scab labor and calling upon its political servants in local and state government to disperse the picket lines and protect the scabs. The governor of the state of Minnesota complied by calling out the national guard and stationing troops in Austin.

At the Austin union headquarters P-9 had set up a commissary to feed the strikers. At the outset it encouraged a local strike support committee which solicited food and other assistance from sympathizers. It collaborated fully with a similar support committee in St. Paul, capital of Minnesota, established to help publicize the strike and collect food. The St. Paul committee delivered tons of food to the Austin commissary.

The strike committee published a news bulletin to keep the strikers and townspeople informed of latest developments. The local held regular membership meetings to decide what to do at every stage as the strike continued.

Teams of strikers, consisting of P-9 officials and rank-and-file members, visited unions in major cities of this country and spoke to membership meetings everywhere. They collected thousands of dollars to support the strike, and made it the best known union struggle since World War II.

In September 1986 the International officials of the UFCW signed a sweetheart contract with Hormel to cover the scab workforce. They revoked the charter of Local P-9 and set up a new UFCW local to represent the scabs. But this did not resolve the problems of the workers in the meatpacking industry, nor did it satisfy the demands of the employers.

The Austin strikers, having launched a boycott campaign against Hormel products, had moved almost immediately to set up their own local union when UFCW top officials bureaucratically seized control of Local P-9. They continued their struggle for improved wages and working conditions, and to win back their jobs. Toward that end they eventually founded the North American Meat Packers Union (NAMPU), now seeking to rebuild unionism in this chaotic industry.

The strategy and tactics of the P-9 strike were an innovation for the post-World War II period. The fact that the ranks were mobilized, kept fully informed, and called upon to decide what could be done was a radical departure from standard union procedure. Their decision to take their case to the union movement at large, to call upon townspeople and local farmers to help them, to set up their own support system to feed and care for strikers' families, to track down and expose the financial connections of Hormel was all new. Nothing like this had been seen since the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes. It was that tradition which was partly responsible for the audacious course of the year-long 1985-86 meatpackers' strike in Austin.

### Results and Prospects

The impact of this strike within the union movement and among radical political organizations was greater than any other struggle since the advent of the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

It demonstrated new possibilities.

*Labor Notes*, a radical labor publication, called a conference for November 14-16, 1986, to discuss "New Directions for Labor." This conference was concerned with international solidarity and union struggles throughout the world, but among the prominent guests and speakers were leaders of the P-9 strike. It was notable not only for what was said there but also for the fact that it was attended by more than 800 militant union members, secondary union officials, and others. This was a measure of the interest generated by the P-9 strike. Of course, many questions were left unanswered.

This year several attempts have been and are being made to call conferences for the purpose of finding answers to the unanswered questions. Mostly these attempts are narrowly based, limited to segments of the radical movement or to militant oppositionists in the unions who disagree with the policies of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy.

A recent conference called by the Hormel strikers and their supporters was different. It was held in Austin, May 2-3, 1987, attended by 87 workers from several Midwestern states. The majority were packinghouse workers, some on strike at the Cudahy plant in Wisconsin and at the John Morrell plants in Sioux City, Iowa, and in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Connie Dammen, one of the organizers of the conference and a Hormel strike leader and charter member of NAMPU, said the conference was called to allow rank-and-file workers in the meatpacking industry to assess their problems and seek answers. She said, "six months from now we would like to schedule another conference."

This first conference accomplished more than most who attended thought possible when the call went out. They succeeded in drafting a 15-point set of demands that packinghouse workers (and most other workers) want and need. It is their rank-and-file "Packinghouse Workers Bill of Rights" (see *Bulletin IDOM* No. 43). It deserves careful attention because it is the most succinct statement to date of the

economic and political issues that impinge on the daily lives of working people in this country. Having these demands clearly formulated by representative and respected union militants is certainly a gain of new territory at the present stage of the struggle for workers' rights. But the struggle to win these demands lies ahead. And the question remains: *How will the victory be won?*

### III. THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM FOR SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

A common sentiment expressed at the conference of rank-and-file packinghouse workers last May was the need to return to slogans such as *solidarity*, *no concessions*, *rank-and-file control*, etc. Most conference participants recognized that the history of the early struggles of the CIO movement can help the struggle today.

One of the best sources of information about the method of struggle in the earlier period is the four-volume history of the 1934 Minneapolis strikes by Farrell Dobbs (*Teamster Rebellion, Teamster Power, Teamster Politics, and Teamster Bureaucracy*, Pathfinder Press, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014). This is useful because the leaders of those strikes understood better what they were doing and were more conscious of the political relationship of class forces in this country at that time than those who got involved in the leadership of other strikes in those days. The leaders in Minneapolis were revolutionary socialists, guided partly by Leon Trotsky's analysis of world events in that fateful decade. They were supporters of Trotsky, members of the Communist League of America, imbued with a world outlook. This certainly did not prevent them from focusing their attention on the details of the strikes and drawing upon their own earlier experiences in the pre-World War I socialist movement and in the union struggles of the 1920s. It was, in fact, their greatest advantage.

One of the benefits of reviewing how the Minneapolis strikes were won is the discovery of a similarity in method to the more recent P-9 strike in Austin. In both situations the strike leaders began with the idea that the great mass of workers who would be drawn into the action would need to be completely informed at all times, take full responsibility for the course of their actions, and participate consciously in the decision-making process. This idea is the key to the successes in both struggles.

Some will argue that in 1934 the Minneapolis strikers won, and in 1986 in Austin the strikers lost. But this is not entirely true. In Minneapolis the strikers won a temporary victory and succeeded in building a solid union movement in that city. They also succeeded in transforming the Teamsters union and extending their influence through the over-the-road drivers section of the union which they created. But the most important gains were destroyed by the Roosevelt administration when it prepared to enter World War II, and much of what the 1934 strikes won was lost in 1940. The struggle in



Austin and throughout the meatpacking industry is not yet over. And no one can say what the outcome will be.

This was also true in Minneapolis. The Trotskyist leaders of the Teamster movement there never thought their struggle was completed. When they succeeded in consolidating some of their initial gains, they turned their attention to what remained to be done. In many respects the needs of the working class in this country in 1936 were very similar to those listed today in the Packinghouse Workers Bill of Rights.

### The Transitional Program of 1938

In 1938, in consultation with the leaders of the Minneapolis Teamsters and others, Trotsky drafted what is now known as *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* (available from Pathfinder Press, New York). It is a generalized statement of the Marxist method of organization, illustrated with an explanation of specific transitional demands. This was intended as a programmatic guide to the working class transformation of society throughout the world. Most of the transitional demands were suited to the needs of the vibrant industrial union movement in this country at the time.

In some respects the times now are similar to the pre-World War II period. That is why union militants today will benefit from a careful study of the *Transitional Program*.

### Yesterday and Today

The similarities and differences between the United States in the 1930s and now relate to the economy as well as other aspects of our society. The surface differences are readily seen. But the basic economic problem remains the same. It is what Les Evans predicted in his 1971 analysis of the Nixon administration's "new economic policy," mentioned earlier. Evans foresaw "escalating trade wars and competitive devaluations that characterized the 1930s."

This is a problem for the ruling class of this country and all other countries. It is also a problem for working people everywhere in the world. Top AFL-CIO officials are preoccupied with this problem as if obsessed. They demand solid support for protective legislation from their "friends" in Congress. This is the deciding issue in their view.

At the Steelworkers' 1986 convention AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland told the delegates that "the major cause for this new economic crisis is the flood of cheap, foreign imports inundating our markets." He is the chief proponent of the national "Buy America" campaign. When GM announced plans to close its Norwood, Ohio, assembly plant the AFL-CIO unions mobilized a demonstration of 3,500 angry workers last May against Japanese imports instead of against GM management. One of the chauvinist slogans shouted was, "Drop another bomb on Hiroshima." Ohio's Lt. Governor Leonard and U.S.

Senator Metzenbaum (both Democrats) were on hand to lead the demonstration and fire up the marchers with demagogic speeches. Such demonstrations serve to divert attention from the financial directors of U.S. industry and their political servants who ought to be held responsible for the unemployment, hunger, and suffering in this country.

Every major industrial country in Europe has a high rate of unemployment. Unemployment also afflicts Japan. If the great mass of working people in all these countries can be led to believe that they are likely to lose more jobs because of "foreign imports," the most probable result is another international trade war as in the 1930s which led inevitably to armed conflict. Bomb dropping in the atomic age is not the same as in 1945. This game today, once begun, is destined to be the last.

The solution is in the transitional program, the programmatic concepts on which the Fourth International (the international association of revolutionary socialist organizations) was constituted in 1938.

### The Crisis of Capitalism

This document begins with the crisis of the capitalist system. "Mankind's productive forces stagnate. Already new inventions and improvements fail to raise the level of material wealth. Conjunctural crises under the conditions of the social crisis of the whole capitalist system afflict ever heavier deprivations and sufferings upon the masses. Growing unemployment, in its turn, deepens the financial crisis of the state and undermines the unstable monetary systems." This reads as if it were written today to describe our present "stagflation."

The seemingly insuperable problem then, as now, was the contradiction between the magnitude of the social crisis and the consciousness of the working class, the only social force capable of solving the crisis. That contradiction and its inherent solution is presented in terms of the union struggle at the time, as follows:

The unprecedented wave of sit-down strikes and the amazingly rapid growth of industrial unionism in the United States (the CIO) is the indisputable expression of the instinctive striving of the American workers to raise themselves to the level of the tasks imposed on them by history. But here, too, the leading political organizations, including the newly created CIO, do everything possible to keep in check and paralyze the revolutionary pressure of the masses.

Here Trotsky contrasts the "instinctive striving" of the workers to the limitations imposed on them by the determination of the union leadership to limit the struggle to the confines of the capitalist productive system and its political facade. This contradiction can be resolved in favor of the needs of society only if the workers are able to pursue

their own class needs to the end. This requires continuous struggle (entailing temporary setbacks and victories) in the course of which the workers gain self-confidence and learn the secrets of government.

In the 1930s, as now, the problem was how should the workers conduct the "continuous struggle" from their vantage point, what strategy was indicated? The employers devised their own battle strategy, guaranteeing that there would be no letup in the struggle. Their master plan in those days, when the union movement was on the offensive, was to placate the advanced battalions of the working class and eventually roll back the gains of the new unions.

Today the employers are on the offensive. In this respect the roles of the two central antagonists in the struggle are reversed. But the needs of the workers in both instances remain the same: full employment, adequate wages, decent housing, expanded educational opportunities, free health care, and an assured income when unemployed. Union struggles for these most basic social needs, through strikes and parliamentary political action, have been limited in the past to "minimal demands" which could be won without disturbing the existing economic and social system.

Trotsky proposed "transitional demands" in conjunction with or as an extension of the "minimal demands" usually advanced. In the years immediately preceding the advent of World War II he foresaw the possibility of the mobilization of the working class in its own self-interest so as to postpone or avoid the coming catastrophe. "It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of revolution," he wrote. "This bridge should include a system of *transitional demands*, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."

This was written fifty years ago. Given the condition of U.S. industry, are workers now in a position to make demands? What are "transitional demands"? What is the level of "today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class"? Do "transitional demands" apply? Can they be understood and explained? Is the underlying concept relevant?

### A Critical Evaluation

Before addressing these questions it is necessary to understand the essential character of these demands. They are designed to develop the independence and self-reliance of the working class, and prepare this social class to lead the democratic struggles that will reorganize society. In this fundamental respect they are the extended *political* transformation of such minimal union demands as higher wages and better working conditions which accept the worker-employer relationship as permanent, the assumption being that workers cannot survive without a prosperous employer to sign the weekly paycheck. Transitional demands, to the contrary,

recognize that workers are the only essential human element in the productive process, that in our advanced stage of mass production the private owner and the present wages system are superfluous, and that *continued protection* of the employers' need for private profit at the expense of the workforce is the cause of most social ills.

What follows is a sampling of transitional demands, and a brief explanation of their applicability.

1) Sliding scale of wages and sliding scale of hours.

The concept embracing these "generalized slogans" is neither so complex nor abstract as some present-day union officials may pretend. It comes in direct response to what was recognized by Trotsky in the late 1930s as the "two basic economic afflictions, in which is summarized the increasing absurdity of the capitalist system, *unemployment* and *high prices*."

During the early "pump priming" experiments of the Roosevelt administration's New Deal (1933-36), the economic wisdom was that mass unemployment forced prices down because consumers lacked money to buy the goods they needed. The simultaneous rise of unemployment and consumer prices was considered impossible. But this is what happened in Roosevelt's second term, as the New Deal was transformed into the War Deal in 1937. Monetary inflation coincided with the economic recession of 1937-38 and the result was an increase in unemployment while prices continued to rise. Many at the time thought this was accidental, a freak occurrence, something unlikely ever to happen again. But throughout the postwar years this phenomenon became so common that it is now accepted as part of current economic wisdom. Economists say it is here to stay. It is no less absurd than it was 50 years ago, and no less devastating to the working class standard of living.

During World War II the unions accepted a wage freeze and the government promised a price freeze, but prices rose steadily while wages remained frozen. By 1943 the disparity between wages and prices was such that workers in the war industries began a series of wildcat strikes demanding wage increases geared to the rising price index. They got promises of a "price rollback" from Roosevelt and the union officialdom.

In the early postwar years wage increases won in the 1946-47 strike wave failed to close the gap. At this juncture union-management negotiations began to *particularize*, to sort out, different aspects of the indicated solution. In 1948 General Motors agreed to include an "escalator clause" in the UAW contract. This was inadequate but it embodied the principle of a sliding scale of wages (adjusted quarterly in this case) in accordance with the Labor Department's Consumer Price Index. This arrangement was accepted by the other auto corporations and improved in succeeding contracts. It helped regulate and control rising labor costs during the period of expanding U.S. industrial output in the 1950s and 1960s and seemed to work so well that by 1970 the escalator clause was included in all major union contracts.

When the antiunion offensive of the employers reached full fury at the start of the 1980s the escalator clause was among the first concessions most unions made. In this decade of anticoncession struggles the escalator clause or cost of living allowance (COLA) is an almost forgotten issue, one reason being the relatively slow rise in prices for the past few years. But signs of inflation, combined with employer demands to roll back wages to meet the prices of "foreign competition," will surely bring the union demand for a sliding scale of wages to the fore again.

This brief history of the ill-fated "escalator" shows how basic concessions by the employers can be turned to their advantage and used by them to lull the workers and their unions into a false sense of security. In this case the protection afforded by the union contract applied only to those workers covered by the particular contract. As wages for union members continued to rise along with the steady increase in prices the discrepancy between wages and living conditions of the organized and unorganized sectors of the working class grew. The union movement became more isolated from the vast majority of the class which remained unorganized and which the union bureaucracy made little effort to organize. The limited use of the sliding scale of wages concept, combined with similar twists of other useful weapons of struggle and socially necessary goals, contributed eventually to political isolation of the unions. Antiunion propagandists then began to paint the union bureaucracy as "big labor" and the union movement as a "special interest group."

Distortion by the union bureaucracy of other badly needed social gains is best illustrated by the failure to fight for socialized medicine, full employment, and free public education at the university level.

### The Combined Character of Wages and Hours

The other side of the sliding scale of wages/sliding scale of hours equation is what became known in most union contracts in the late 1960s and 1970s as "supplementary unemployment benefits" (SUB). This additional protection for union members in basic industry against temporary unemployment began as a demand for the "guaranteed annual wage." SUB was the next best thing, and it was an almost meaningless give-back when plant closings began and permanent unemployment replaced temporary layoffs.

In the 1930s when Trotsky introduced and explained the sliding scale of hours concept he underscored the transitional character of the demand for living wages:

Under the menace of its own disintegration, the proletariat cannot permit the transformation of an increasing section of the workers into chronically unemployed paupers, living off the slops of a crumbling society. *The right to employment* is the only serious right left to the worker

in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is being shorn from him at every step. Against unemployment, "structural" as well as "conjunctural," the time is ripe to advance, along with the slogan of public works, the slogan of a *sliding scale of working hours*. Trade unions and other mass organizations should bind the workers and the unemployed together in the solidarity of mutual responsibility. On this basis all the work on hand would then be divided among all existing workers in accordance with how the extent of the working week is defined. The average wage of every worker remains the same as it was under the old working week. Wages, under a strictly guaranteed *minimum*, would follow the movement of prices. It is impossible to accept any other program for the present catastrophic period.

In this brief paragraph the distinguishing feature of *transitional demands* is clearly stated: they are demands consciously advanced to protect all sectors of the working class, *as a viable social class*, in times of economic crisis and social disintegration. They appeal to the whole class for unity in self-defense.

### 2) A massive public works program.

In the above-quoted paragraph, Trotsky seems to refer to the need for public works only in passing. The fact is that in the 1930s federally financed public works sustained millions of families in this country. Some who depended on these projects organized themselves, either as public works sections of newly established unions (as in Minneapolis) or independently. They demonstrated and called strikes for more money and more jobs. But the government began curtailing these socially useful programs as the Roosevelt administration siphoned resources into the arms buildup that was underway in 1938. The impending war was an overriding issue in those days. Major emphasis on the need to expand rather than curtail public works was inadequate to expose the danger of war or to address the immediate economic needs of the working class at that juncture, and to relate them to the long- and short-term effects of the war economy.

Present circumstances, however, cry out for a massive federally financed public works program. Those vast amounts of wasted military appropriations ought to be immediately halted. Congress should allocate comparable sums of money for public works to rebuild the public transportation system (railroads and highways), clean up the industrially polluted environment, organize a more meaningful and egalitarian educational system, build decent public housing for the homeless, create socially productive jobs for the millions of unemployed, relieve the staggering debt burden that disrupts farm production and bankrupts family farmers, etc.

Recognition of these far-reaching social needs, coupled with the demand for public works, does not

mean that the cure for all contemporary social ills can be found solely in this demand. But it will be useful in reviving the union movement around common goals, and in helping to restore self-confidence in the working class to the extent that its potential as a *transitional demand* is recognized and that it is advanced in conjunction with other such demands. It is an essential part of a transitional program to transform U.S. society today.

### 3) The shorter workweek.

This demand was popularized in the slogan, "30 for 40." It stood for a 30-hour workweek with no reduction in pay. In this form it was raised by some UAW locals and formally adopted by the International in the early 1950s. Other unions followed suit. For more than a decade it was routinely included in a laundry list of demands before the periodic formal contract negotiations began, but this demand was never seriously endorsed by the bureaucracy of any major industrial union. (Some craft unions in the building trades, notably the electricians, successfully demanded the 6-hour day/5-day week under the guise of creating jobs for unemployed workers. But the real intent and actual result was to raise the weekly wages of those normally employed by forcing the contractors to pay more in overtime rates.)

The reason the heads of industrial unions refused to make the shorter workweek a central demand, even in times of high unemployment, is because the employers were adamantly opposed to it. They argued that if adopted in any of the basic industries (auto or steel) it would further distort the national wages system and disrupt the economy. In response to arguments for a drastic revision of the federal wages policy, which legalizes the 40-hour week, the employers countered that such a change would raise production costs and price U.S. commodities out of the competitive world market. The union officialdom accepted these arguments at face value and repeated them to justify their failure to address the problem of technological unemployment.

The AFL-CIO *News* reported (July 4, 1987) that "international labor bodies are pressing a worldwide drive to shorten the workweek without any loss in wages." If the AFL-CIO bureaucracy bestirs itself to support this "worldwide drive" it will be in conjunction with the Democratic Party and other employer institutions, strictly in accordance with past practices.

During cyclical "recessions" union-management negotiators have always skirted the problem of unemployment, always treating it as if it were a temporary misfortune. As a pacifier for high seniority workers in basic industry they eventually devised the SUB formula which provided for those workers longest on the job to take leave with nearly full pay when the corporations announced temporary layoffs. This neat arrangement was supposed to satisfy everyone, allowing the last-hired workers, who would ordinarily be the first out, to stay on the job. This benefited only a very small group. It created no new jobs, allowed for the

continuous numerical decline of the workforce caused by the introduction of new machine and electronic technology, and ignored completely the growing numbers of unemployed who were permanently squeezed out.

The demand for a shorter workweek aims under present-day conditions to create jobs. But in the history of capitalism employers have never willingly accepted reductions in hours of work. To the contrary, they have always sought ways to extend the working day, as they are doing now by imposing compulsory overtime while handing out layoff notices.

Unemployment is the scourge of the labor movement. Workers need jobs. The demand for a massive public works program, combined with the demand for shorter hours of work, offers a solution. These demands must be explained, fought for, and won.

The transitional character of these demands will become more evident in the struggle to win them. They are intended to satisfy the needs of contemporary society, and they can be won only by the working class in struggle against the employers and their political agents in government.

### 4) Open the books.

The finances of most major corporations are shrouded in secrecy.

Even though U.S. industry and associated banking interests continue to record greater profits year after year, several of the largest corporations in steel and some other industries have recently filed for bankruptcy. In these cases the workers are left high and dry. Their jobs are gone, and their accumulated pension and health funds as well. The unions that represent these victimized workers charge that corporate management is falsely claiming bankruptcy in order to shed all its obligations incurred under legally ratified collective bargaining agreements.

Developments of this kind clearly show that the union movement ought to demand public hearings and an open inspection of the corporations' books by independent accountants representing the workers, their families, and community allies. This would be the traditional union response.

The demand to "open the books" was first widely popularized by the UAW in the 113-day strike against General Motors in 1946. The strike leadership raised two slogans: "wage increases without price increases," and "open the books." Both were designed to win public sympathy for the strike and embarrass the world's richest corporation that had grown richer from war profits. The first slogan conformed to the avowed aim of the Truman administration to "hold the line on prices." The second was an adaptation of the demand raised by the influential Trotskyist fraction in the UAW. But as raised by Walter Reuther who controlled the strike committee, "open the books" was converted from a strike demand into a propaganda slogan. As a demand it could have been used to expose the war profiteering of the auto corporations, and urge nationalization of the industry under workers' control.

Reuther's "open the books" slogan served to scandalize GM and expose the company's false claim

that it could not afford to raise wages without jacking up prices. GM never opened its books. In the end a wage increase of little more than half of what was asked came down, and the price of cars went up. This became the standard formula for all future wage negotiations in the auto industry. Henceforth wages were geared to prices. And capitalist propaganda pictured wage increases as the cause of inflation.

In union negotiations for most of the postwar years it became a standard union ploy to demand to see the employers' books whenever company negotiators claimed poverty. Sometimes the employers gladly brought out a set of books to "prove" that they absolutely could not afford to operate if the workers insisted on higher wages. They promised, of course, to raise wages when times got better or if business picked up. But meantime union/management cooperation depended on poverty-level wages. In such instances the union negotiators usually opted for a signed contract, telling the workers that they had to "save the union."

These are extreme examples of how a useful class struggle demand, stripped of its transitional character, can be distorted by the union bureaucracy to serve the needs of the employers. This does not mean that this particular demand, "open the books," can never be infused with genuine revolutionary potential, as originally intended. But this requires its use when circumstances indicate by a knowledgeable union leadership that understands (or has a class instinct for) the irreconcilable conflict between labor and capital.

In the *Transitional Program*, Trotsky wrote about the need to expose the secrets of capitalist exploitation and profit. He put this under the general heading, "Business secrets' and workers' control of industry." Here he explained two central issues, one that workers have a *right to know* and the other that they have a *need to know*. On the first he wrote in part as follows:

Workers no less than capitalists have the right to know the "secrets" of the factory, of the trust, of the whole branch of industry, of the national economy as a whole. First and foremost, banks, heavy industry, and centralized transport should be placed under an observation glass.

As for the need:

The working out of even the most elementary economic plan—from the point of view of the exploited, not the exploiters—is impossible without workers' control, that is, without the penetration of the workers' eye into all open and concealed springs of capitalist economy. Committees representing individual business enterprises should meet at conferences to choose corresponding committees of trusts, whole branches of industry, economic regions and finally, of national industry as a whole.

Thus, workers' control becomes a *school for planned economy*. On the basis of the experience of control, the proletariat will prepare itself for direct management of nationalized industry when the hour for the eventuality strikes.

These brief paragraphs demonstrate that Trotsky had something more in mind than how to negotiate a union contract or win a strike. He was interested in the process through which education and self-confidence of the working class develops in constant struggle, at all levels of capitalist production, to the point where the working class is prepared and ready to take over the administration of government in the best interests of the majority of people.

5) Control prices! Elect price control committees.

In a section of the *Transitional Program*, "the alliance of the workers and farmers," Trotsky addressed the question of price controls:

By falsely citing the "excessive" demands of the workers, the big bourgeoisie skillfully transform the question of *commodity prices* into a wedge to be driven between the workers and farmers and between the workers and petty bourgeoisie of the cities. The peasant, artisan, small merchant, unlike the industrial worker, office and civil service employee, cannot demand a wage increase corresponding to the increase in prices. The official struggle of the government with high prices is only a deception of the masses. But the farmers, artisans, merchants, in their capacity of consumers, can step into the politics of price-fixing shoulder to shoulder with the workers. To the capitalist's lamentations about costs of production, of transport and trade, the consumers answer: "Show us your books; we demand control over the fixing of prices." The organs of this control should be the *committees on prices*, made up of delegates from the factories, trade unions, cooperatives, farmers' organizations, the "little man" of the city, housewives, etc. By this means the workers will be able to prove to the farmers that the real reason for high prices is not high wages but the exorbitant profits of the capitalists and the overhead expenses of capitalist anarchy.

### Toward Proletarian Self-Defense

Recent experiences teach that workers must be prepared to defend themselves on all fronts, and when possible to take the offensive by exposing the antisocial decisions and self-serving actions of the employers. Nowhere is this more blatant than in the recent rounds of picket line bashing by strike-breakers, company thugs, city police, and state militia. In most such brutal and unprovoked attacks

the workers are unprepared to defend themselves. What is happening now is like a rerun of strike battles in the 1920s. Police scatter pickets, beat up and detain strikers; some strikers are arrested, held in contempt of court, fined. Replacement workers and management personnel (strikebreakers) operate the plant under police protection. Strikers are fired and union activity is outlawed under terms of "yellow dog" contracts signed individually by all employees (in modern parlance this is called "decertification" under supervision of the National Labor Relations Board).

In the early 1930s strikers began to develop new defense techniques. One was the sit-down strike which came into general use after its success in the 1937 GM strike in Flint, Michigan. But they also refined and put to good use some traditional practices, the creation of *roving pickets* and *union defense guards*. These were special units prepared to discourage scabs and defend in every way possible the mass picket lines.

A strike leadership that is able to deal reasonably with the employers and succeeds in exposing their crude (illegal, antisocial) schemes will not hesitate to call upon the union ranks to defend themselves against physical attacks. In this climate union defense guards are sorted out among the strikers by natural selection and begin to function effectively as special units.

The responsibility of the strike leadership is to explain the need, the complete justification, and the legality of these special defense units. Workers have no need to violate the basic principles of the Bill of Rights, but they must challenge those *special* antilabor laws that are unjust, discriminatory, and violations of human rights. The best and most effective place to challenge such laws (and court injunctions based on them) is on the picket line. Preparations must be made to defend in the courts all workers who are arrested for exercising their constitutional rights.

Trotsky recognized that improved defense methods by the workers bring countermeasures from the employers. In times of economic crisis and social instability they call out organized right-wing hoodlums and fascist bands. He said, "Scabs and private gunmen in factory plants are the basic nuclei of the fascist army. *Strike pickets* are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating *workers' groups for self-defense*. It is necessary to write this slogan into the program of the revolutionary wing of the trade unions. It is imperative wherever possible, beginning with the youth groups, to organize groups for self-defense, to drill and acquaint them with the use of arms."

In saying this Trotsky sounded the alarm against further repressive measures by the employers, culminating in fascism. As the economic crisis becomes more acute and workers demand rational production of socially necessary goods through the creation of nonprofit public works projects, and

employ other means to meet their most basic needs, the employing class will resort to armed suppression of the unions and other working class organizations. This is in the preparatory stage today in the U.S. in the form of fascist-type organizations and caches of arms taken (in some cases) from U.S. army arsenals. Most recently the hooded Ku Klux Klan marched through the streets of Greensboro, North Carolina. Such demonstrations are omens of the coming struggle. The preparation of the working class for future battles in defense of democratic rights begins with the organization of union defense guards.

### Working Class Internationalism

The struggle against imperialist war is the only form of mass action in which working class internationalism is being expressed in this country today. Opposition to U.S. intervention in Nicaragua and elsewhere in Central America, and hatred of apartheid in South Africa (in which U.S. imperialism is complicit) are expressed in many ways by millions throughout the world. These issues touch large sectors of the U.S. working class. The government is perceived as engaged in immoral pursuits. Also the bloated military budget is hurting the economy. These considerations impelled influential sections of the established churches and embattled unions to call antiwar demonstrations earlier this year, on April 25, in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco. An estimated 200 thousand people responded, including many union members.

The purpose of these demonstrations was to influence the government to change its militaristic policies and to weaken the Reagan administration. The radical movement helped build them and for the most part endorsed both the stated and implied aims.

Working class internationalism goes beyond these kinds of mass actions. It entails the conscious recognition that workers and poor peoples of all countries are victimized by the world system of capitalism, that they must unite to free themselves from this oppressive and destructive system.

The socially valuable accomplishments of these recent antiwar demonstrations are recorded in the rising level of political consciousness that they help generate. A higher percentage of workers and union members participated last April than previously, and this serves to give these workers a better sense of the potential power of their unions. The left wing in the union movement is strengthened as a result.

This emerging left wing will build its forces by challenging the chauvinistic policies of the union bureaucracy (especially its "Buy America" campaign), and by developing its program to meet the immediate needs of the working people in this country. More antiwar demonstrations, if successfully organized to bring out masses of people as was done last April, will help advance the cause of the working class here and throughout the world.

The struggle against the impending global war, as envisioned by Trotsky (in 1938 World War II was imminent), would be a training ground for working

class control of society. In the section on "the struggle against imperialism and war" in the *Transitional Program*, he listed several demands that develop self-confidence, help safeguard the political independence of the working class, and prepare it to assume the responsibilities of government.

- Not one man and not one penny for the bourgeois government!

- Not an armaments program but a program of useful public works!

- Complete independence of workers' organizations from military-police control!

- Complete abolition of secret diplomacy; all treaties and agreements to be made accessible to all workers and farmers;

- Military training and arming of workers and farmers under direct control of workers' and farmers' committees;

- Creation of military schools for the training of commanders among the toilers, chosen by workers' organizations;

- Substitution for the standing army of a *people's militia*, indissolubly linked up with factories, mines, farms, etc.

These demands are quoted verbatim from the *Transitional Program*. They derive from the political experience and lessons of the class struggle from the beginning of the 20th century, including the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and the tragic ascendancy of fascism in Germany and Spain in the 1930s.

This set of demands does not constitute appropriate slogans for antiwar demonstrators today. Nor is it a list of strategic goals that ought to be adopted by the antiwar movement in this or any other country. It is, to the contrary, a programmatic statement of working class internationalism. It states, succinctly, the only protective course of working class action under the most divisive national and international circumstances, i.e., war among nations. Trotsky's transitional demands for the struggle against imperialist war are a restatement of the political course followed by the Russian Bolsheviks in World War I which hastened the end of the 1914-18 imperialist slaughter and created the first viable working class state.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

1) This short introduction to the *Transitional Program* is limited to that part which seems most obviously useful to activists in the unions and other arenas of the class struggle in the U.S. today. Beyond this the 1938 *Transitional Program* includes sections on the struggle against imperialism in colonial and semicolonial countries, and in countries then under fascist rule (Germany and Italy) or controlled by military dictators and warlords (China).

Another section describes the conditions of struggle against the dictatorial Stalinist regime in

the Soviet Union, the economic problems and social stratification, the extent and instability of the bureaucracy, and the revolutionary struggle against the bureaucracy for the restoration of soviet democracy. This is useful for an understanding of contemporary events in the Soviet Union.

The central thesis of the *Transitional Program* and the *transitional method* (which it embodies) is the international character of capitalist exploitation and the need for workers of all countries to unite in the common cause of self-liberation. In all essential respects this is a restatement of the *Communist Manifesto*, related to the specific and special needs of the world's toilers trying to survive under capitalism in the throes of its death agony.

2) The *Transitional Program* does not completely answer the problems of the U.S. working class. Even though these problems are beginning to be identified and working class demands are now more sharply formulated than in the recent past, the question still remains: How will the needs of the great majority of people be satisfied and how will the demands of the class conscious workers in the union movement be won? Trotsky maintained that the program creates the necessary organization for its fulfillment. That is, appropriate organizational forms are developed to serve specific goals and purposes.

He envisioned the formation of a labor party in the United States and explained it as part of the political process of introducing and applying the transitional program in the class struggle. This closely related question—the labor party question—is presently under discussion within class struggle currents in the union movement. It will be dealt with in future issues of the *Bulletin IDOM*.

3) Another question that demands further discussion and clarification is the "vanguard party" concept. Will the working class spontaneously create its own organizations of struggle and in the process develop its own political program to wrest control from the employing class and eventually eliminate class exploitation and oppression? Or must the most advanced and thoughtful sector of the working class create a vanguard party within the political structure of bourgeois society to organize the struggles for emancipation?

One of the propaganda weapons of the rulers in this country is the stereotyped lies used to characterize what they call "Marxism." In the false picture that they project the vanguard party appears as a secret society of elitist self-seekers trained to trick the working class and use the power of the mass movement to transform society from "democratic" capitalism into "bureaucratic" socialism.

To avoid any misunderstanding on this decisive question, the editors of the *Bulletin IDOM* assert complete agreement with the "vanguard party" concept, essential to the transitional program of the Fourth International. We introduce and recommend this program because it provides the world view and scientific method needed for labor's answer to the problems of modern society. ■

### F.I.T. LAUNCHES NEW PUBLICATIONS PROJECT

A new publication series is being launched by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency under the title, "Materials for a History of Trotskyism in the United States." For more than half a century American Trotskyism has been a vital force in the U.S. radical movement and in the world revolutionary movement. It has been rooted in and has drawn from the left-wing labor traditions personified by Eugene V. Debs of the Socialist Party of America, by "Big Bill" Haywood of the Industrial Workers of the World, and by the early pioneers of American Communism. At the same time, U.S. Trotskyists have learned from and applied the experiences and ideas of international revolutionary socialism personified by Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, V.I. Lenin, and Leon Trotsky. Deriving its principles from this rich native and international working class heritage, American Trotskyism has sought to advance a clear and principled orientation for workers and all the oppressed to defend their immediate interests while struggling for workers' democracy and a socialist future.

During recent years the revolutionary socialist movement has been beset by a crisis which has resulted in a serious disorientation and fragmentation of its forces. The Fourth Internationalist Tendency has, from the beginning of its existence in 1984, been committed to helping overcome that crisis and forge a new unity of revolutionary socialist forces through a process of political clarification. We believe an important part of that process involves a critical-minded evaluation and retrieval of our movement's heritage—particularly from the early days of American Communism and Trotskyism up to the period of crisis in the Socialist Workers Party in the late 1970s and 1980s. It is our view that there is much of value in the orientation and experience of James P. Cannon and his comrades—the founders and continuators of the Trotskyist movement in the United States—for present-day activists to learn from and utilize as they rebuild the revolutionary socialist movement.

We are therefore initiating a project on the history of American Trotskyism to gather and make available diverse materials, previously published work which is out of print or not easily available, as well as previously unpublished materials and original studies. The "Materials for a History of Trotskyism in the United States" series will be of special interest to revolutionary socialists in the U.S. and elsewhere, as well as to all who want to know more about the ideas and experiences of several generations of revolutionary Marxists in this coun-

try. In particular we hope that members and supporters of all U.S. groupings sympathetic to the Fourth International, the worldwide organization of revolutionary socialists with which we collaborate in a fraternal way, will want to read, circulate, and perhaps contribute to these publications.

The first two volumes of the series can now be ordered. They are: *Trotskyism in America: The First 50 Years*, by Paul Le Blanc; and *Organizational Principles and Practices*, edited by Evelyn Sell. Soon to be published is a third volume, *Revolutionary Traditions of American Trotskyism*, edited by Paul Le Blanc.

*Trotskyism in America: The First 50 Years* is a comprehensive survey of the birth and development of the U.S. movement, from the earliest days of the Communist League of America, the U.S. component of the International Left Opposition, through the 1970s. Le Blanc covers all of the major turning points in that history, the political struggles that shaped the movement, the major class battles in which the Trotskyists participated, and the individual personalities who left their mark on the movement. Also included are some personal analysis and observations by the author, based on his own experience as a member of the SWP in the 1970s and '80s.

*Organizational Principles and Practices* provides several informative discussions by veteran members of the Socialist Workers Party on the nature and the functioning of that organization, involving the application and development of Leninist principles by U.S. revolutionary socialists. These discussions grapple with the vital question of how Marxists can most effectively organize their own activities for the purpose of advancing the revolutionary program. Included are excerpts from a 1948 work by Joseph Hansen, a discussion by the editor, Evelyn Sell, of the views of Farrell Dobbs, and previously unpublished talks by Bea Hansen and Evelyn Sell dating from the 1960s and '70s.

*Revolutionary Traditions of American Trotskyism* will provide some further general background material on the history of the U.S. Trotskyist movement up to the 1970s. Included is material by, or discussions about, a number of important figures: James P. Cannon; Antoinette Konikow; George Weissman; George Breitman, and Ruth Querio.

Each of these volumes is \$3.50 and can be ordered from: F.I.T., P.O. Box 1947, New York, NY 10009. ■



## NOTEBOOKS FOR THE GRANDCHILDREN

by Mikhail Baitalsky

### 13. Days and Evenings Without Romance

The quiet provincial Artemovsk was then the administrative center of the Donbass. We lived in the main square of the small town. To go to work, to go to the editorial office, was about 300 steps. And generally speaking, there was almost nowhere to walk to.

We got to the coal mines and chemical and metal plants on the workers' trains; a large part of the factory workers lived in the villages, many miles from the plant. A good half of the workers of the Kramatorsk factory spent more than an hour traveling each way. In the train they played cards, slept sitting up, and sometimes drank.

The miners lived closer and for them there were public barracks, taking into account that miners were migrant workers. Alongside the barracks not one blade of grass grew and only a lavatory stood in front of them, close to the street. Such was the landscaping. They didn't say "home from work" but "from work to the barracks." Grisha wrote very aptly about this in his poems:

I grew up where the days and nights  
passed without romance.

The Donbass settlements—which are what today's cities Gorlovka, Kramatorsk, and Constantinovka were at that time—were buried in black coal dust mixed with sticky dirt. Their outskirts invariably carried the nicknames Shanghai or Sobachyovka or Nakhlovka.<sup>1</sup> Gorlovka and Kramatorsk had their Shanghais and their Shrews Towns also. From time immemorial in the winter months, peasants from the poorest, most land-hungry provinces of the central and western regions would come to the Donets mines. They were a majority of the mine workers.

The seasonal ebbs and flows, of course, could not possibly be reconciled with the task of mine mechanization; and our paper devoted special attention to the miners' lives—to the Dogsvilles and the Hole in the Walls. *The Stoker* had several hundred permanent worker correspondents. Those were the years when the worker correspondent movement was blossoming. Working people who had never studied anywhere, having been aroused to begin reflecting on life, passionately studied and described it. One-fourth of the newspaper without fail was set aside for their writings. I was ready for hand to hand combat with the editor for the slightest encroachment into "my" page.

David Bagrinsky edited *The Stoker*. When he was 17 years old, he shot the police chief of Vilensk on the instruction of the Social Revolutionaries

*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.*

organization. He was sentenced to life at hard labor. The revolution freed him and he became a Bolshevik. The blue stripes from the manacles were still on his hands. And in 1937, he shared the fate of many others.

Why, when you want to describe the best days of your life, do you discover that there was nothing special in them? Everything was ordinary: work, friends, a wife, a child. But not all ordinary days are the same. There are pre-holidays when you are expectant and prepare, and there are Mondays.

Here is a small feature which can give you an idea of us in those days. Our son did not call us Mama and Papa; we taught him to call us by our first names. This seemed closer to a communist upbringing to us. The first word of our daughter, born four years after our son, was "Mama."

For the first time (and the last—I am allowing myself a little harmless boasting), I received a pass to a workers' resort. Svyatogorsk was a beautiful, heavenly place. The high mountain, all overgrown with dense forest, looks out onto the blue rapids of the Donets River. On the mountain there is an old monastery and at the foot of the mountain the resort, and then more forest, the river and a boat. But neither the boat nor the resort nor the tasty meals could hold me. In the second week, I fled those Sacred Mountains for stifling, dusty Artemovsk. There I felt good. Dur-

ing the black Ukrainian evenings, Grisha and I roamed the streets.

I was not the only one captivated by his transparent soul, some sort of remarkable internal purity which would not accept either directly or indirectly the very widespread corruption, that rare human pride which does not allow you to duck dangers that are whistling like bullets around you.

One of our young Donets writers of that time, a circumspect fellow, recently told me: "I could smell the changing attitude toward him in the district committee of the party. How many times did I tell him! 'Run away while you can,' I said. 'To hell with Artemovsk.' He did not listen, but if he had run away, he would have survived."

But Grisha would not have been saved either in Moscow or in some remote town. You can't run away from yourself.

And quiet nights, when Grisha and I could talk for hours at a time, did not occur very often. Once on a summer night that enveloped the soul, we were so engrossed in our conversation that we walked the streets until morning like lovers. We talked about everything in the world but most of all about our plans. Grisha spoke about his childhood and about his future book. It would be a virtual autobiography: a boy works as a sledder, he observes the adults and becomes one himself. Grisha's comprehension of the world was that of a person with an adult mind and with the open heart of a child.

The literary page of *The Stoker* came out weekly, and the young writers' organization grew. Boris Gorbатов left for Kramatorsk and became a factory worker—not everyone knew that he was preparing his work, "The Cell." Shortly after that, Grisha also left. He went first to the journalism institute—where he had been sent as one of the most talented of our youth—and afterward into the army.

For some time, alarming letters had been received by the editors, particularly from Druzhkovka; worker correspondents wrote about the conduct, unworthy of a communist, of the director of the Druzhkovka factory and his insolent treatment of workers—the worker correspondent did not know the director was the brother-in-law of someone on the district committee.

And several responsible workers of the Artemovsk district as well were someone's brothers-in-law or sons-in-law. They all apparently thought that it was time to be finished with the epoch of self-restraint: the country was getting back on its feet and was not so poor that responsible workers in such an important industrial center could not allow themselves a drink within a narrow circle. Don't wash your dirty linen in public. To each his own.

They converted the Artemovsk district into their own private family domain. They would not accept people who were sent from other areas by the Central Committee, adopting such a proudly proletarian air as: "We, the Donets workers, do not need workers from other places!"

Neither Grisha nor I were very familiar with the top-level district leaders, but it was enough

for us to know the secretary of the executive committee. This man was a real tool of the bureaucracy. In a domestic setting—and we lived side by side with him—his red-tape mentality did not show, but Grisha hated him, perceiving intuitively behind his obsequiousness a full-fledged bureaucrat.

This apparatus hanger-on was nothing compared to other district officials. In the homes of the chairman of the district court and the chief of police, unbelievable things were happening, and the city did not keep it a secret.

After a routine drinking bout, a tragic event occurred—the wife of one of the responsible officials shot herself. *The Stoker* did not recruit the forces to unravel the mess. By that time, they had managed to drive Bagrinsky from the Donbass. When the newspaper ran a short feature about the director of the Druzhkovka factory who issued an order that all inhabitants of the town must clip the wings of their geese because they disturbed the peace by flying into the yard of his home, Comrade Kuzhelev, the agitation and propaganda chief of the district committee, was extremely outraged. Because I had washed dirty linen in public, they proposed that I clear out of the Donbass.

I had to go to Kharkov, but my heart remained with my friends in the Donbass. The central newspapers did not allow the Artemovsk scandals to die away; the newspaper *Proletariat* described them, and "Artemovshchina," as it was called, was exposed for all to see. Besides drunkenness, some more serious matters surfaced. Arbitrariness and contempt for workers reigned not only in Druzhkovka with its goose director. A resolution of the All-Ukrainian Council of Trade Unions spoke of the "incorrect use of the militia in conflicts with workers" (it is not difficult to imagine the character of this "use"). Worker correspondents' letters—I read them myself—painted a grim picture. At that time it was ordered that worker correspondents write almost exclusively about deficiencies; this, of course, was itself a temporary deficiency of their activity, and they had to get over it fast. All the worker correspondents, while they told the editors their names, persistently requested their names not be printed but a pseudonym: "The Quill," "The Little Key," "Thorn in the Side," "The Chisel," "Eagle Eye," etc.

A terror came into being among the people. They ceased to believe that a worker could speak the truth boldly, without caution, to the authorities. The pseudonyms of the worker correspondents were not an isolated Artemovsk phenomenon.

In these years, consequently, there were already suppressors. And you unwittingly come back to the question I raised when I wrote the notes to my first notebook: Was a party purge like the one that took place during Lenin's life, in the Leninist way, possible just four years after his death? Would the worker correspondent "Eagle Eye" have decided to speak out openly, not only against the district committee secretary, Mikhienko, but even against his goose director? It was, after all, worker correspondents who brought the "Artemovshchina" to public attention.

The worker and peasant correspondents were the most interesting phenomena of the revolutionary period. These were not leaders pushed forward *from the masses*, but people who remained with the masses, feeling what the masses felt and more sharply than anyone else perceiving every evil.

The difference between the worker and peasant correspondents was the object of their accusations and the types of evil they were fighting. The peasant correspondents (selcors) were fighting the kulaks; the worker correspondents (rabcor's) were fighting the bureaucrats. The selcor faced an enemy (as he understood the enemy) who did not enjoy the support of the state; but the rabcor faced an enemy disguised as a servant of the state.

A selcor could be shot. In those years the Dymovka affair caused a sensation: In the village of Dymovka, in Nikolaevshchina, the selcor was killed. But the rabcor could not be shot; they only fired him from his job or cut his wages. To be fired is not a direct threat to a person's life; but it was an indirect and well-placed blow at the rabcor's family and children. Few people are fearless before such a threat.

The first year of my life in Artemovsk I felt happy, despite all its humdrum aspects. I could hardly explain why. I was young, rarely pondered anything too much, and was warmed by my friendship with Grisha and the other young people. But after only a year to a year and a half, my spirits began to sag. I was especially depressed by reports about what was going on in our district, our province. The press did not print everything (and what it did print was long after the fact). The editorial office knew more than anyone else. We talked to one another, grew outraged and indignant, but kept it all to ourselves. It turned out to be no easy task to write in the newspaper about even a factory director. ■

[Next month: "Cain, Abel, and the 'Platform of the 83'"]

#### NOTES

1. *Sobachyovka* comes from the word for dog, and *Nakhalovka* from the word for an impudent man. These are used to refer to places where uncultured and crude people live, places where "nice" people would not set foot, the "other side of the tracks." In English, we might call such places skid rows or the boondocks.

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## WRITER AND REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST

*Blackness of a White Night: Stories and Poems*, by Sherry Mangan. Edited by Marshall Brooks, with an introduction by Alan Wald. Newton, Massachusetts, Arts End Books, 1987. 72 pages. \$6.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Paul Le Blanc

Sherry Mangan was born in Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1904 and died in Rome in 1961. Alan Wald's dual biography, *The Revolutionary Imagination: The Poetry and Politics of John Wheelwright and Sherry Mangan* (University of North Carolina Press, 1983), helped to revive the memory of this minor New England writer and veteran Trotskyist, and the present volume—consisting of two short stories and six poems—makes available some of his work.

Mangan was a respected journalist in the 1940s, writing for *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* from Latin America and Europe. He also did important work for the Fourth International during this time and—off and on—until his death. "Now there was one that didn't moan about his soul, one who wouldn't run with the paid pack, one who saw clear through to us and now." This line from one of his poems suggests how Mangan hoped to be remembered. His continuing revolutionary commitment resulted, in the 1950s, in his becoming a "failure" by conventional standards in an American cultural scene which celebrated the "end of ideology," in what Mangan's former boss Henry Luce christened a capitalist "American Century." His isolation was deepened by the severe crisis and split in the Fourth International, which was partially overcome only after his death.

And yet there was a triumph in what he was. Another poem, about a working class militant executed during the Spanish Civil War, says:

I did the best I could. So it's all right. But after a life at it, it's hard not to be here to see how it all came out.

Unfortunate as it is that he couldn't have witnessed and contributed to what came after, it's good to make contact with his stalwart soul through his writings.

The two short stories are partially autobiographical. "Snow" is about a U.S. Trotskyist helping to rebuild the Fourth International in war-torn Europe, with flashbacks to a New England boyhood. "Blackness of a White Night" is about a sick and lonely leftist in New York City in the 1950s. In his introduction to the collection, Alan Wald comments on "the new style characteristic of his later work—an elegant yet simple realism, sometimes enhanced by a dash of surreal imagery and some residual classic motifs."

One wonders about editor Marshall Brooks's assertion that these selections represent "the best, and surest, overall introduction to a writer whose work, until recently, has been sorely neglected." We are told in Wald's introduction, for example, about fragments of a revolutionary novel on Bolivia—the scene of a profound working class upsurge in the late 1940s and early '50s in which Trotskyists had played an important role. One wonders, too, if we can fully appreciate the talents of a noted journalist without samples of his journalism, or of an intensely committed revolutionary without examples of his political prose. Hopefully more of Mangan's work will be made available in the near future.

At the same time, we should be grateful for the publication of this modest sampling, offering something of value and making us want to read more from a revolutionary socialist who stood fast. ■

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(Continued from page 17)

only supporting material was confessions coerced from the defendants. All were convicted and shot.

In exile in Mexico, Leon Trotsky and Leon Sedov, Trotsky's son—two principal defendants tried and convicted *in absentia* in the first two Moscow trials—convened an impartial commission chaired by American philosopher and educator John Dewey to investigate the charges. After examining the transcripts of the Moscow trials, taking Trotsky's and Sedov's testimony and information from all available sources, the commission issued its findings, declaring the charges totally unfounded and the defendants not guilty.<sup>3</sup>

Obviously the Communist Party of the USSR's review committee can find no evidence to support the charges today. There was none in 1937.

While rehabilitating Muralov, Stalin's heirs have not gone so far as to relate either the nature of the charges against him or who his codefendants were. The article even sets the date of his death sentence as April and not January.

Unofficial Soviet historian Roy Medvedev, writing in *Let History Judge*, states:

By 1968, all the defendants in the Moscow political trials had been rehabilitated as citizens and seventeen had been posthumously restored to Party membership. In this way, the indictments and verdicts in all the trials . . . can be considered for all practical purposes quashed. But there has not yet been a formal and public annulment of the verdicts. . . . It is ridiculous for Soviet historical scholarship to keep its notorious mask of silence and to pretend that there were no political trials in the mid-thirties: that Trotsky, Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsy, Pyatakov, Kamenev, and Zinoviev were not outstanding leaders . . . that their names are not found even in encyclopedias and handbooks published today, or if they are included . . . they are followed by a careful list of only sins, blunders, and mistakes."<sup>4</sup>

The *Socialist Industry* article too avoids the issue. But Muralov's rehabilitation may also indicate that further rehabilitation of these victims will follow.

### Fyedor Raskolnikov

The crimes of the Stalin era are much more explicitly described in a third item that appeared in the June 20 issue of *Ogonyok*, a mass-market weekly magazine with a circulation of 1.5 million, reviewing the case of Fyedor Raskolnikov.

Raskolnikov was one of the leaders of the October Revolution, a leader of the revolutionary Kronstadt sailors in their uprising, and a prominent Bolshevik during the civil war period. He was a journalist and editor; and from 1923-38, he was Soviet ambassador to Estonia, Afghanistan, Denmark,

and Bulgaria. In 1936-38 many diplomats were called back to Moscow for reassignment, only to be arrested and shot. Raskolnikov too had been repeatedly summoned. However, becoming more and more alarmed at the repression in the USSR, he refused to comply until April 1, 1938. En route, he learned he had been declared an "enemy of the people," reversed his journey, and went to France.

Raskolnikov wrote two statements expressing his revulsion at Stalin's tyranny: "Why I Was Declared an Enemy of the People" written July 22, 1939, and an "Open Letter to Stalin" dated August 17, 1939—just weeks before his suspicious death.

The "Open Letter" was printed abroad but circulated within the USSR only through private, unofficial networks. It has often been referred to in samizdat writings. Excerpts from both of these statements form the basis for the *Ogonyok* article.

Also part of a series leading up to the revolution's 70th anniversary, "1917-1987," the article is prefaced with an explanation that it is prompted by a campaign of the F.F. Raskolnikov Pioneer Detachment of the village of Goltsyan in the Udmurt Autonomous Republic. These "young Leninists" are conducting a large effort to collect materials about heroes of the revolution and they are asking surviving participants of the revolution and civil war to send them information about that heroic time. One response they received was the memoirs written in 1966 of U.I. Manokhin, a Bolshevik since 1912, which include a reference to Raskolnikov's role as commander of Red naval forces in rescuing 432 starving Red Army prisoners from the Whites. Manokhin was one of those rescued.

Following the introduction is an article by Vasilii Polikarpov, "A Doctor of Historical Sciences," describing Raskolnikov's life and activities. He explains that Raskolnikov was rehabilitated and posthumously readmitted to the party by a decision of the plenum of the Supreme Court of July 19, 1963, when the Pioneer detachment named above took his name.

However, as the "thaw" following the 20th Party Congress was gradually reversed, Raskolnikov was again declared a "renegade" and "Trotskyist."

"For 20 years, since 1965," Polikarpov explains, "Raskolnikov's name was again surrounded with slander. It was removed from the texts of research and literary works. How can one calculate the losses to the cause of educating the Soviet people about the Revolutionary tradition that were incurred due to all this?"

Polikarpov quotes Raskolnikov's alarm over Stalin's beheading of the Soviet armed forces just when the threat of a German invasion was imminent:

"One can raise the question: is he not exaggerating? . . . But we have before us the figures compiled by Lieutenant-General A.I. Todorsky." Polikarpov then lists the Ministry of Defense's own devastating figures in support of Raskolnikov's statement: "Stalinist repression cut down 3 of 5 marshalls. . . . 3 of 5 first-rank army commanders, all 10 second-rank commanders, 50 of 57 corp commanders, 154 of 186 division commanders, all 16

army commissars of the first and second rank, 25 of 28 corp commissars, and 401 of 456 colonels."<sup>5</sup>

Polikarpov also quotes Raskolnikov's condemnation of Stalin's tyranny for suppressing all talent and initiative in every area of Soviet life. He asserts that Raskolnikov's analysis should serve as a starting point for today's effort to understand and uproot the bureaucracy that continues to stifle Soviet life. He condemns those who sought, in 1965 and since, to keep back the truth, condemning by name S.P. Trapeznikov who in 1965 headed the posthumous campaign against Raskolnikov.<sup>6</sup> Polikarpov suggests that the revelations of the 20th Party Congress did not go far enough. "Doesn't it seem that it did not expose the entire essence of this phenomenon [the 'cult of personality']? And did it not too easily declare it overcome?"

Polikarpov quotes Raskolnikov's own statement that he never was a Trotskyist and stops the quotation just where Raskolnikov says: "But I consider him [Trotsky] an honest revolutionary. I do not believe, and never will believe, that he was involved in 'collusion' with Hitler and Hess," as the Stalinists proclaimed at the Moscow trials.

However, later in the article, to show that one must be careful about who one too easily labels "Trotskyist," Polikarpov includes a quotation from Stalin of November 6, 1918, in which Stalin "recognized as Trotsky's 'all the work on the organization (of the October) uprising' affirming that 'for the quick transfer of the garrison to the side of the Soviet and for the able organization of the work of the Military-Revolutionary Committee, the Party is indebted above all and mainly to Comrade Trotsky.'"

Polikarpov uses Raskolnikov's statements to lambast Stalin for the mass arrests and murder of leading figures throughout the USSR in all areas of life.

"Your insane bacchanal cannot continue long," he quotes from Raskolnikov's "Letter to Stalin." "Endless is the list of your crimes. Endless is the list of your victims. It is impossible to enumerate them. Sooner or later the Soviet people will put you on the defendant's bench as the betrayer of socialism and of the revolution, as the main wrecker, the real enemy of the people, the organizer of hunger and judicial forgery."

Generally speaking, this is one of the strongest and best-argued attacks on Stalin and his continuators that has appeared in the Soviet press since glasnost was initiated.

### A New Stage

These three articles in the popular press go far beyond the line of the 20th Party Congress.

Khrushchev's speech to that congress, his "secret speech," condemned Stalin's departures from "socialist legality" but still defended Stalin as "one of the strongest great Marxists" guided always by the "interests of the working class against the plotting of enemies . . ." (*The Stalinist Legacy*, Tariq Ali ed., pp. 267 and 269). The Khrushchev condemnations of Stalin's crimes never went so far as to defend the rights of the opposition against Stalin.

Although Gorbachev has called for an end to "anonymous history" and the return to history of the names that have been politically banned, he has also claimed that Stalinism "was an invention of the opponents of communism and used to smear the Soviet Union and socialism." (See "Stalin's Legacy makes the Moscow press," by the Moscow correspondent of *The Manchester Guardian*, June 30, 1987.)

Some supporters of glasnost are prepared to go far beyond that. The biggest problem faced by Stalin's heirs will be stopping the process now that it has begun. Once the names are rehabilitated, can the works of these individuals long remain banned? Can their ideas remain unknown and undiscussed? Once the trenchant analysis by the antibureaucratic opposition Leon Trotsky represented becomes available, what will be the consequences among the masses of Soviet workers, peasants, and students? There are reports that "the search for meaning has led some youngsters into their own, decidedly unofficial, explorations of Communism itself. In Leningrad and Minsk, for example, there are reports of a budding back-to-Bolshevism movement, with young people carrying books of quotations from Lenin and Trotsky.

"In . . . Riga, . . . a small group of youngsters who call themselves 'greens' and espouse a sort of radical egalitarianism has organized raids on people who have accumulated what they consider unjustified wealth, burning cars and houses." ("Russia's Restless Youth," the *New York Times Magazine*, July 26, 1987, p. 27.)

With this kind of activity emerging, with "young Leninists" soliciting memoirs from survivors of the purges in an effort to restore the truth about the revolution's heroes, with hundreds of Crimean Tatars holding street demonstrations demanding their right to return to their homeland (as occurred in late July in Moscow), with historian journalists calling for an investigation of the roots of the Stalin cult and of the history of the struggle against it, there can be no doubt that the next period in the USSR will be of utmost interest and importance to revolutionary Marxists the world over—most of all to those whom we can expect to re-emerge inside the USSR itself. ■

### NOTES

1. The party names of Lenin, Stepanov, Avilov, and Stalin are also listed in parentheses after their given names.
2. See *Bulletin IDOM*, No. 39, March 1987, p. 4.
3. See *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, Merit Publishers, New York, 1968; and *Not Guilty*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1972.
4. *Let History Judge*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1972, pp. 185-86.

5. Roy Medvedev believes Todorsky's figures are incomplete and compares them to other official sources. See *Let History Judge*, p. 213.
6. S.P. Trapeznikov was a prominent spokesman for the campaign to end the thaw and whitewash the Stalin era after Khrushchev's fall.

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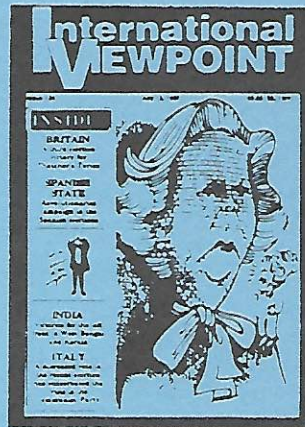
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