

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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THE FEBRUARY 3 CONTRA AID VOTE AND THE U.S. ANTI-INTERVENTION MOVEMENT

by Samuel Adams

The February 3 vote on contra aid by the House of Representatives was undoubtedly the most climactic and significant of any vote taken so far on the issue.

When Reagan took office, he made the ouster of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas his number one priority. (A senior administration aide said that the government spent twice as much time on Nicaragua as it did on all other foreign policy matters, including U.S.-Soviet relations.)

In 1981, the Reagan administration began its covert war against Nicaragua and was soon employing Argentine officers to train the contras. In 1981-82, \$80 to \$90 million was channeled to the mercenaries through the CIA. In 1983, Congress voted to finance the contras openly and approved \$24 million in CIA aid to them "to interdict weapons to El Salvador." When the CIA mined Nicaragua's harbors in 1984, Congress adopted the Boland Amendment explicitly forbidding all aid to the contras. After the April 20, 1985, demonstration, whose demands included no aid to the contras, the House rejected

a bill to fund them. But two months later, in June, Congress voted the contras \$27 million in "humanitarian aid." The turnabout was blamed on Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega for having gone to Moscow immediately after the April vote.

In October of 1986, Congress voted \$100 million in lethal and "non-lethal" aid to last for one year. The measure passed the House by 12 votes, despite anti-contra aid demonstrations all across the country and despite polls showing the overwhelming majority of the American people opposed to such aid. In addition, \$10 million to \$30 million was secretly diverted to the contras during the Iran-contra affair.

In November 1986, the Democrats won a majority of the Senate so that they controlled both houses of Congress. In September 1987, Congress gave the contras \$3.5 million, in November another \$3.2 million, and, in December, \$14.4 million. The margin in this December vote in the House of Representatives was one vote—209 to 208. Since this was on an appropriations bill ("continuing resolu-

Editorial

HANDS OFF PANAMA!

One way or another, the Reagan administration is determined to convince the American public that it has a right to intervene in the affairs of the people of Central America. Facing increased opposition to its bloody war against Nicaragua—waged through the contras' proxy army—the administration's latest scheme is to denounce the Panamanian regime of Manuel Antonio Noriega as being responsible for the drug problem in the United States. The goal is to force, by one method or another, the installation in Panama of a government more congenial to Washington's plans for the Central American region.

Washington has no right to interfere in the internal politics of Panama, or any other country. All efforts—either direct or indirect—by the U.S. to destabilize the Panamanian economy and government should be stopped immediately.

Noriega's dictatorial rule is roundly opposed by the vast majority of the population of Panama

itself. He is no friend of working people in that country or anywhere else. But that is a problem for the Panamanians to solve. It is absolutely guaranteed that any new Panamanian government which Washington has a voice in selecting will serve first and foremost the interests of North American imperialism, not those of the Panamanian masses.

By choosing as its target a petty dictator and using as its weapon the drug-scare, the Reagan administration hopes to win over public opinion in the U.S. to the idea that North American imperialism has a right (even a duty) to police our hemisphere. The ultimate target, of course, is not Noriega, nor is it the drug traffic. It is the insurrectionary masses in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and ultimately in Panama and the rest of Central America. Activists in this country who support the basic right of self-determination for the Central American peoples must make every effort to guarantee that this ploy will not be successful. ■

tion"), which contained many other items, an agreement was reached with the administration that there would be a straight up-or-down vote—strictly on contra aid and with no amendments—in the House on February 3, and the Senate on February 4, 1988.

Secretary of State George Shultz said the administration would seek \$270 million. The actual request was \$36.25 million, of which supposedly only ten percent would go to purchase "lethal" equipment and would be held in escrow until March 31. The lower asking figure was seen as a sign of the weakness of the administration's position. While that is undoubtedly true, the costs of the package were much higher than publicly indicated. There was another \$7 million for "passive air defense equipment" and \$20 million more to insure the aircraft used to ferry the supplies. There were also millions that the CIA could tap from other sources as part of its secret budget. Adding it all up, "it's more than the contras have ever gotten before," according to Senator Christopher Dodd (*N.Y. Times*, February 1, 1988).

As the date for the vote approached, the *Wall Street Journal* editorially sounded the alarm, declaring: "If the anti-contra vote in Congress succeeds, the Sandinista revolution will likely succeed" (January 19, 1988). The Reagan administration and pro-contra forces in Congress pulled out all the stops in a frenzied effort to pick up a few additional votes. That section of the U.S. ruling class which is pressing for an even more aggressive policy against the Sandinistas opened wide its pockets and poured millions into a media, mailing, and lobbying campaign.

The anti-intervention movement provided the counter force. With popular sentiment on its side, the movement organized mass actions in many cities. The largest, by far, was in Los Angeles, with a turnout of several thousand. In addition, countless numbers of people called, wrote, and confronted members of Congress, demanding a "no" vote. A number of the legislators who ultimately voted "no" certainly did so out of fear of the political price that an affirmative vote would bring.

On February 2, Reagan made a last minute concession that he had sought to avoid. He offered Congress a voice in determining whether the escrow funds for military aid would ultimately be released. But this gesture failed to carry the day.

The actual House vote was 219-211 against the Reagan request. The breakdown of Democrats was 47 for, 207 opposed; on the Republican side, 164 for, 12 opposed. Despite the fact that 22 percent of the Democrats voted "yes," the vote was perceived as pretty much a partisan division—an impression strengthened by the fact that all the Democrats running for president took positions opposing contra aid, while all the Republican aspirants favored it.

Yet the Democratic leadership, which three times in 1987 supported legislation for contra aid, gave assurances that it would soon return with its own proposal for more such aid if the Reagan plan were defeated.

Sandinistas Forced to Make Concessions

The Sandinistas made major concessions to influence the Congressional vote on February 3. They were left little choice in the face of the pressures placed on them from three sources: 1) the U.S. government, including Congressional Democrats whose "friendly advice"—i.e., ultimatum—was for the Nicaraguans to make substantial concessions or see the mercenaries given additional millions; 2) the Soviet Union, which seeks to improve its relationship with U.S. imperialism and is more than willing to cut back its support for the Sandinistas to achieve this; and 3) the dire straits of the Nicaraguan economy, which is running out of even the most basic necessities. The Nicaraguan people need a breathing space, even a brief and limited respite from the war, which has created major problems in their fight for the survival of the revolution.

The list of actions taken by the Nicaraguan government in an effort to demonstrate its good faith is considerable, and quite sufficient to convince any honest observer. Some of the steps are completely unprecedented by any government involved in a war situation. The Sandinistas have:

- Established a Commission on National Reconciliation, headed by contra supporter Obando y Bravo, who was chosen to play the role of intermediary. (The accepted criterion for an intermediary is "detachment and objectivity," qualities that no one suggests Obando y Bravo possesses.)

- Announced that three priests banned from Nicaragua because they supported the contras could return.

- Issued a pardon for 16 Central American nationals convicted of participating in counterrevolutionary activities.

- Released 985 prisoners, including 188 former members of the Somoza National Guard. (Sandinista interior minister Tomas Borge told the *New York Times*, February 9, 1988: "A high percentage of the 1,000 people pardoned have reincorporated themselves into the ranks of the armed counterrevolution.")

- Offered to release all the remaining prisoners accused or convicted of political crimes, once a cease-fire is signed, or to permit them to emigrate if any country would take them.

- Abolished the Absentee Law, which permitted the confiscation of property of absentee owners.

- Allowed the reopening of *La Prensa*.

- Allowed the reopening of Radio Catolica.

- Allowed other radio stations and media outlets run by capitalist elements and counterrevolutionaries to function freely.

- Lifted censorship.

- Suspended the state of emergency.

- Suspended the functioning of the exceptional courts known as the "Popular Tribunals" or "Popular Anti-Somocista Tribunals."

- Agreed to indirect talks with contra leaders.

- Agreed to direct talks with contra leaders.

● Agreed not to give aid to "irregular forces or insurrectionist movements" in other countries of the region.

● Offered the contras "irrevocable guarantees" of their rights.

● Given counterrevolutionary elements in Nicaragua the right to march, rally, and demonstrate.

● Agreed to "humanitarian aid" to the contras so long as it is administered by a third party, such as the Red Cross, and follows a cease-fire.

● Offered to set up an international commission that would include representatives of the Republican and Democratic parties to certify that Nicaragua is respecting civil liberties and human rights.

● Given up the idea of "simultaneity" in the implementation of the Guatemala agreement.

In a sense, it is the last of these that is the most far-reaching of all the concessions made by the Sandinistas. They repeatedly said they would comply with the Arias plan so long as the other parties carried it out simultaneously. *But nobody else did so!* Honduras did not give the contras the boot as it was required to under the plan. Neither Guatemala nor Honduras instituted democratic reforms. And most important of all, the U.S. Congress kept voting funds for the contras *after the August 7 signing of the agreement*, in violation of the agreement, and despite one concession after another by the Sandinistas.

In fact, the Sandinistas implemented all of the measures listed above *prior to* the February 3 vote and without being assured of its outcome. If five more members of the 435-member House had voted the other way, contra aid would have passed despite the Sandinistas' efforts. And the February 3 vote is not the final word. Even if it is not reversed, as happened after April 1985, a new contra aid proposal will soon be presented to Congress, supposedly limited to "humanitarian aid."

In short, the Sandinistas are the ones who have been asked to do all the giving. That is now well understood by nearly everyone. Even the January 20 *New York Times* ran a lengthy article under the headline: "Peace Agreement for Central America: Nicaragua Seen as Being Singled Out." Subheads state: "Sandinistas Are Called Victims of a Double Standard" and "Other Nations Are Not 'Asked to Do as Much.'"

As Congress headed for its February 3 vote, it became increasingly clear to more and more people that the Guatemala agreement was being used as a bludgeon by Reagan, by the Democratic Party leadership, and by Arias, to force more and more concessions from the Sandinistas. Their objective is to insure that counterrevolution has a free hand inside Nicaragua to prevent the consolidation of the country's revolution.

Drawing a Balance Sheet

Despite all of this, the February 3 vote was a stinging defeat for the Reagan administration and

its interventionist policies. Syndicated columnist James J. Kilpatrick, a strident supporter of the contras, went so far as to conclude in a February 8 article titled "House Severs Contras' Legs" that the contras have now been abandoned and defused. But such a sweeping judgment is clearly premature.

What is certainly clear—and from every point of view absolutely decisive—is that the Sandinistas retain state power. They also retain an enormous following, particularly among the youth, and have a powerful army which, together with the Sandinista Defense Committees, is waging a formidable defense of the revolution from both external and internal enemies.

On the other hand, with the Nicaraguan economy in shambles and with a dangerous shortage of food (among other commodities) the Sandinistas face immense problems. If the contra war continues all their problems will be greatly compounded. The vitally needed support of Nicaragua's masses and their willingness to sacrifice further could erode. Counterrevolutionary forces now have far greater freedom and capacity to exploit the dissatisfaction that U.S. policies were calculated to generate.

The Sandinistas paid a heavy price for their February 3 victory. As *Newsweek* notes in its January 25 issue: "The Reagan administration has used the process (involving the peace accords) to strengthen its hand in Nicaragua." In the same vein, *In These Times* (January 27–February 2) explained:

Whether or not contra aid is approved, it may be that Reagan has already won a larger victory. By pressing Nicaragua for concessions, the Democrats have conceded the administration's right to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries.

"I think in the short term we might win on contra aid," said Betsy Cohn of the Central America Historical Institute, "but in the long term sovereignty has gone down the drain."

Reactions in the U.S. Left

It is perfectly understandable and reasonable for the Sandinistas to make whatever concessions they consider necessary to take advantage of divisions among U.S. ruling circles—as well as between the interests of the U.S. imperialists and other bourgeois forces, such as the leaders of neighboring Central American countries. It is certainly correct to try to influence decisions such as the February 3 contra aid vote.

At the same time, however, it is patently inappropriate for the U.S. left to welcome these concessions as if they represent some kind of victory for Nicaragua. Our task must be to continue to condemn Washington's war against the Sandinistas, so that *whatever* policy decisions are made in Managua can be arrived at on the basis of genuine freedom and the right of the Nicaraguan people to decide their own future without coercion or interference from Washington or anywhere else.

Yet many sections of the movement in this country speak about recent events in Nicaragua as if the decisions made by the Sandinistas to lift the state of emergency, grant amnesty to Somocista murderers, and expand democratic rights for those who are out to destroy the revolution were freely arrived at and were based on purely objective criteria. For example, the January 20 issue of the Communist Party, U.S.A.'s paper, the *People's Daily World*, carried an article headed, "Contra Aid Foes Hail Nicaragua's Peace Moves." The article referred to the lifting of the state of emergency and meeting with the contras as "peace moves," not as forced concessions. (See also CP general secretary Gus Hall's article in the January 21 *PDW*, "Reagan Paints Himself into a Shrinking Corner," in which Hall sees the Sandinistas' release of political prisoners "who have been actively supporting the contras" and other concessions as positive developments.)

We have previously commented at length on the Socialist Workers Party's uncritical enthusiasm for the Arias plan and for the numerous concessions the Sandinistas were making to implement it. (See "The Socialist Workers Party and the Guatemala Peace Plan," *Bulletin IDOM* No. 48, January 1988.) In January, the SWP shifted its line somewhat to portray more realistically the actual course of events—for example, recognizing that the Sandinistas had been forced to make major concessions—while at the same time reaffirming the party's advocacy of full civil liberties for counterrevolutionary elements. In the January 29 issue of the *Militant*, SWP leader Larry Seigle wrote, "Silencing opposition voices—whether they be the capitalist and landlord opposition groups or currents within the working-class movement—avoids having to answer their arguments. Administrative moves merely drive such arguments into indirect channels—such as rumor mills—where they are harder to deal with."

But in Nicaragua today we are not dealing with abstract questions of democracy. If such concerns as Seigle raises outweigh the right of the Nicaraguan government to defend itself against counterrevolutionary elements attempting to overthrow it, why, then, did the Sandinistas suppress *La Prensa* and the other voices of reaction in the first place?

Does Seigle regard such suppression as a mistake? Or does he not understand that, in dealing with an all-out war being waged by these very "capitalist and landlord opposition groups," the Sandinistas felt they had no alternative? And is the situation so drastically different today with the contra war continuing and the economic situation in Nicaragua worsening?

No working class revolutionary regime in history (or even any government, of any class character, faced with a violent insurrection) has allowed complete freedom and civil liberties for those engaged in an armed struggle against it. Noam Chomsky speaks to this point in an article in *Zeta Magazine* (January 1988): "*La Prensa* was funded by the terrorist superpower attacking Nicaragua, and the journal supported this attack. The fact that it has been allowed to publish at all has few if any

precedents. Now it is publishing again, still supporting the war against Nicaragua while the superpower conducting the war provides it with 'essential' funding according to its director, contra supporter Jaime Chamorro; again, an unprecedented phenomenon" (emphasis added).

Of course no discussion of precedents can necessarily decide the specific case of Nicaragua. But that is precisely the point. What is at issue is the survival of the revolution. The expansion of civil liberties for counterrevolutionary elements supporting an armed effort to overthrow the Nicaraguan government can be justified in this case by one factor and one factor only—the need to politically defeat the most virulent wing of the imperialists which calls for more aggressive actions against Nicaragua. The concessions given up by the Sandinistas reflect a gamble to achieve this objective.

Solidarity's David Finkel, writing in that organization's journal *Against the Current* (issue No. 11, November–December 1987), also applauds the Sandinistas' decision to allow *La Prensa* to reopen. Finkel sees this not as a concession forced upon the Sandinistas, but as a liberating advance for Nicaragua's revolution. He also finds praiseworthy the Nicaraguan government's shift on the question of negotiations with the contras. The Sandinistas had repeatedly vowed that under no circumstances would they ever negotiate with the contras, directly or indirectly. The last thing the Sandinistas wanted to do was to break that vow, because doing so meant giving recognition and legitimacy to the contras.

When the announcement was made that indirect negotiations would be held with them—because Nicaragua had been forced to yield on the point—many Nicaraguans whose loved ones had been maimed, butchered, or murdered by the contras responded with outrage. Finkel, however, had a different reaction. He characterized the decision to hold indirect negotiations with the contras as "a brilliantly executed diplomatic move" because it "saved the situation" and brought House speaker Jim Wright into the negotiations. This is the same Jim Wright who led the fight for contra aid in September, November, and December 1987 and promised to bring in his own package after the Reagan proposal was voted down on February 3.

In *These Times*, a paper that expresses the viewpoint of the Democratic Socialists of America, has also dismissed the dangers posed by counterrevolution in Nicaragua. In its January 20–26, 1988, issue, it editorially declares that the Sandinistas "have been so cooperative [in making concessions] because they have everything to gain" from what *ITT* hopes will be the end of the war. Not a word in the paper about the forced nature of the concessions or their cost or consequences to the people of Nicaragua.

One of the most balanced accounts of events has come from *The Guardian*. The headline of its January 27 issue declared, "Managua Gives A Lot, U.S. Wants More." *The Guardian* made no effort to gloss over the seriousness of the situation, characterizing the concessions the Sandinistas were forced to give as "extraordinary," and quoting Meg

Ruby of the Days of Decision coalition, who said they were "stunning."

At the same time, *The Guardian* uncritically stated that "activists will stress that further funding could kill the Central America peace plan." By tying the campaign against aid to the contras to the Guatemala agreement, *The Guardian* fails to recognize that the peace plan is precisely the tool which the imperialists are attempting to use today to undermine the Nicaraguan revolution. The Nicaraguans themselves may have no choice but to formulate their proposals in the context of this plan. But that doesn't mean that activists in the U.S. must be bound by it, or organize our strategy around it.

The best way for us to make sure that terms of the Guatemala agreement work out in a manner most favorable to the Nicaraguan revolution is to continue to focus our demands around the absolute and inviolable right of the Nicaraguan people to self-determination. The U.S. anti-intervention movement cannot allow our slogans or actions to be qualified by any set of negotiations or peace plans. We are simply for the U.S. to get out, and stay out, of Nicaragua. If we focus on this one simple idea it will put the greatest pressure on all of the institutions of government in this country, and we can help advance the kind of "peace process" we want to see.

Socialist Action has expressed views on the Guatemala agreement which parallel those set forth in this and previous articles in the *Bulletin IDOM*. But *Socialist Action* draws conclusions which are fundamentally different from ours about what should be done. They initially urged April 30, 1988, demonstrations—not simply on a national scale but on a world scale—that would take up the issues of a nuclear freeze, an end to Star Wars, and other demands and subdemands, along with a call for an end to U.S. intervention in Central America. They found no support for this proposal in the broader movement, outside of the San Francisco Bay Area. Carl Finamore, a leader of the group, complained that "not one national peace or solidarity organization has agreed to a proposal by the Northern California Mobilization for Peace, Jobs and Justice for nationally coordinated local area spring actions on April 30, 1988" (*Socialist Action*, February 1988).

Finamore ascribes this to the conflict many activists see with the June 11 disarmament demonstration scheduled for New York. But he also says it reflects a lack of understanding "that the U.S. war on Nicaragua was at a critical point."

But if the war is "at a critical point"—an assessment with which we agree—is this not the time to call coordinated demonstrations *focused* on Central America? Wouldn't that be better than diffusing the focus, by lumping the Central America demand with the nuclear freeze and other issues as SA persists in advocating?

The U.S. government is today engaged in a fundamental adjustment of foreign policy priorities. Its focus is preventing any more revolutions

by oppressed peoples and, where possible, overthrowing those revolutions which have occurred. Toward that end, U.S. imperialism is prepared to cut back on its nuclear appropriations and even its commitment to maintain the same level of ground forces in Europe. In a landmark Pentagon study (January 1988), Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, among others, have concluded that the U.S. must refocus its "defense" priorities away from Europe to conflicts in the third world.

What Next for the Anti-Intervention Movement?

Thus, the challenge to the U.S. anti-intervention movement is sharper than ever before: to create a more powerful movement capable of stopping aggressive U.S. wars against popular liberation movements and revolutionary governments. Today the focus of our struggle is Central America.

There are ideological and organizational issues before the movement that must be resolved to ensure its healthy growth. The former include clarifying the uncompromising nature of the right to self-determination; keeping the movement independent of bourgeois electoral politics; preventing the diversion of the movement into the swamp of divisive multi-issuism; and recognizing always the *regional* nature of U.S. intervention in Central America. While our attention has been and remains focused on Nicaragua in this period, the rest of the Central America/Caribbean region is carefully monitored by imperialism. In El Salvador, the list of the names of U.S. banks and corporations with holdings reads like a "Who's Who" of American big business. There is an ever-present threat of *direct* U.S. intervention there if that is deemed necessary to maintain in power the weakened Duarte regime (or some other U.S. puppet administration that may follow it).

Organizationally, the anti-intervention movement, if it is to be as effective as it must be, should coalesce—uniting all of the diverse forces which can be brought together to support it in a common organization—both nationally and in local areas around the country. This burning need cannot be further delayed. The anti-intervention movement won a squeaker on February 3, but our victory is a fragile one. As this is written, the movement awaits the next battle against the Democrats' plan for "humanitarian aid." Our capacity to mobilize, while significant, still lags way behind what is possible and necessary. This was demonstrated in the pre-February 3 period, when the actions which did take place were, for the most part, uncoordinated and in many cases quite small.

It is time that today's anti-intervention movement do what its predecessor, the Vietnam antiwar movement, did: Create a broad and democratic national coalition which can call the most massive actions possible. ■

February 22, 1988

THE REHABILITATION OF NIKOLAI BUKHARIN

by Bernard Daniels

New York Times dispatch from Moscow on February 6th: The Supreme Court of the USSR has concluded that Nikolai Bukharin, along with nine others convicted in the third of the infamous Moscow show trials which took place in 1938, had been wrongly convicted and executed and that he was a victim of "gross violations of Socialist legality." The *Times* dispatch also noted that this decision dealt only with judicial issues, that party rehabilitation was still under study by the Central Committee. However, it may be presumed that this will follow.

Why is Bukharin being singled out for exoneration and rehabilitation at this time? What is the relationship, or the connecting link, between Bukharin, the leader of the Right Opposition to Stalin in the late 1920s, and the current policies of Gorbachev?

Nikolai Bukharin was born in 1888 and died at the hands of Stalin's executioners when he was 50. Amongst other responsibilities, he was the editor of the party newspaper, *Pravda*, from 1918 to 1929; head of the Communist International from 1926 to 1929; and leader of the Right Opposition to Stalin from 1928 to 1929.

Bukharin's political career was a series of paradoxes. At first he was a leader of the left wing of the Bolshevik Party and later became a leader of its right wing. In his last *Testament*, Lenin says of Bukharin: "Not only a most valuable and major theorist of the party; he is also rightly considered the favorite of the whole party but his theoretical views can be classified as fully Marxist only with great reserve, for there is something scholastic about him (he has never made a study of dialectics and I think, never fully understood it)."

During the battles that raged in the Bolshevik Party after Lenin's death Bukharin was solidly in Stalin's camp until 1928. He was never a supporter of Trotsky or the Left Opposition, but was the leader of his own, right-wing current. Nevertheless, Bukharin was fond of Trotsky and thought very highly of his contributions to the revolution. When Lenin was gravely ill, he was distraught when he learned that Trotsky was also ailing. During a visit to Trotsky he said, "There are two men of whose death I always think with horror . . . Lenin and you." When Trotsky was banished from the Soviet Union, Isaac Deutscher reports that Bukharin wrung his hands and wept. Together with Rykov and Tomsky, he voted against Trotsky's exile.

When Zinoviev and Kamenev broke with Stalin in 1926, and their forces merged with Trotsky's in the United Opposition, Bukharin became the "theoretician" for the already entrenched Stalinist bureaucracy. He became the mouthpiece for Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country" (i.e., a rejection of a fight for the international proletarian revolu-

tion). In the late '20s Bukharin, again with Rykov and Tomsky, formed the Right Opposition. In particular he opposed Stalin's left turn after the breakdown of the New Economic Policy (NEP), which included a plan for extremely rapid industrial development and the forced collectivization of agriculture in the USSR.

Bukharin's program gave priority to the needs of agriculture over industry. He was the one who developed the idea (pushed by Stalin during NEP) that the kulaks, or rich peasants, should "enrich" themselves. He was also in favor of permitting the private ownership of small businesses, which he thought was the needed spur to the economy, and advocated a limited measure of free market policies.

With the bureaucracy in the USSR today looking toward measures similar to those Bukharin advocated in the 1920s, it isn't at all surprising to see a move for his rehabilitation. In a certain limited sense it can truly be said that Bukharin is the theoretical forerunner of Gorbachev. It is useful for the present-day bureaucracy to have a genuine revolutionary leader as prestigious as Bukharin whom they can rely on as an authority. And by fully rehabilitating him from under the mound of Stalinist slander Gorbachev gets to play the role of crusader against Stalin's crimes. At the same time, of course, he continues in the true Stalinist tradition by relentlessly attacking the genuine Marxist views of Trotsky and the Left Opposition.

In the *New York Times* of February 6, Stephen Cohen, the author of Bukharin's biography (*Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*), is reported to have put it this way while in Moscow as a lecturer: "There is an implication in all this that Bukharin was Lenin's programmatic heir, that he was the forefather of perestroika (economic restructuring)." That is certainly an accurate summation of what Gorbachev would like the Soviet people to believe, even if not of Bukharin's real role.

The dilemma which Gorbachev faces is that he cannot dissociate or separate the trial of Bukharin (together with Rykov and Tomsky), from all the other frame-up trials, at the center of which was Leon Trotsky and his son Leon Sedov. Even on the list from the third Moscow trial, along with Bukharin, were the leading Left Oppositionists, Khristian Rakovsky and Arkady Rozengolts. It was impossible to juridically clear Bukharin without pointing to their frame-up as well. What, then, is to be said about the verdicts in the other trials? What of the accusations against Trotsky? This is indeed a problem for Gorbachev. The contradictions inherent in the present process create major new openings for discussion, debate, and even opposition today among the working people of the Soviet Union. ■

COMRADES TROTSKY and Sedov, with a small nucleus of co-thinkers and sympathizers, utterly isolated from the international labour movement (with the honorable exception of Friedrich Adler, the then secretary of the Second International), were practically the only ones in the years 1936-38 to denounce the three Moscow Trials as based upon lies, slanders and crude falsifications. They denounced the method of extorting confessions from the accused by whatever means (we know today that torture was used on a wide scale), and then using these confessions as the main basis for condemnation. This is a method that the infamous Vishinsky even elevated to the level of a general theory of jurisprudence taught in Soviet universities for two decades.

It is probable that, in the very long run, truth would have triumphed even without Trotsky's efforts. But thanks to these efforts the mechanism of the Stalinist lies and slanders quickly exposed for all those who were not blind or cynical, so the time for the restoration of historical truth was much shortened.

Khrushchev's "secret report" to the 1956 Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) prepared the way for the February 4, 1988, verdict of the USSR Supreme Court which cleared all the names of the accused of the third Moscow Trial over 30 years later. That verdict is a vindication of the greatest political importance for the struggle which Trotsky and Sedov started in the summer of 1936, to defend the honour of their comrades, the Old Bolsheviks, who had led the young Soviet state from the days of its creation in October/November 1917.

One million communists died in Stalin's purges

By declaring that all the accusations of "spying", "terrorism", "assassination" and "conspiracy" against the Soviet state and the leadership of the party advanced in the third Moscow Trial were false, the Supreme Court has not only rehabilitated Bukharin, Rykov and their co-accused. It has also branded Stalin, Vishinsky, Yezhov-Beria (the then heads of the GPU) and their accomplices and henchmen as mass murderers. These criminals used the false accusations of the three Moscow Trials for a mass purge of the CPSU, in which probably as many as one million communists were killed outright or died of the consequences of their unjust imprisonment. Stalin will go down in history branded with the mark of Cain, as one of the most sinister figures in the long and tragic story of humanity's inhumanity.

So much blood, so much mud, so much human suffering heaped upon innocent men, women and children — finally all to no avail! Truth has triumphed, in spite of lies spread in tens of millions of books, pamphlets and newspaper articles circulat-

A historical victory

THE PENAL (judicial) rehabilitation by the USSR Supreme Court on February 4 of all the accused of the third Moscow Trial of 1938 — with the exception of the ex-GPU chief Yagoda — represents a great victory for the Soviet people, the Soviet proletariat and the international working class. It is above all a great victory for our movement.

ERNEST MANDEL

ed to suppress it. What a lesson for the cynical-naive devotees of *Realpolitik*, *raison d'Etat* and opportunism! What a confirmation of our unshakable political and moral conviction that in the long run it always pays to stick to principles, under all circumstances, and against the greatest of odds. The only regret we have is that so many of the courageous handful of 1936-38 have not lived to see the moment of triumph that they never doubted.

Those who, for whatever reasons, have repeated the lies and slanders against the Old Bolsheviks against our movement, against all oppositionists, for years and decades, stand today in the shameful position of apologists and accomplices of murderers of communists. Those who have

continued to educate their members and sympathizers by means of the infamous *Short History of the CPSU*, which codified the lies and slanders of the Moscow Trials, are guilty of poisoning and destroying the critical minds of two generations of communists. The least one can ask of them is a clear and open self-criticism, a clear and public statement that all the epithets like "Hitler-Trotskyists" — used innumerable times by *L'Humanité* and other Communist Party and Maoist papers — were slanderous through and through.

Campaign must continue for rehabilitations

But this is only the beginning of victory. The Supreme Court of the USSR has only juridically rehabilitated the accused of the third Moscow Trial, not those of the first and second trials.

This is not accidental. The combination of pressure by critically-minded people and of the ideological affinity of the Gorbachev followers with Bukharin makes the rehabilitation of the third Moscow Trial defendants less problematic for the Soviet leaders. But the political identity of the Left Opposition and the United Opposition makes the penal rehabilitation of the first and second Moscow Trial defendants, including Trotsky and Sedov — a rehabilitation which involves the right to reprint, circulate, study and publicly discuss their writings — into a formidable problem for the ruling bureaucracy.

It is true that among those rehabilitated now are Krestinsky, a close friend and co-thinker of Leon Trotsky, a member of the first politburo after the October revolution, although never a formal member of the Left Opposition. Especially relevant to our further endeavours is the fact that among those rehabilitated on February 4, 1988, is our great comrade Christian Rakovsky, who was the closest friend and the second most important political leader of the Opposition, after Leon Davidovitch himself.

In the light of that rehabilitation, we have to pursue with the utmost intensity our campaign for a full juridical rehabilitation of all those indicted by the three Moscow Trials, including comrades Trotsky and Sedov, who were charged and condemned in the verdict of the first trial.

We have to pursue with the utmost energy our struggle to ban once and for all from the labour movement the methods of lies, slanders and unfounded accusations, and the use of violence for settling ideological differences.

We are the only communists today in the world who can proudly say: our banner is clean. In the darkest days of the twentieth century we saved the honour of communism. Let us go forward in the spirit of the slogan of May 1968 of which we shall soon commemorate the 20th anniversary: "This is only the beginning, we will continue the fight!" ★



ABORTION VICTORY IN CANADA

by Anne MacLellan Brunelle

"The most important victory for women's rights in Canada since we won the vote." That is how the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC) has described the January 28 Supreme Court decision that declared the Canadian abortion law unconstitutional.

The day of the decision was bitterly cold but there were pro-choice supporters out in front of the Morgentaler Clinic from 7 a.m. to await the announcement. It came at 10:30 a.m. Chants of "We've Won!" and "The People Have Spoken, the Clinics Will Stay Open!" could be heard blocks away. The activists were aware that five judges in Ottawa are not the people of Canada, but this decision was imposed on the court by mass pressure. The ruling was not given lightly, it was wrested from them. The movement had indeed won.

In 1969, the Trudeau Liberals passed a law under the Criminal Code of Canada which declared that abortions were legal only if done in a hospital and if a Therapeutic Abortion Committee (TAC) deemed that the life or health of the woman was at risk. The TACs were made up of three doctors who met in secret and had no direct contact with the women whose lives they were affecting. The decision of the TAC could not be appealed. This law was called an "historic compromise" between the demands of the anti-choice forces who called for all abortions to be illegal, and the pro-choice forces who were calling for full access to free abortion.

For a time the different federal and provincial governments were able to win the battle for public opinion by presenting themselves as the sane middle between two fanatical groups at opposite poles. As time passed, however, the message of OCAC and other pro-choice groups across the country got through: it is not fanatical to demand that a woman have the right to control her own body, her own reproductive capacity, and the right to decide when and if to have children. And that must include the right to terminate a pregnancy.

While this Supreme Court decision, which is analogous to the Roe vs. Wade decision in the United States (which stated legal restriction of access to abortion is a violation of the right to privacy), has given the women of Canada the right to make their own choices on abortion, it does not guarantee access in terms of funding or location.

Several provincial governments have already moved to limit access. In Alberta and Nova Scotia

the governments have stated that they will only fund abortions done at hospitals that have functioning TACs, even though they face court challenges as to the legality of this regulation in the face of the Supreme Court decision.

In British Columbia, right-wing Social Credit Premier VanderZalm has gone one step further; he has declared that B.C. Medicare will not fund *any* abortions unless the woman faces death and she demonstrates a need for financing. He flatly refuses to see that this is a return to the two-tiered health-care system wherein women with money are able to get safe, medical abortions and working women and poor women end up at overcrowded emergency rooms or forced to have babies that they do not want or cannot feed.

In Prince Edward Island the problem is somewhat different. The Provincial Government has accepted that abortions can be performed but the hospitals in the province have refused to do them. To date no doctor has offered to set up a free-standing clinic.

In Ontario, Health Minister Eleanor Caplan has announced that Ontario Medicare (the Ontario Health Insurance Plan—OHIP) will pay for abortions done in hospitals and free-standing clinics, like the ones run by doctors Henry Morgentaler and Robert Scott. Unfortunately the OHIP payment that will be made will only cover the doctor's services. It will not cover counselling, nursing care, etc., which are covered in the regular funding of a hospital. (If a woman who does not have OHIP coverage chooses to have an abortion in a hospital it will cost her approximately \$1,000 [\$750 U.S.]—if she has the abortion at the Morgentaler Clinic her cost will only be \$300 [\$225 U.S.] and she knows that she will be cared for in a completely nonjudgmental, supportive environment.)

On the federal level right-wing lobbyists and politicians have been calling for new legislation to restrict abortion. This has taken several different routes. One, similar to the current threat posed by the Alton Bill in Britain, is a call for a limit on the number of weeks of pregnancy during which an abortion can be performed. Other anti-choice forces have demanded that the federal government use the "notwithstanding clause" of the Canadian Constitution to override the Supreme Court ruling and enforce the old law. However, the biggest threat is the demand to enshrine in the Constitution the "rights of the fetus" which will subordinate the rights of women to the rights of the "preborn."

The women's movement in Canada has always called for fully funded, community based women's

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clinics where a wide range of health-care needs will be met, including abortion. As it is apparent that the Supreme Court decision did not grant us this it is good that we have more than twenty years' experience to show us the way forward in continuing the struggle.

There have been many debates about how to go about winning abortion rights. Many different strategies and tactics have been put forward in the movement. Some groups have favored lobbying and writing letters to politicians. Others have put their faith in the courts. There were groups that recognized that both politicians and judges can, and must, be *forced* to make reforms that are advantageous to the working class. These are the women that have advocated the strategy that was used in Quebec in the 1970s and again in Toronto over the last five years: *mass action*. Without minimizing the importance of Dr. Morgentaler's heroic contribution (he challenged the law by opening up his "illegal" clinics, first in Montreal, and more recently in Toronto; all charges against him and the other doctors and staff people have been

dropped), the victory was won by getting as many working people into the streets as possible for rallies, demonstrations, pickets, and tribunals.

This strategy has taken the abortion rights movement into the Ontario Labor Federation and the Canadian Labor Congress, into the antiracist movement and into women of color groups, into groups of disabled women, and the women's health-care movement, and it has shown the movement's ability to find and win allies in all sectors of the workers' and women's movements.

With the pro-choice struggle entering a new phase it is now essential that the lessons of the recent past not be forgotten. Pro-choice forces must go back into the streets to demand full access and full funding from all the provincial governments and demand that the federal government keep its laws off women's bodies and not pass another law that will restrict choice on abortion in any way.

Victories for the women's movement and workers' movement may be few and far between these days but a victory for one is still a victory for all. ■

AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE, AS LATE AS NECESSARY Women Fight for Abortion Rights in Britain

by Judith Arkwright

On January 22, the British parliament passed a new anti-abortion bill through its second reading, thus paving the way for one of the most serious setbacks for women's abortion rights since abortion was made legal under the 1967 act.

The bill, which was supported by a majority of only 45, is sponsored by a Liberal Party MP and a Catholic, David Alton. It seeks to amend the 1967 abortion act (originally introduced by the current leader of the Liberal Party) to make the legal time limit for abortions 18 weeks instead of the current 28 weeks.

It is the fourteenth attempt to amend the abortion act since it came into force, the fourteenth attempt to restrict women's rights to control their own bodies and their own lives. Some of the most well known of those were the White, Benyon, and Corrie bills which were all defeated before they received a third reading in parliament. These attacks were defeated as a result of mass action by women in conjunction with the labor movement, culminating in a fantastic show of strength in October 1980 against Corrie's bill, which was organized by the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the single national trade union federation in the country, when 60,000 women and trade unionists took to the streets.

Under the umbrella of the single issue campaign, Fight Alton's Bill (FAB), a week of action was organized leading up to the second reading. On January 16, local days of action were held in every major town in England, Scotland, and Wales, involving an estimated 15,000 people in demonstrations,

street meetings, pickets, etc. On January 21, the day before the second reading, there was a mass lobby and rally at which celebrities, trade union and Labor Party leaders pledged their support.

The smallness of the 45-person majority for the second reading of the bill was testimony to the success of this and past campaigns which have established a strong consensus for a woman's right to choose and this in a climate where the most reactionary government since the war has tried so hard in the last eight years to impose the narrow thinking of a so-called moral majority. However, parliamentary pundits also agree that the problem for the pro-choice lobby is that its support in parliament may have already reached its peak and that there will not be more votes to come when the bill comes out of the committee where it is currently being discussed and back to the parliament for its third and final reading.

Women were disgusted and outraged to find that of the MPs who voted for the bill 36 were Labor members, and if you take into account Labor MPs that did not vote or abstained, then you can conclude that Labor MPs could have defeated the bill on January 22. But instead these 36 chose to break with the Labor Party policy on abortion on request, on the grounds that this was an issue of conscience. This despite the fact that the 1985 Labor Party conference passed a resolution against the notion of a conscience vote on this issue. Women inside the party are up in arms about this display of male arrogance which seems to be par for the course in the increasingly undemocratic party of Neil Kinnock

and his cronies in the leadership. They are demanding that MPs who voted for Alton be deselected (that is, removed from office) and that a 3-line whip be imposed at the next vote so that MPs will have to vote according to the party policy.

The anti-abortionists are, unusually, united behind this bill, since many of the more extreme elements—members of the organization Life—now see the value of going for piecemeal reform with the ultimate goal of making abortion illegal. They have used the fact that the 28-week limit is the most liberal in Europe and the fact that it is possible for a fetus to be viable at 24 weeks (although only with a lot of medical resources and even then only 10 percent survive). They profess to be concerned at the number of late abortions and the suffering caused to the fetus. Of course what they don't point out is that nowadays only 50 percent of abortions are done on the National Health Service and that in most cases the reason women need late abortions is because of bureaucratic delays, prejudice from powerful doctors, and inadequate facilities.

CLUW CALLS NATIONAL ACTION

The Coalition of Labor Union Women has called for an "American Family Celebration" in Washington D.C. next May 14. The purpose of the rally, according to a letter sent to members by the New York City CLUW chapter, is to emphasize the need for a "Family and Medical Leave Act to guarantee workers time off in emergencies. Workers should not be forced to choose between their job and caring for a newborn or newly adopted child or for a sick child or family member. In addition, workers need job protection in case of their own serious illness.

"The nation is slowly awakening to the growing need for eldercare and the drastic lack of available services for the elderly. Labor's commitment to quality health care continues, sharpened by the increasing number of Americans without any coverage."

A leaflet for the action lists six demands: Family and Medical Leave; Comprehensive Health Care; Quality, Comprehensive Child Care; Economic Justice and Security; Services for the Elderly; and Improved Educational Opportunities.

The event will be held in and around the Sylvan Theater, near the Washington Monument, from 12 noon to 5 p.m. For more information, write: CLUW, 15 Union Square, New York, NY 10003.

If the bill becomes law over 7,000 women could be forced to the back streets to obtain abortions. These will include women who have discovered through the amniocentesis test, normally done at 18 weeks, that their fetus is malformed, or women who for one reason or another did not find out they were pregnant until late on. In reality the 18-week limit will operate at 16 weeks since most doctors like to allow two weeks leeway to avoid the risk of prosecution.

Undoubtedly the stakes are extremely high compared to past campaigns. Under Thatcher's government there have been so many restrictions on democratic freedoms and the labor movement has suffered so many setbacks that opposition is not easy to mount. Thatcher herself has come out in favor of a compromise solution, which is also backed by the medical profession, for a 22-week or 24-week limit. Alton has not been receiving very good press and many of those who voted for the bill are in favor of such a compromise. Such a compromise is not a solution for women. We utterly reject any changes to the 1967 act which do not make it easier for women to obtain abortions. David Alton wants to get rid of the act altogether and a 24, 22, 18 weeks amendment is only a step on that road. Women should not be punished for having late abortions. What is needed is safe early abortion. Only a woman should decide what happens to the fetus inside her. As early as possible and as late as necessary is one of the slogans which has been raised in the campaign and which sums this up.

However, the picture is not all gloomy. Women have fought hard in the last 20 years and have established the abortion issue as a trade union issue. The TUC has already agreed to sponsor a national demonstration against Alton's bill on March 19, before the third reading, and most of the major unions in the country are supporting the campaign, including the National Union of Miners which has never before had a position on this issue. This has not a little to do with the Women Against Pit Closures movement which took a position against early in the campaign and which will show the same intransigence on this issue as they did during the miners' strike.

FAB groups have sprung up all over the country and are more numerous and more widespread than in any previous campaign. Opinion polls are still showing in favor of a woman's right to choose. We have never experienced a defeat on this issue and, since the Corrie campaign, confidence is riding high. Women will not easily allow an attack on this most basic of human rights. *Alton, Get Your Laws Off Our Bodies!* ■

NEW YORK PICKET OPPOSES U.S. AID TO THE PHILIPPINES

by Steve Bloom

Carrying signs with slogans such as "End Human Rights Violations," "Justice for Victims of Repression in the Philippines," "Close All U.S. Military Bases," and "No CIA Operations in the Philippines," more than 100 people picketed outside the Philippine Consulate in New York City on a cold day, February 25. The event was organized to mark the second anniversary of the revolution which overthrew the hated Marcos dictatorship and installed Corazon Aquino in power in Manila. Initiated by two groups, the Alliance for Philippine Concerns and the Campaign to End U.S. Intervention in the Phil-

ippines, the picket was endorsed by a broad range of individuals and organizations.

We are reprinting below a fact sheet compiled by the Campaign to End U.S. Intervention in the Philippines and distributed at the action and during the preceding weeks. The CEUSIP is a newly formed group of activists in the New York area which plans an ongoing campaign with the goal of focusing attention on the issue of human rights in the Philippines and the role of the U.S. government as a prop for the Aquino regime and a promoter of extreme rightist elements in the country. ■

PHILIPPINE FACT SHEET

In the last 18 months, life has gotten worse for the majority of Filipinos. The U.S. government is supporting Corazon Aquino because it knows that her regime, like that of Marcos before it, will provide support for U.S. business and military interests. This is a continuation of Washington's decades-long interventionist policy in the region. Here are some facts about life in the Philippines today:

Human Rights Abuses

Task Force Detainees of the Philippines—a human rights group that monitors the situation in the country—reported as of November 30, 1987: 668 political prisoners in detention, 512 torture victims, 208 "salvaged." ("Salvaging" refers to the murder of political opponents.)

Human rights abuses are concentrated against working people in the Philippines. From February 1986 to September 1987 (19 months) a total of 578 were victims of "salvaging," massacres, arrests, and "disappearances." By contrast, during the Marcos regime, for the *six-year* period of 1980-1986 there were 510 such victims. Clearly, the intensity of repression is now even greater than under the ousted dictatorship.

Political Assassinations

Among the victims of assassination during the past 18 months have been a number of prominent leaders and supporters of the Filipino workers' and peasants' movement. They include: Leandro Alejandro, BAYAN; Peter Alderite, Ladeco Workers' Union; David Bueno, human rights lawyer; Pablo Eleccion, United Atlas Workers' Union; Edwin Laguerder, People's Ecumenical Action for Community Enlightenment; Alex Marteja, human rights lawyer; Daniel Nagayaan, Cordillera Bodong Association; Rolando Olalia, KMU.

During the recent local and regional elections, more than eighty people were killed as a direct result of electoral violence. At least forty of them were candidates for office.

Rise of Right-Wing Vigilantes

One major factor in the increase of human rights violations has been the rise of right-wing vigilante groups since 1986. These are similar to paramilitary units that were prominent in the Marcos era, though a new twist has been added—the manipulation of religious cults (like the Tadtad) to carry out counterinsurgency objectives. U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz has expressed open support for the formation of right-wing vigilantes in the Philippines, whose targets have included a large number of innocent civilians.

(Continued on page 36)

FRANCE: COMMUNIST RENOVATORS CHALLENGE TRADITIONAL LEFT PARTIES

by John Barzman

Since the elections of March 1986 which ended Laurent Fabius's Socialist government and brought a right-wing coalition led by Jacques Chirac to power, two big changes have taken place in the French Left: strikes and street demonstrations have resumed on a wider scale and a new political current has emerged from the Communist Party. It is called the Renovators. One of its most prominent figures, Pierre Juquin, is running in the presidential elections scheduled for early May 1988, and his campaign has brought together a wide array of dissident Communist, trade union, feminist, antiracist, ecologist, and far-left forces, including the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR)—French section of the Fourth International.

'Tapie Generation'

The political climate has changed substantially since the last years of the Left government. One of the most damaging results of the five-year rule of the Socialist Party—with Communist support from 1981 to 1984 and alone from 1984 to 1986—was its undermining of traditional values of the French Left. Reforms were postponed, principles discarded as obsolete, and strikes discouraged. Strikes, in fact, reached their lowest point in decades. Demoralization and confusion spread among workers, intellectuals, and youth who had thought social change was possible.

Free enterprise was rehabilitated. The "entrepreneur," traditionally hated or despised in France as "le patron" (the boss), became the hero of the new adventure which mainstream socialists urged the French people to embark on: modernization. Defending jobs was derided as "archaic" and "old fashioned" and class struggle trade unionists as "dinosaurs" doomed to extinction. Media star and playboy businessman Tapie emerged as the savior of factories threatened with closure and the supposed idol of the new generation of youth.

Of course, the decline of strikes was rooted in the rise of unemployment, and the disappointment of ex-Communists and Socialists was amplified by the business-controlled media for political effect. But both phenomena also reflected a real political weakening and disarray of the labor movement. Alongside the "liberal" free-enterprise individualistic right, Jean-Marie Le Pen's fascist party, the National Front, gained ground with little organized grass-roots opposition, except among school youth. All currents of the Socialist Party, from the right around Michel Rocard to the center around Francois Mitterrand and Fabius to the would-be left

around Jean-Pierre Chevenement and Pierre Mauroy, accepted the goal of modernization of French industry within the existing economic structures. The confusion was also reflected in the electoral losses of the Communist Party and far-left in the 1986 elections.

Rightist Government

After the Right won the election, Chirac set up an RPR-UDF coalition government leaving Mitterrand in office as figurehead president. The arrangement was nicknamed "cohabitation." Chirac hoped to use the two years before the presidential elections scheduled for 1988 to establish his credibility as the leader of the Right coalition and begin implementing anti-working class reforms.

At the time, Raymond Barre, a leader of the UDF, warned that the situation was not yet ripe for the Right to implement its full program. He recommended that the French people be allowed a few more years of Socialist rule, in the hope that the confusion and disarray of the Left would grow further. He condemned "cohabitation" and suggested that he was the right man to lead the Right back to power in the presidential elections.

Chirac may have been a victim of his own propaganda. Arguing that he was part of an international conservative renaissance to which the victories of Reagan, Thatcher, Kohl, and Nakasone testified, he announced sweeping measures that would undo what the Socialists had done. These included a clampdown on "illegal immigration," law and order measures, reducing the number of functionaries, educational reform, repeal of laws limiting employers' "freedom" to decide work schedules and fire their employees, and privatization of public corporations. The first onslaught in the spring and summer of 1986 passed with only scattered resistance. The main public television channel was privatized. ID checks against people considered "dark" (the chief target of police brutality are people of Algerian, Moroccan, and Tunisian descent) increased and over one hundred undocumented Malian workers were expelled in a charter airplane, the largest number deported in a single batch in a long time. The Ministry of the Rights of Women was abolished and subsidies to women's centers cut. The rent-control law adopted under the Socialists was replaced with a new law authorizing large rent hikes. In negotiations with public sector employee unions, the government announced that it would reject any wage increases and eliminate thousands of jobs in 1987.

Youth Shatter the Consensus

It was on the question of education that Chirac's plan ran afoul. Two draft laws became the focus of opposition among the youth: Alain Devaquet's plan to curtail the right of baccalaureate holders (high school graduates) to attend all French universities, and Rene Monory's plan to track high school students into job-oriented education by closing off opportunities for general education and choice at an earlier stage.

By mid-November 1986, high schools, campuses, and technical schools across France were holding "general assemblies" to discuss the draft laws. They voted to strike and elect recallable delegates. A national coordinating committee was established and national demonstrations called.

The movement's unity and independence from any party or sect attracted the parents of school children, workers, and some of the previously cynical media. But as police attacked the students' demonstrations, and Malik Oussebine, a youth of Algerian origin, was bludgeoned to death, the "apolitical tone" of the first phase quickly gave way to anti-government slogans and an appeal to labor unions for help. Local assemblies of trade unionists in plants voted to strike for one hour and demonstrate. The CGT, FEN, and CFDT eventually endorsed the December 6, 1986, national action. (See *Bulletin IDOM* No. 38 for a report on the French student protests.)

Faced with a groundswell of grass-roots activity, the government chose to avoid a further extension and politicalization of the movement. It withdrew the Devaquet law and sent the Monory law back to a committee. It has been paying the price for that capitulation ever since. Its individualistic free-enterprise ideology has been losing support. The youth movement rehabilitated the moral values of equality, solidarity, and democracy. The media discovered that while they were speaking of a "Tapie generation," the most popular themes among young people had been the fight against hunger in the third world, the deriding of the Left and Right establishments by comedian Coluche, and disgust with the French equivalents of Archie Bunker—the racist "beaufs." Young immigrants had launched yearly marches for equality since 1983 and the new "Franco-French" based association SOS-Racisme had mobilized hundreds of thousands of youth under the slogan "Touche pas a mon pote" (Don't Touch My Buddy). More immediately, the youth had shown that the government could be defeated by large, united, and democratically controlled movements.

Unrest Among the Workers

Many workers translated the students' tactics into their own situation. The model was applied—at least partially—by workers of the SNCF (the national railways) in one of the longest rail strikes in French history. (See *Bulletin IDOM* No. 39.) The three-week struggle (December 1986 to January 1987) was initiated by rank-and-file workers and was never fully endorsed by the national labor federa-

tions. Two national coordinating committees formed but failed to unite: the first, broad based, started among the locomotive engineers; the second, initiated by workers influenced by the small Lutte Ouvriere organization, claimed to represent all rail workers. For a while, it seemed as if the strike would extend to other public workers. Gas and power workers went on strike, and postal workers prepared to do so. However, there were still obstacles to an extension of the movement: no single demand emerged that could rally all public workers; the strikers lacked an authoritative national leadership that could bargain on their behalf; and the national unions either took a wait-and-see attitude or rejected the movement's own structures. Railroad strike leaders claimed they had won nothing but the confidence that they still had strength and could do better next time.

Agitation continued into the spring of 1987. Grade school teachers initiated a national strike of several weeks through a coordinating committee elected by strikers in a few pioneering schools. There were sporadic strikes in hospitals, the post office, airports, and Paris metro. It is interesting to note that members of the LCR were elected to the national leadership of the student, rail, and teachers strikes.

The government response was to avoid national tests of strength. It withdrew its most provocative proposals: the privatization of prisons and the abolition of automatic citizenship to immigrants' children born in France. It tried to associate trade union leaders to its plans for "flexible" work schedules and reduce the social security deficit by increasing workers' payments and cutting benefits. The projected attack on social security, though, triggered another massive—though divided—show of workers' discontent. A CGT protest brought one million people to Paris on May 22, 1987. The Socialist-influenced unions—the CFDT, FO, and FEN—and mutual aid societies called another rally of a few hundred thousand a week later. Chirac had to refer the plan for further study.

Antiracist demonstrations have continued to mobilize thousands of youth. On the campuses, the "generation of fall '86" remains active and organized a series of demonstrations against the educational budget in December 1987. The October 1987 stock market crash hit the Paris Bourse too, and forced the government to postpone some of the major privatizations, further undermining the free-enterprise credo. With some exceptions, such as the private sector industries hardest hit by the crisis, the revival of labor and social activism since 1986 is clear.

Presidential Elections

The change in the social climate has affected the presidential election. A word about the rules of the game in France may help to explain the tactical problems posed for political parties. Under the present constitution, the president is elected directly by all voters in two rounds of

voting held one or two weeks apart. In the first round, all candidates who gather the signatures of 500 mayors and other officials may run; in the second round, only the two leading candidates are allowed to run. Since both the Left and Right include only two major parties, the survivors are usually one Left and one Right candidate. The smaller parties of the Right and Left must then choose whether to support the candidate closest to them.

On the Right, Chirac has failed to achieve the unchallenged status which he hoped his two years in power would give him. Raymond Barre has emerged as a serious if not leading contender to represent the Right in the second round of the presidential election. That is not the only division among politicians of the Right. Some UDF and RPR leaders, such as Bernard Stasi and Michel Noir, have indicated a desire for a middle-of-the-road coalition with the Socialists, to appease social tensions. Others, such as Leotard, believe that, applied to France, the U.S.-style alternation of a barely distinguishable center-right and center-left would enhance the rise of extremism (the CP and Le Pen) at the expense of the traditional Right parties. Meanwhile, Le Pen's racist National Front is credited with 8 to 10 percent of the vote.

The renewal of Left activism has had some repercussions on the Socialist Party, most notably in the astonishing rise of Mitterrand's standing in the polls. Most surveys give him a 10 percent lead over any one of the Right's candidates in the second round. The party is trying to recruit young people through its youth organization and its supporters in SOS-Racisme and the student union UNEF-ID, but with only moderate success so far. It retains activists among teachers. But left trends inside the party have been swamped by those who preach "realism" in the hope that it will bring them a new stint in government. The watchwords of the SP mainstream are "modernization" and "acquiring a culture of government." They hope to make the Socialists sufficiently tame for French business to accept their election as casually as U.S. business accepts Democratic Party victories.

Prominent SP leaders like Jacques Delors have suggested that they would be willing to be part of a coalition government headed by Raymond Barre. So far, though, no leader of the SP other than Mitterrand has gained sufficient authority beyond his own party tendency to rally the energies of the whole membership. This is one of the reasons why Mitterrand will probably decide to run. His propaganda will stress the need for national unity and compromise and he has made no pledge to dissolve the National Assembly elected in March 1986, with its majority of Right deputies. Short of a very strong showing by the Left, it is likely that he will seek to put together a government of the Socialists with center-right support.

Crisis of the Communist Party

The most strikingly new phenomenon in this election is the crisis of the Communist Party. In

the 1986 elections, the party score fell to about 10 percent, on a par with the National Front. Current opinion polls give it only about 5 to 7 percent. In a recent television appearance, its national secretary, Georges Marchais, announced that this was the price his party was paying for over thirty years of deceiving the French people into believing that social change could come through the ballot box in alliance with the SP.

But this explanation was one-sided, and therefore unconvincing to many CP members. In fact, the CP has vacillated between *two* lines over the past thirty years. One proclaimed in divisive and sectarian fashion that the CP alone was the party of the working class and revolution, and the CGT the only genuine trade union. This line relegated the SP to the position of a temporary and unreliable petty-bourgeois ally, tried to submit social movements to direct CP control, rejected united action by the trade unions, and denounced the far-left as provocateurs.

The other line, practiced as recently as the 1981-84 period of the SP-CP government, presented the revolution as a gradual process of transformation for which positions in the state apparatus were useful tools. It reduced differences with the SP to a quantitative matter, such as the number and pace of nationalizations under a united Left government, and urged trade unionists to cooperate in exercising co-management in the plants. It emphasized that good CGT trade unionists could take responsibility for making their firms competitive if they used the "new management criteria" defined by CP economists.

During the 1968 general strike, the CP basically held to the first line, stood completely outside the student movement and urged workers to settle strikes as fast as possible since no governmental solution was possible. In 1972 it shifted its position, signed a Common Program with the SP—and later the tiny Left Radical party—and argued that an electoral CP-SP majority could bring fundamental change. It subordinated the massive wave of strikes of the early 1970s to the goal of this electoral majority. Then, in 1977, it began to try to outbid the SP on the left by demanding more nationalizations be included in the Common Program. It used the SP's refusal as grounds for rejecting unity in action with the SP, CFDT, FO, and FEN. Thus, its candidates in the 1981 presidential election, Georges Marchais, spent most of his time denouncing the SP candidate as just as bad as the candidate of the Right, Giscard; once defeated in the first round, the CP refused to campaign for a vote for Mitterrand in the second round.

When Mitterrand and the Socialists won the 1981 election to the CP's great surprise, the CP agreed to send four ministers into the government. The four—Marcel Rigoult (Professional Training), Charles Fiterman (Transport), Jack Ralite (Health), and Anicet Le Pors (Public Sector)—were to demonstrate that CPers were good and disciplined managers. They and the CP used their trade union connections to convince workers to tone down their demands and avoid strikes so as not to embarrass

"their government." The CP accepted the first austerity measures of the government in the name of improving the productivity of French industry.

The CP's withdrawal from the government in 1984 led to a complete reversal of its line. The CGT was now urged to conduct strikes and call demonstrations regardless of local difficulties and the mood of demoralization, and to denounce the other unions as pawns of the Socialist government. Quite rapidly, SP policy was equated with that of the Right. Since an alliance with the SP was excluded and the CP could not regain hegemony within the Left for some time, there was no perspective for social change. French society was drifting to the right and the party had to be steered for a difficult period and purge itself of unreliable elements.

Emergence of Communist Renovators

It is this zigzagging course which has caused the largest split in the French CP since 1939-40. Previously, dissidents had left the party in small numbers at each successive turn since 1968. The latest split, led by Henri Fiszbin in 1978, tried to pressure the party to stick to its right Euro-communist line of the 1972-77 period. But few activists followed Fiszbin and he has become an ally of the Socialist Party, funneling the votes and energies of ex-Communists towards the SP.

Two twists and turns later, a much larger opposition has arisen on the basis of a different platform and different experiences. This current includes people who opposed the "left" divisive sectarian turns as well as the right opportunist turns. They are a heterogeneous bunch who first united in summer 1986, following the dire electoral defeat of the CP, around a single demand: the summoning of an extraordinary congress to discuss the reasons for the party's decline. Their desire for free discussions, for a serious study of French society, and for giving a voice to rank-and-file experience has remained a hallmark of the new opposition.

This initial regroupment around internal party democracy was given a decisive leftward bent by the strikes and movements of fall '86 and winter '87. The lessons of these movements in terms of unity and rank-and-file control were integrated into the first platform written by the Renovator current: "Revolution, Comrades!" in spring 1987.

Sensing the danger of a leftward-moving opposition, the CP leadership decided to clamp down. Throughout 1987, party and CGT institutions were "normalized." Finally, at the 26th congress in December '87, the Marchais leadership was able to get its line and candidate for president, Andre Lajoinie, approved with less than two percent against.

Relatively large groups of Renovators, including whole structures of the party, were driven out in the industrial North (Nord) and Lorraine (Meurthe-et-Moselle), Brittany (Finistere), and the Mediterranean coast (Herault, Bouches-Rhone). Elsewhere, particularly in the Paris area, the Renovators are mainly individuals: ex-party and trade

union functionaries, teachers, municipal councilors. All assembled at a national gathering in January 1988 in Lyons, and elected a steering committee, appointed a full-time organizer, Claude Llabres, from Toulouse, and designated the monthly of the Nord group, *Tabou*, as their paper.

The Renovators claim connections with several oppositional currents still in the CGT and party. In the CGT, there is a discussion between those who wish the CGT to maintain a safe distance from divisive sectarian CP campaigns, and those who want the union to follow the party in almost all its undertakings. In the CP, the former minister, Marcel Rigout, has built up an oppositional base in the Haute-Vienne (Limoges), and Claude Poperen, the organizer of the Renault autoworkers cells, is considered to be waiting for a good opportunity to lead a new opposition.

Both the Renovators and dissidents inside the party include a variety of trends. The same individual is often motivated by contradictory aspirations. Some elected officials, notably city councilors and mayors, feel an alliance with the SP is necessary to get reelected. Others simply want to be able to wage effective united campaigns in defense of local jobs, education, and health facilities, as in the small Lorraine steel towns. Some unionists want a more democratic and united trade union movement and were inspired by the strike committees and coordinations of winter '86-'87, but the same people may uphold the CP's economic strategy of protectionism (Producing French) and "new management criteria." Some believe the Communist ministers in the 1981-84 government were well intentioned but could do little good without the pressure of an active mobilized grass-roots network of associations and unions. Others believe no progress can be made through the government without a pledge to break with the logic of profit and the institutions of bourgeois power.

The Renovators reject the organizational model of the French CP. Some even identify it with democratic centralism and vanguard parties. Proposals for a new formation range from a loose federation of sporadic, issue-oriented committees, to a democratic party of workers, through something more like the German Green Party. All these strategic and organizational questions are being discussed with great fervor.

Juquin for President

In the meantime, the Renovators have had to take public initiatives. Their main effort which will decide the future of this movement is the decision to run Pierre Juquin for president. Juquin was in the leadership of the CP for over twenty years. His assignment was relations with scientists, cultural workers, teachers, students, and intellectuals. He was a member of the Political Bureau and Georges Marchais's private secretary until the CP left the government. In the 1970s and early '80s he reputedly leaned toward the "Italian Communist model." His recent break with the CP

leadership has been documented in a book, *Autocritiques*, and a series of articles.

The most positive aspects of Juquin's new thinking are a rejection of social democracy and Stalinism, and a desire to continue the tradition of French communism defined as the militant wing of the Left, hence his endorsement of a series of radical demands and forms of action. However, in the context of a stated desire to rediscuss and rediscover everything, he retains the approach to the "revolutionary transition" developed by left Eurocommunist currents in the 1970s as a series of structural reforms imposed under mass pressure, but with no particular qualitative crisis involving the forceful breakup of the bourgeois state. Moreover, the pressures of presidential election-style politics lead him to try and stand above the organizations supporting him and couch his proposals in a language of "realism."

The radical demands of the Renovators have been reaffirmed in Juquin's new book, *Fraternellement Libre*, which is to serve as a campaign statement. They include positions to the left of the CP on a series of important issues: Independence for Kanaky and solidarity with the FLNKS (the Kanak liberation organization), the scuttling of French nuclear weapons, immigrants' right to vote in all elections, fifty-percent representation for women in all elected assemblies, and cutting the legal workweek to 35 hours with no loss in pay. In addition, Juquin and his supporters generally uphold certain CP and CGT themes that place his campaign to the left of the SP: Raising the minimum wage to 6,000 francs per month, defending the social security system at the expense of employers. Finally, it argues that unrelenting united mass struggle is needed to avoid new disappointments should the Left win the election.

Juquin's presidential campaign has been endorsed by the Renovators, the LCR, the PSU (Parti Socialiste Unifié), and the FGA (Federation de la Gauche Alternative). It is run by a group of staff and experts personally selected by Juquin. As of this writing, about 550 support committees have been set up with about 20,000 people committed to some level of involvement. In addition to the organizations listed above, these include many unaffiliated trade union activists from the CFDT, CGT, and FEN, antiracist advocates, feminists, and ecologists. Perhaps most hopeful is the emergence of about 60 youth committees for Juquin, with about 3,000 supporters, most of whom are people whose first political experience were the demonstrations of fall '86 and fall '87.

Running an election campaign that speaks to the needs of millions of people while getting organized groups and unaffiliated activists to work together, and beginning to grapple with the strategic questions posed by the Renovators, has been a challenge for those involved in the campaign. The LCR is helping to set up Juquin campaign committees and participating in them with proposals for issues and activities that can unite the committees and turn them outwards towards the communities and workplaces where they are based. It is also presenting its platform independently through its public meetings and posters. Finally, it is developing relations with the Renovators and contributing to the discussion about what sort of organization and program can help advance the class struggle in France. If Juquin is able to reach broad layers with his radical message and many viable committees are established during the campaign, the face of the French left may be substantially changed for some time to come. ■

February 2, 1988



Last February 13th to the 15th, delegates from across the country met at the fourth national conference of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency in Cleveland, Ohio. In addition to this political resolution, the conference approved reports covering international, trade union, anti-intervention, and women's liberation work, as well as a tasks and perspectives report. In subsequent issues of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism we will be publishing additional texts from the conference.

THE THREEFOLD CRISIS FACING U.S. WORKING PEOPLE

Political Resolution Approved by the February 1988 F.I.T. National Conference

There is a threefold crisis facing working people in the United States today: 1) We confront a deepening crisis of the capitalist system in this country, which is part of the crisis of the imperialist system throughout the world. 2) The heavy weight of reformism has up to now kept the unions, the Black liberation struggle and other allies of the working class from generating an alternative leadership, one that can organize on the elementary basis of militancy, class solidarity, and independence from the capitalist government. 3) The perspective for building a revolutionary party in this country has been dramatically set back by the degeneration of the leadership of the Socialist Workers

Party, and the ability of that leadership to persuade the majority of the organization to go along with them in their efforts to undermine the party's historic revolutionary Marxist program.

Each of these three crises has its own particular dynamics and features. Yet they are at the same time interconnected aspects of a single reality. And it is no exaggeration to say that the future of the entire world hinges on whether the U.S. working class finds a way to qualitatively change that reality, on the road to the third North American revolution—the overthrow of the power of North American capitalism.

I. The Crisis of Capitalism

The current situation faced by the U.S. capitalist system is the culmination of forces which have been building up for the last two decades. At the start of the 1970s, the U.S. imperialist government, then headed by Richard Nixon, found that the immediate post-World War II period of unchallenged U.S. economic dominance was coming to an end. More and more the U.S. lead in productivity and technology was being challenged—in particular by West German and Japanese industry. U.S. corporations faced competition for markets they had previously taken for granted.

The result of this increased competition on a global scale was the development of a chronic crisis of capitalist overproduction—the production of more goods than can be sold for a profit, not more than can be used by society. Tied to this was an accentuation of the ongoing problem of where and how to find profitable investments. This led to a series of recessions beginning in the 1970s, with steps taken by the U.S. ruling class to try to maintain its profits.

The Attack on the Working Class

The first, and most obvious of these steps was the launching of a series of attacks on the standard of living of working people. This began in the United States with Nixon's "wage-price freeze" in 1971. All through the 1970s the U.S. ruling class looked for means of undermining gains won by the unions during the 1950s and '60s, without yet launching a head-on attack against organized labor.

Then, beginning with Ronald Reagan's brutal smashing of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) during its 1981 strike, a new phase was opened. In selected cases, where the possibility existed for success, major corporations began to take steps to deunionize their industries. In addition to direct attacks, like destroying PATCO, other methods were used for this: bankruptcies to void union contracts, closing of union plants and opening new ones on a nonunion basis, out-sourcing of previously unionized work to non-union subcontractors, etc. This attack by the employers has been successful in reducing the absolute numbers and relative weight of the organized working class in the U.S.

The direct attack on the U.S. union movement was prepared by the concessions bargaining policy of the union bureaucracy. The unions moved onto the defensive, retreating and giving back previous gains. In the face of the capitalist crisis, with no working class program to resolve it being developed by any significant section of the labor movement, concessions seemed to most union members like the only alternative that would keep them from joining the ranks of the unorganized or the unemployed.

Structural changes taking place in the economy during this period contributed to a weakening of the unions and the condition of the working class as a whole. During the 1970s and 1980s dramatic gains were made in the productivity of labor in basic, goods-producing industry. Fewer workers were necessary to produce the products which could be

profitably sold by the bourgeoisie. This put an even greater pressure on precisely that sector of the U.S. working class which had been the backbone of the organized labor movement since the 1930s (steel, auto, etc.). The kinds of labor which it represented—semiskilled, industrial production workers—were less in demand. This enabled the capitalists to drive down wages as a surplus of available labor power created sharp competition.

New workers have found fewer jobs available in the old, relatively highly paid and well-organized industrial sector. Both this layer and the layer pushed out of industrial employment by the restructuring of industry have been forced into lower-paying employment in the service sector industries, maintaining the pressure to keep wages down in these areas. Though the process of transforming industrial production in this country has created a certain layer of new jobs which offer good earnings opportunities, these are reserved for the relative few who manage to obtain skills in engineering or technical fields. On the whole, the real wages of the majority of workers have declined substantially during this period.

Social Decisions vs. Objective Realities

Many commentators have treated shrinking industrial employment, declining real wages, etc., as if they are an inevitable outcome of the restructuring going on in the U.S. economy. This is incorrect. The only objective realities are the economic crisis itself and the increased productivity of industrial labor. All the rest are *social* consequences resulting from decisions made by the minority of society that owns and controls its productive machinery.

There is absolutely no material reason, for example, why the same proportion of industrial workers cannot be employed today as twenty years ago, with an overall reduction in hours but no cut in pay. They would still be able to produce more goods, that is, more real usable values for society as a whole. Nor is there any law of economics which requires that workers in educational institutions, or hospitals, or other areas of "service" employment must receive lower wages than those in industrial jobs. The results of the crisis and the restructuring take the form that they do simply, and solely, because the primary power to make decisions about employment patterns and wages in specific industries remains in the hands of the bosses. So long as the workers fail to challenge that power, the decisions of the owners of capital and their government take on the appearance of objective laws. But that is only an appearance.

The process of shifting wealth from the workers to the bosses to help maintain the profit level of the capitalists in the face of their economic crisis has taken other forms as well. The capitalists have used their government to restructure the tax system increasingly in their favor. New tax legislation was enacted shortly after Reagan took office, designed to give massive breaks to big corporations. Most recently, the "Tax Reform Act" of 1986 completely revised the income tax code,

dramatically decreasing the share of taxes which will be paid by the corporations and the wealthy.

Similar developments to those in the United States have been taking place—to a greater or lesser degree—in all of the major imperialist countries. The crisis is an international crisis, and the solutions which are being sought by the bourgeoisie are international solutions—despite the fact that every national imperialist ruling class must look out for its own interests above all, and will frequently act to advance those interests even when they conflict with the overall objective of maintaining the imperialist system as a viable international entity. This is one of the insoluble contradictions faced by the bourgeoisie stemming from the fundamentally national character of the capitalist economic system.

Imperialism and the Third World

The attack on the working classes in the imperialist centers is not the only way through which the capitalists have tried to maintain their profits despite the difficulty of finding markets and investment opportunities in a period of severe overproduction. The fantastic growth of third world debt is another. This serves a two-fold function. First, money capital which would otherwise have had a problem finding profitable use is loaned, at rates of interest acceptable to the imperialists, to third world countries. Second, these countries are expected to use the money to buy industrial products from the imperialists.

At the same time that this burden of debt has been imposed, the economies of these countries have been further undermined by the erosion of the prices paid for their basic exports: agricultural products and raw materials. It therefore became qualitatively more difficult for most of them to earn the foreign exchange necessary to repay the loans which have been incurred.

(There are a few exceptions such as South Korea, where the loans taken from the imperialists were used to create industries—electronics, automobiles, shipbuilding. These have been able to compete on favorable terms because of the extremely low wages of their workers. But in Korea there has now been a sharp upturn in workers' struggles.)

Despite the extreme imbalance of wealth today between the industrial countries and those which are less developed, the imperialists do not hesitate to impose conditions on the dependent countries which further exacerbate the economic imbalance—to the point of a severe economic and political destabilization for imperialism's junior partners.

Other Means of Postponing the Crisis

An additional approach which was taken to try to avoid the effects of the international economic crisis—in particular the problem of what to do with surplus capital—was an extensive boom in investment in nonproductive areas: real estate, purely speculative monetary ventures, etc. These types of investments, however, produce no new values which increase the wealth available to society.

Because of this, these sorts of monetary activities only postpone for a short time the problems inherent in the crisis of overproduction. They can never resolve things in any fundamental way. The same can be said about the massive explosion of consumer and corporate debt in the U.S., which, like the third world debt, generates a demand for industrial goods and services which temporarily hides the fact that the bourgeois system is producing more than it can sell.

The "Reagan recovery" has been simply and purely a recovery of capitalist profits, not a recovery that resolved anything fundamental about the U.S. economy. It is a recovery which has taken place at the expense of the workers and of the poorer nations. While it has been successful in postponing the ultimate crisis for a period of

time, the usual result of such a postponement is that the next wave of the crisis (perhaps heralded by the stock market crash of October 19, 1987) will be even deeper and far more destructive in its effects.

The economic situation is only one aspect, though by far the most important, of the crisis of the capitalist system today. Alongside and in connection with it is a profound crisis of government credibility and social confidence. This manifests itself clearly through the growing opposition to imperialist foreign policy and through protest movements which arise on a broad range of issues. And it is felt less tangibly, though no less vitally, in the form of increased alienation felt by broad layers among the oppressed nationalities, youth, the elderly, etc.

II. The Crisis of the Mass Organizations

In the face of these problems inherent in the bourgeois economic and political system, there is no significant tendency within the organized workers' movement of this country which has systematically posed a proletarian solution. But ferment has begun, raising the most *elementary* questions of the class struggle: trade union militancy, democracy, national and international working class solidarity, and political independence from the bourgeoisie.

Isolated, partial efforts at a fightback against the ruling class offensive are being seen. Most notable was that by the workers at the George A. Hormel meatpacking plant in Austin, Minnesota. The Hormel fight began to generalize its lessons and reach out effectively to other unionists around the country when the struggle in Austin itself faced a severe crisis—as a result of intervention by the national guard. But the Austin workers faced a severe attack by the bosses and in the end were sabotaged by the leaders of their own international union. This illustrates one of the basic problems for militant workers today: how to overcome the weight of a conservative bureaucracy on their struggles. Despite the defeat in Austin, many other workers appreciated the valuable example set by the Hormel experience—in terms of rank-and-file activity, democratic functioning, and a local leadership which relied on and respected the wishes of the membership.

There are other recent fightback experiences, some of which have led to victories, or partial gains, for the workers involved. Examples include the Oregon State Employees strike and that of the Watsonville Cannery workers. But we have yet to experience in the 1980s victories, such as occurred in the '30s in Minneapolis, Toledo, and San Francisco, which can spark a major working class upsurge and a renewal of the labor movement. Such breakthroughs for the labor movement are unquestionably brewing, however, in the rising discontent being expressed in hundreds of local unions throughout the country.

The Bureaucracy's Solutions

There is, of course, no lack of false solutions proposed by the present crop of reactionary

trade union leaders. Unable to break free from a narrow identification of their own interests with those of the ruling class which they serve, this parasitic layer projects a series of ineffective, parochial, and narrow national-chauvinist responses to the crisis. Their outlook can be summed up with the words "concessions" and "protectionism." Yet neither concessions nor protectionism offers even a short-term solution *for the bureaucracy*, let alone for the union ranks.

The basic assumption behind the original concessionary agreements made by a number of major trade unions was that the givebacks were only temporary, to help tide the employers over hard times. When prosperity returned the workers were supposed to get their fair share. But despite the well-documented and highly touted *recovery of profits* over the last five or six years, not a single union that granted "temporary" concessions has been able to win back those wages and benefits which were given away. Corporations now demand concessions without even pleading poverty, when they show record profits—claiming that this is necessary in order for them to outstrip their competitors both here and abroad. There is no limit to the greed of the bourgeoisie, no profit margin that they consider high enough.

The effect of the concessionary movement has been purely and simply to weaken the unions. As the wages and conditions of union workers sink closer to those of nonunion—with whom the bosses insist they must compete—workers see less reason to have a union. The process of negotiating concessions has further undermined union consciousness, which began to deteriorate in the 1950s as the labor movement became more openly class collaborationist and corrupt. This process affects not only older, more established unions, but also the ability to organize the unorganized, contributing to the overall decline of the organized labor movement in the U.S. today.

Although the union bureaucracy has caved in to the bosses' demands for concessions, the ruling class has not gone along with the labor officialdom's desire for protectionist legislation. This idea strikes a favorable chord among some more

shortsighted ruling class elements, but it does not enjoy majority support and is unlikely to be implemented in the immediate future. The trade union bureaucrats remember little in the way of history—either of the union movement or of the dynamic of previous economic crises. But the majority of the ruling class appreciates the disastrous effect which protectionist legislation played in accentuating the economic calamity of the 1930s. They are not looking for a repeat performance.

"U.S. jobs" cannot be protected by excluding products from other countries. The inevitable result of erecting increased U.S. tariff barriers sufficient to have any substantial effect is reciprocal action by other governments. Far more U.S. jobs will be lost through the shrinking of international markets than could possibly be gained in the U.S. market alone.

But the problem with the slogan of "keeping U.S. jobs" runs deeper than that. It fosters a divisive, narrow, chauvinistic nationalism at a time when internationalist workers' solidarity is a necessity—because the corporations are international, imperialism is international, and the problems are international.

Is it really in the interests of U.S. workers to fight for "our jobs" by putting workers in Japan, Italy, France, Germany, Mexico, Korea, or Brazil out of work? Can that truly advance our struggle? The bureaucrats cannot supply any other answer, and extend the logic of this so that workers in New Jersey are urged to keep "their" jobs at the expense of those in California, etc., etc. All of this serves to undermine labor solidarity, weaken the working class, and strengthen the bosses. Whether on a national or international level, that sort of "solution" is a disaster.

There is an important discussion taking place within the U.S. labor movement on the need for international solidarity rather than competition with workers in other countries. The debate over U.S. Central America policy in the AFL-CIO is a prime example of this. The development of a significant wing of the official trade union leadership which tends to identify with the struggles of working people in Central America, rather than with the efforts of the U.S. ruling class and its allies to suppress those struggles, is an important step forward—even if this current remains hesitant and uneven in its consciousness. Likewise, the positions taken by many unions regarding South Africa and apartheid offer an important opportunity for discussion and education.

New explosions around the world—such as the current struggle of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip—will continue to alert U.S. labor to oppression abroad. Here, too, there will be openings to bring up issues of working class solidarity and the links between U.S. foreign policy and repressive governments in other countries.

Divisions Within the Labor Bureaucracy

The trade union bureaucracy is not homogeneous. There are three broad groupings that can be

detected. First, there are the "mainstream" business unionists who haven't changed much from the days of Samuel Gompers, the pioneer of this current. These bureaucrats consciously base themselves on a layer of the more privileged, and socially backward, sections of the unions. They are avowedly class collaborationist and seek to get some crumbs to maintain their base. AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland is the foremost leader of this current.

Secondly, there are the social democrats, who themselves are divided into left and right wings. The right wing is very right indeed, sometimes supporting Reagan, always supporting the CIA and State Department, and opposing affirmative action, comparable worth, and other progressive trends. Albert Shanker, head of the American Federation of Teachers, is the outstanding example of this "state department socialist" current.

The left wing of the social democracy is more interested in trying to influence and co-opt the more militant components of the labor movement—Blacks, women, and younger workers. They affect a more militant verbiage and sometimes involve themselves in social movements—civil rights, the ERA, opposition to intervention in Central America, anti-apartheid, etc. William Winpisinger, president of the International Association of Machinists, is a leading example of the "left" social democracy within the labor bureaucracy.

Third, there are the Stalinists of the Communist Party. Though the CP is far from being the mighty force that it once was, the Stalinists retain some influence within the packinghouse section of the United Food and Commercial Workers, the textile division of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers, electrical workers, and various local unions.

All of these currents represent alien forces inside the labor movement. None can be trusted. All are capable of selling out to the employers and the government. However, their interests and goals are not identical and conflicts among them can sometimes open cracks that can be exploited by militant workers. The mobilization of tens of thousands of trade unionists around opposition to intervention in Central America and South African apartheid on April 25, 1987, is a good example of what can be accomplished given the proper conditions.

Class-Struggle Left Wing Needed

The solution to the crisis faced by the U.S. labor movement requires the formation of a conscious, militant, class-struggle left wing in the unions. This may occur with a change of leadership and policy or a caucus in an existing union, the formation of a new union, or in some other way.

But whatever the initial form of this development, it is certain to emerge from *action* taken to advance working people's interests, and will need to consciously pose a *programmatic alternative* to the bureaucracy. This, and this alone, will enable it to build a significant opposition current and influence sufficient forces to successfully change the present class-collaborationist direction of the

organized labor movement. The basic outlines of this programmatic alternative are clear, and have already been suggested:

1) A fight for immediate gains to compensate for years of cutbacks and takebacks. Demands in this area include substantial wage increases, job security enforced through reductions of the work-week with no loss of pay to spread the available work among all those who want a job, safe working conditions, affirmative action for women and oppressed nationalities, equal pay for work of comparable value, opening the books of the corporations so that the unions can monitor the degree of exploitation of the workers.

2) Working class political independence. This idea will have to be inscribed at the top of the programmatic banner of any emergent opposition which wants to change the labor movement in a fundamental way. It is this question primarily which will distinguish a genuine class-struggle current from all others. That's because it represents such a profound break with the way the U.S. union movement has done business in the past. We must have a government run by working people, in the interests of working people. One run by the Democrats and Republicans—i.e., the servants of the capitalist class—can only represent the capitalist class.

3) Trade union democracy and rank-and-file control of the unions. The importance of this was underlined dramatically by the struggle of the Hormel workers. Although their fight was not successful, it would have been defeated far more decisively and far sooner had it not been for the emergence of a leadership under Jim Guyette which respected the wishes and relied upon the activity of the rank and file. Over the years the idea has emerged that the bureaucrats are the unions. The bureaucrats themselves, along with the bosses, promote this notion, both through what they say and how they act. And many workers—both union and nonunion—have absorbed it and believe it. But if the union movement is to begin to reflect the true interests and desires of the workers, if it is to begin to mobilize the rank and file in battle, then the ranks must believe that the union belongs to them—in the most profound sense of this idea—and the actions of their leaders must reflect that reality.

4) Basic labor solidarity—"an injury to one is an injury to all." Though often stated by the present union officialdom, this elementary notion is honored more in the breach than in practice. It must be relearned and reapplied. Picket lines must once again become a thing not to be crossed. All forms of solidarity and support—from material aid, to protest rallies, to sympathy strikes—must be mobilized for workers in struggle against the bosses. And this idea must extend not just to *workers* in struggle, but to *all* those who fight our common enemy: the capitalists and their government. This

includes Blacks and other oppressed nationalities, women, youth, working farmers, gays, the elderly and disabled, environmental activists, etc.

The working class is potentially the most powerful social force within any developed capitalist country. Yet even this force cannot take on the bourgeoisie by itself and expect to be victorious. The program advanced by workers' organizations must address the needs and problems of the whole of society. By doing so, and showing that they are willing to throw their weight into the fight against all of these social evils, the workers can help strengthen other struggles against the rulers. This will weaken their own opponent and also win the support of broad social layers for their fight.

5) Development of an independent political and social agenda for labor. This stems from the question of solidarity with labor's allies in this country and around the world, as well as the necessity for independent political action. The social agenda for labor advocated by a class-struggle left wing today must include such items as: the elimination of the military budget and the withdrawal of all U.S. installations and troops from other countries; decisive government action to end right-wing terror against Blacks and women; free quality medical care for *all*; expanded and improved public services such as education and urban transportation; a massive public-works program to build housing, hospitals, schools, roads, etc.; environmental legislation; and similar items. In this way a clear alternative can be presented that has the potential to rally broad support.

6) Internationalism, the question of basic solidarity with the struggles of other workers—from South Africa, El Salvador, and the Middle East, to Italy, Spain, and Canada, to Poland and the USSR. The problems of the U.S. labor movement will be solved as one part of the solution to the problems of workers throughout the world, or they won't be solved at all.

7) Self-reliance and proletarian methods of struggle. Only the workers themselves, organized to make full use of their massive numbers and social weight, can solve their problems. No wing of the ruling class is our ally. Strikes and other forms of mass action, which demonstrate the power of the workers' movement in life, are the most effective. No confidence should be placed in the capitalist-controlled government or the courts. A decisive end must be put to reliance on so-called impartial arbitration as a means to resolve disputes, and likewise to the phony representation schemes by which union officials are appointed to sit on management or government boards.

8) A campaign to organize the unorganized. The implementation of even some of the above points will qualitatively change the present perception of the organized labor movement among U.S. workers—a perception which is an extreme handicap in efforts

to organize the unorganized. A campaign to bring new forces into the union movement through class-struggle methods is absolutely vital. The new militancy and solidarity which that effort will inevitably generate is essential to renewing the union movement as a whole, and advancing the entire program outlined above.

Over the last few years caucus formations, opposition currents, rank-and-file newsletters, etc., have begun to take shape in many unions—both on a national and local level. The successful national conference organized by *Labor Notes* in the fall of 1986 showed that there is a great deal of ferment and dissatisfaction with present union policy. Yet as long as that dissatisfaction fails to address the essential programmatic questions facing working people, its effectiveness in creating an opposition will be extremely limited. A positive example in this regard was set by the Rank and File Packinghouse Workers Conference held in Austin, Minnesota, in May 1987, which adopted the Packinghouse Workers Bill of Rights.

Black and Chicano Struggles

Although a concentration on the crisis of the trade union movement is essential for revolutionary Marxists in the U.S. today, it would be a serious mistake to ignore other essential social issues and problems, which exist independently of the workers' movement *per se*, though they are strongly intertwined and interrelated with it. In the late 1960s and early '70s there was a strong rise of the student movement, the Black and Chicano liberation struggles, women's liberation activity, etc. Beginning in the middle of the 1970s the general crisis of working class leadership, whose manifestation in the organized labor movement we have been discussing, has also taken its toll in these areas.

Consciousness concerning the fact, and to a large degree even the causes, of the national oppression which they suffer remains high within the Black community. At the same time, the inability to find any viable organizational expression for this consciousness has led to a severe contradiction and frustration on the part of a layer of activists. Some have tended to draw ultraleft conclusions, while others have turned to reformist answers in response to the same phenomenon.

This problem is, to a large degree, created by the historical development of Black leadership in this country. Of particular significance was the assassination of two of the most influential leaders: Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. Each of these individuals demonstrated, in his own way, an uncompromising commitment to the struggle against Black oppression, an understanding that the road to liberation could come only through the mobilization of the masses of Black people themselves, an ability to translate that understanding into a language that the average person could appreciate, and a willingness to apply it in action.

Yet King and Malcolm represented different poles within the Black community. King's political

goal was the *integration* of Blacks into the already-existing structure of white-dominated, class-stratified, capitalist society; and he was morally committed to nonviolence. Malcolm, on the other hand, was an uncompromising revolutionary who viewed the complete overthrow of the racist capitalist system as the only viable answer. He also believed in the necessity for Blacks to defend themselves against racist violence. King's views, as they stood at the time of his death, were entirely incompatible with a proletarian revolutionary perspective for the U.S.A., while Malcolm was rapidly moving in the direction of drawing revolutionary socialist conclusions, to complement his revolutionary nationalism, when he was gunned down.

With the deaths of these two giants in the 1960s (undoubtedly with the collusion of federal officials if not their active participation), there was no one with similar qualities who stepped in to fill the void, and no collective leadership which was able to provide an adequate substitute. The success of the government in destroying organizations such as the Black Panthers, through frame-ups and infiltration in the late '60s and early '70s, contributed further to the present leadership void. Though the possibility of a significant step forward was posed in the early '80s with the formation of the National Black Independent Political Party, this group proved unable to go beyond abstract programmatic discussions, and did not connect with any real mass struggles. As a result it has now disappeared.

The previous generation of leaders, those who came out of the civil rights struggles of the '50s and '60s, have tended to move in a conservative direction, immersing themselves in Democratic Party politics or other reformist projects. The growth of a larger living space for the Black petty bourgeoisie—and even an aspiring layer of bourgeois entrepreneurs—creates a relatively stable social base for this layer.

As a result of its own leadership crisis, and also reflecting the effects of the overall ruling class attack on working people, the Black liberation movement has suffered a major decline over the past two decades. Even so, sporadic defensive struggles have taken place, and over the last period the pace of this activity has accelerated—in response to incidents like the one in Howard Beach, Queens, or the attack on Tawana Brawley. As with the signs of discontent in the labor movement, the reaction within the Black community to these events may well be the precursor of a new upsurge among Black people in this country.

Other movements of oppressed nationalities—Chicanos and Puerto Ricans—have suffered a similar decline throughout the 1970s and '80s. The Chicano movement, in particular, achieved important organizational steps in the late '60s and early '70s with the formation of the Raza Unida Party and with the Chicano Moratorium movement in response to the Vietnam war. But in the absence of a parallel development of consciousness on the part of others—the organized workers' movement in particular—

which might have reinforced such vanguard efforts, the extent to which independent political forms of the Chicano movement could succeed proved to be severely limited.

Combined Character of the American Revolution

This points up the interrelated dynamic of the U.S. political scene, which flows from the combined character of the coming, third, American revolution. That revolution must be *both* a proletarian revolution for the establishment of socialism *and* a national revolution, which can guarantee the right to self-determination of Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, American Indians/Native Americans, and other nationalities oppressed by U.S. capitalism.

The term "combined character" refers to the struggle for power against the bourgeoisie as well as the tasks of the new revolutionary government after that power is conquered. The proletariat's battle for socialism is complementary to, but not the same as, the struggles of the oppressed nationalities for their liberation. The enemy of all of these social forces is the same, and none of them can be successful unless all are victorious. That's why the workers' movement must see the oppressed nationalities as equal partners; their struggles are not subordinate in any way to the fight for a proletarian revolution. Workers' organizations must fully support the demands raised by the movements of these allies, recognizing their legitimate autonomy. It is only with an attitude of mutual respect and support that the necessary unity can be forged.

Obstacles to this mutual alliance include the history of racism among white workers, racist practices of many trade union organizations, and the general complicity of the top AFL-CIO bureaucracy with the capitalist government and its oppression of people of color—not only in the U.S. but throughout the world. But the alliance can and will be forged through experience, as a new working class leadership emerges from the struggle and shows *in action* that it can be sensitive to, and supportive of, the needs of the communities of the oppressed.

At the same time, this crucial alliance is facilitated by the fact that the overwhelming majority of the oppressed nationalities in this country are members of the working class. These layers will no doubt prove to be the most conscious and militant in the process of creating a new class-struggle orientation for the workers' movement as a whole, and are likely to make up more than their fair share of its leadership. This will be a significant help in breaking down the barriers to solidarity and cooperation erected by bourgeois ideology.

Through the course of the combined struggle against the U.S. bourgeoisie, this revolutionary movement of workers and oppressed nationalities will forge the kind of solidarity and needed programmatic perspectives which will allow a new revolutionary government to attack the age-old problem of racial oppression and prejudice. Here, too, the continued *combined* mobilization of the workers and the communities of the oppressed, each following the impera-

tives of its own separate but interrelated demands, can assure the success of the joint revolutionary project to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned.

The Women's Movement

The women's liberation movement in the U.S. over the last two decades has followed a pattern similar to that of the movements of workers and the oppressed nationalities, though the specific forms and manifestations have been different. After a dramatic rise of feminist consciousness in the early '70s, and a signal victory on the right to abortion in the Supreme Court's "Roe vs. Wade" decision, the movement began to mark time. On the key test—the fight for the Equal Rights Amendment—it mobilized its forces in a way that was ineffective for counteracting the increasingly conservative trend of ruling class policy.

The same period saw a concerted right-wing attack on abortion rights, with only a sporadic and relatively weak response. Whenever an opportunity for mobilization was provided, as the National Organization for Women did with its "March for Women's Lives" on March 9 and March 16, 1986, in Washington D.C. and Los Angeles, the response was impressive. Over 155,000 people participated in those actions. Similar outpourings occurred on the few occasions that national actions were called around the ERA. But the overall strategy of NOW—which is the largest and most authoritative women's group in the country—has been one of relying on lobbying, and electing liberal Democratic "friends of women." This has been a disaster, and has made it far easier for the ruling class to scuttle the national ERA and proceed with its attacks on abortion and women's rights in general.

The dominance of NOW and its liberal-democratic oriented leadership within the women's movement reflects the rise in both number and status of professional women—lawyers, business executives, politicians, etc.—during the 1970s. This rise stemmed from social and economic realities, as well as from the pressures generated by the women's movement itself. A similar proportional rise in the numbers of women in proletarian occupations has, unfortunately, not resulted in a similar increase in their political weight within the organized women's movement. The Coalition of Labor Union Women, which might have represented their interests, became the victim of the general bureaucratic organization of the unions and has primarily played the role of spokesperson for the union officialdom.

The task among women is fundamentally the same as that within the communities of the oppressed. A leadership must be forged which recognizes that the fundamental interests of women *cannot* be served by the capitalist government of the United States, a leadership which relies upon the mobilization of masses in the streets to win women's demands for equality and the right to control their own bodies, and which strives to forge a strong alliance with working people, the communities of the oppressed, etc.

Related, ideologically and historically, to the development of the women's movement is the

fight for gay liberation. The problem of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), which strikes inordinately at male homosexuals, has placed a spotlight on the broad homophobia of capitalist America, and provided the excuse for a stepped-up reactionary campaign against the gay community. On October 11, 1987, more than half a million people, predominantly lesbian and gay, marched in Washington to protest against this treatment, and to demand full human rights. This march stands as a fresh example for the women's movement, and for every other social struggle, of the impact that can be achieved when masses of people are mobilized in their own interests and under their own banner; when they don't mortgage themselves to the political aspirations of ruling-class politicians. It is an example which can and should be emulated.

Other Social and Political Struggles

Other struggles which deserve the attention, support, and participation of the revolutionary Marxist movement—taking a wide variety of forms—are constantly being posed by capitalism in its decline.

Foremost among these in the U.S. today is the struggle against U.S. intervention and for the right of self-determination for all nations oppressed by imperialism. Primary in this regard is the fight against the U.S. counterrevolutionary war in Central America. The revolutionary Marxist current within the broader anti-intervention movement has a responsibility today—in particular because of the confusion generated by the Arias peace plan—to present a clear, principled orientation: No Aid to the Contras! No Aid to Duarte! U.S. Hands Off Central America! Once again, the perspective of street actions, aimed to mobilize the largest numbers around these demands, is key.

Unfortunately, the Central America movement has been dominated by those with a different orientation, one which sees material aid, individual witness actions, and lobbying liberal politicians as its central pillars. The few times that mass demonstrations have been called the response has been overwhelmingly favorable. Most often, however, despite the obvious objective need for continuing actions of this type and a great deal of rank-and-file sentiment in favor of them, those who have had organizational control have succeeded in stifling efforts to bring them about.

The only way that this will be changed is for large numbers of activists to become involved in the ongoing organizational work of the movement. Then they will be able to promote an alternative leadership. Without this, the domination of decision making in the movement by the "peace bureaucrats" will continue. An alternative model is not hard to demonstrate from the anti-Vietnam war era, when thousands of students and other activists would join in conferences and meetings to decide on

what the movement should do next. There has been no comparable outpouring of militants anxious to involve themselves in planning and organizing actions—as opposed to simply participating in them—during the Central American struggle. If there were it could help push things in the direction of organizational democracy and regular mass action.

The Emergency National Council Against U.S. Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean has been one voice within the national movement which has *consistently* presented an alternative perspective—for democratic decision making, for mass action, for political independence. The ENC has remained small and relatively isolated due to the factors discussed above. Nevertheless, at key junctures the ENC has been able to play an important role in helping to ensure the character of particular demonstrations—even the fact that they would take place. This makes the effort to maintain such a mass-action caucus within the movement worthwhile, despite the hostility of those who oppose its program.

The work done by the ENC today, to hold together a layer of activists around a principled program and to educate those who can be reached about the importance of mass action and movement democracy, lays an important basis for the future development of a mass organization with the ability to severely limit, or even halt, U.S. intervention in Central America.

Closely connected to the movement against U.S. intervention in Central America has been the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. This has inspired hundreds of thousands of Blacks, working people, and students. Here too, when an opportunity arises, massive mobilizations have occurred, but also as with the movement against intervention in Central America such opportunities have existed only sporadically, at the whim and under the control of selected leaders—predominantly left trade union bureaucrats in this case—who call them when it suits their specific needs.

Recent events in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel—the naked repression and brutality of the Zionist armed forces—have created new openings to explain, and organize opposition to, the reactionary role of this colonial-settler state. They clearly expose the popular myth of a "progressive Israel," and have already had a profound effect on public opinion in the U.S., with leading Jewish organizations raising a voice critical of Israel for the first time.

There are still other problems about which revolutionary Marxists are deeply concerned—such as environmental questions and the antinuclear movement, struggles for civil liberties and constitutional rights, etc. These deserve active support from all working people.

III. The Crisis of the Revolutionary Vanguard

Not surprisingly, the effort to construct a revolutionary vanguard party of the U.S. working class has sketched a curve which follows closely the curve of development of the mass movements for social change. Beginning in the early '60s, as the civil rights movement and the Cuban revolution began to make their weight felt in American society, the Socialist Workers Party began to reverse its numerical decline of the cold-war/witch-hunt years. Later in the decade, as the student radicalization and the anti-Vietnam war movement became truly massive phenomena, the party began to grow dramatically and spread geographically. Its youth organization, the Young Socialist Alliance, became a major force on the campuses. All of this was made possible because of its substantially correct political analysis and participation in the events occurring at that time.

Since the degeneration of the Russian Revolution there have been three main poles within the radical movement throughout the world—social democracy, Stalinism, and revolutionary Marxism or Trotskyism. Sometimes there are splits or divisions within the context of these three main currents. On occasion, independent groupings or tendencies develop—such as the Castroist current in Latin America—which can have an important impact on the class struggle and the overall relationship of forces. But even these currents can be best understood by looking at their relationship to social democracy, Stalinism, and revolutionary Marxism—since they tend to represent hybrid forms, exhibiting aspects of political program and behavior which can always be historically identified with one or another of the three main tendencies. In the U.S.A. in particular, the radical movement has been fairly clearly demarcated among these three.

Social democracy represents the interests of the trade union bureaucracy, and seeks to reform and stabilize present social relations through collaboration with the capitalist class. The Stalinists, though often indistinguishable from social democracy in their program and tactics, are fundamentally loyal to the parasitic bureaucracy ruling in the Soviet Union (or in China, or in one of the other bureaucratized workers' states). Only the revolutionary Marxist current has no interests separate and apart from those of the working class.

The increased political weight of the SWP and YSA during the 1960s had a significant impact on the shape of radical politics in the United States. No longer was the revolutionary Marxist current a tiny and persecuted minority as compared to the Stalinists and social democrats. It was in a position to challenge for leadership on a number of levels, and enjoyed its most important success in the anti-Vietnam war movement, where the strategy it presented—massive street actions independent of the capitalist politicians, full democracy and non-exclusion in the movement, unconditional support for the right to self-determination of Vietnam in the

form of the slogan, "Out Now!"—was able to win majority support. This, in turn, played an important, perhaps decisive, role in resolving the Vietnam conflict in the interests of the Vietnamese people.

But the very success of the SWP in the anti-war movement of the sixties and seventies laid the basis for the crisis which was to consume the party a decade later. The generation of activists who had been recruited and trained during this period expected a continuation of the radicalization, sustained recruitment, and a further expansion of the party's influence. They were disoriented by the shift in the objective situation, a downturn in the level of mass activity which the party faced with the end of the Vietnam war. Failing to recognize this fundamental reality, the party leadership, which by now represented almost entirely a new generation recruited during the 1960s and headed by national secretary Jack Barnes, tried a series of schemes that, it was hoped, would somehow provide the same stimulus for party growth as the anti-Vietnam war movement. The struggle for abortion rights, school busing, a search for local struggles through a turn to "community branches" of the party, the "turn to industry," these are a few of the areas in which the party looked, hoping to find one which would blossom into the equivalent of a new antiwar movement.

Much good political work was done by party activists throughout the 1970s. Yet the hoped-for breakthrough failed to materialize. And with each disappointment, the projections for the next round became more and more out of tune with what was really possible. Even where there was some validity in objective events for the latest turn by the party—such as in the effort to gain an implantation in basic industry beginning in the late 1970s—the leadership would carry it out in such a caricatured fashion and with such exaggerated expectations that any real benefits that might have accrued were lost.

Playing a role in the failure of the SWP to understand and adjust correctly to events during this period was a decline in serious education on Marxist fundamentals. Lacking a firm theoretical underpinning—possessing only a superficial understanding in this field—the new party leaders reacted empirically and pragmatically to changing circumstances. Many, even most, of the members recruited during the 1960s and early 70s were likewise ill-equipped theoretically to recognize what was happening and call the leadership to order.

The result of all of this was a gradual demoralization and decline in the SWP's basic cadre through the middle of the 1970s. It might be argued that given the overall decrease in class-struggle activity some shrinking of the party was inevitable. That is the view presented by the SWP's present leaders themselves. But that is too superficial. The decline was not *strictly* the result of objective events. If *some* decline in the party was inevitable, the *de-*

gree of that decline and the *level* of demoralization was not. The serious errors made during this period contributed qualitatively to the damage.

Programmatic Crisis

Then, in 1979, a specific event triggered an even greater crisis for the party leadership: the Nicaraguan revolution of 1979. The SWP had badly misjudged the FSLN in its analysis before the overthrow of Somoza, stating that it was a fundamentally petty-bourgeois, popular-frontist current. When the FSLN took governmental power in its own name and proceeded to use that power in the interests of the Nicaraguan workers and peasants—against the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie—its actions came as a complete surprise. This event was paralleled by the revolution in Grenada, where the New Jewel Movement, also using methods not strictly in keeping with the preconceptions of the international Trotskyist movement, took power the same year.

The accumulated frustrations over a decade or so of failed party-building projects in the U.S. combined with these international events to deal a fatal blow to the ideological self-confidence of the SWP's leaders. It is now obvious that shortly after the Nicaraguan revolution they came to a profound conclusion: their problems stemmed from the programmatic traditions of Trotskyism, which they believed they had been applying all this time. Since *they* had done so badly, the program itself must be at fault.

This transformation of the thinking of the Barnes current marked the beginning of a major programmatic crisis in the SWP. But there was one additional decision of this leadership grouping that made the depth and consequences of that crisis qualitatively more severe than it otherwise might have been. They decided not to tell the party that they had changed their minds about basic programmatic issues. In fact, even as late as the 1981 pre-convention discussion, they stated *precisely the opposite*. Instead, they decided to launch a secret campaign to undermine the program—through articles in the press, educational activity, and speeches by party leaders—without permitting a discussion by the organization as a whole.

The results of this process are well known. After the end of the 1981 convention a series of programmatic revelations began to be made. Open revisions of history (concerning the Russian Revolution and the Trotskyist movement) were published. Deeply erroneous analyses appeared on issues such as the Iranian revolution, the Jaruzelski coup in Poland—as well as on Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada, around which a limited discussion had been possible at the 1981 convention. At the same time, a qualitative sharpening of abstentionist errors in domestic policy took place.

Party members who began to question and object to these things were slandered and harassed. Soon trumped-up organizational charges were made and many were expelled. Others became exasperated or demoralized to the point where they simply resigned. Because the new programmatic revelations

were made piecemeal, and because at every step the party leaders rejected the opening of a formal political discussion about their new ideas, individuals began to realize what was happening at an uneven pace. Opposition emerged sporadically in different branches, but did not congeal into a coherent force that might have been able to convince and influence a significant layer of the party as a whole. The leadership used its monopoly of informational sources to slander oppositionists, and no opportunity existed for the individuals who were the victims of the slander campaign to respond. Finally, in January of 1984, a mass purge of oppositionists took place.

For the first time in the history of the SWP bureaucratic methods had triumphed over political ones. For the first time an opposition was expelled *before* a political discussion. This fact alone stands as the most severe indictment of the party leadership's methods.

Three Opposition Currents

The opposition to the Barnes faction within the SWP was not unified ideologically. There were a series of differences over such questions as the relative weight of practical vs. theoretical issues, the role of the majority leadership of the Fourth International, the best methods of trying to influence other party members, etc. After the mass expulsions, three tendencies which had generally taken shape within the SWP were unable to form a unified organization. Today they exist as the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, Socialist Action, and the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity. Of course, each of these currents has gone through a series of experiences, lost some of its previous adherents, recruited new people, etc., but the roots of their existence as separate currents can be traced back to ideological differences (sometimes subtle and not clearly defined) which existed inside the SWP.

It is for this reason that the best way to appreciate the present organizational reality of the Fourth Internationalist movement in the United States is as four specific tendencies—the three oppositionist groups plus the SWP itself—which would all be part of a single Leninist party had it not been for the bureaucratic expulsions. That means that the existence of these four groups cannot be conceived as a permanent state of affairs, but as a transitional one. The normal Leninist practice would be to have a common discussion of the problems facing our movement in the United States, voting on a line to be carried out, and then testing that line in practice. Instead we have four lines being tested in practice at one and the same time. The proper perspective is for this to lead to a drawing of common lessons and a reunification of at least some elements from each of the four groups at some future stage.

The reforging of unity among those Fourth Internationalists who can be brought back together, either to rebuild the SWP if that is possible or to build a new party if that is necessary, must be the

primary objective of revolutionary Marxists in the U.S. today. This is primarily a *political* question, not an organizational one. The reason for the fracturing of our movement was the refusal of the SWP leadership to allow a programmatic discussion, in violation of all norms of Leninist functioning. The discussion with members of the party is still blocked by the bureaucratic attitude of the party leaders, who fear that debate more than anything else. The differences within the opposition have taken an organizational form, but there are important political issues which underlie that organizational separation. All of this means that a process of discussion and further experience will be essential before a reunification of our forces can be achieved.

That process will take time, but it cannot be left to chance. It must be consciously and actively pursued. Ultimately, the creation of a revolutionary leadership in the United States, which can win significant influence among the masses, apply the transitional method, and recruit the majority of the most advanced layers to a Leninist party, is the key to solving the crisis—not only of U.S. working people but of all humanity. Though this will obviously involve a far, far greater number of people than the layer of cadre who were once members of the SWP and remain true to (or can be rewon to) revolutionary Marxism, that layer and the programmatic heritage of American Trotskyism as maintained for fifty years by the SWP have an indispensable contribution to make to its formation.

The effort to rebuild the unity of the revolutionary Marxist organization in the U.S. today is particularly important because both the main social democratic formation (Democratic Socialists of America) and the main Stalinist formation (the Communist Party U.S.A.) are becoming more aggressive in their efforts to recruit militant workers and activists. Both of these currents are heavily involved in the 1988 election campaigns, initially supporting Jesse Jackson and then, no doubt, the Democratic Party's nominee. (Parlaying its chances, the CP will also run some token campaigns in its own name, seeking to pick up the support of those who can't stomach the capitalist candidates whom the Stalinists will actually be supporting.) Each of these groups (but especially the CP) has a significant apparatus and substantial (from the point of view of the radical movement) financial resources, as well as a certain amount of patronage

to dispense from their influence in the unions and some local governments. This material base, combined with the occasionally radical-sounding rhetoric of these groups, can prove attractive to newly radicalizing workers and students who have not compared the programs and histories of the various currents. Ironically, the CP often benefits from the witch-hunting they have been subjected to which gives that party a false image as a revolutionary alternative to capitalism.

We believe profoundly that the *essential* and *fundamental root* of the party-building problem (though by no means its sole aspect) in the U.S. today is programmatic. The program of revolutionary Marxism differentiates us from the Stalinists and social democrats, and from other reformists and ultralefts within the labor movement. More importantly, it is the key element which can overcome the present organizational divisions within the Fourth Internationalist movement in this country. Our program shapes our party in its most profound features, and other considerations are strictly secondary. Because of the nature of the programmatic crisis that shattered the SWP we believe that the *primary* contribution of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency to the party-building process in the U.S. today can be through our creative application of the program of revolutionary Marxism to the problems facing working people in the U.S. and throughout the world.

We recognize as well that mere paper explanations of program, which are by their nature limited in showing how our ideas can manifest themselves in life, in the class struggle, are not sufficient. And that is why our members are activists, participating in our unions, in anti-intervention work, the women's movement, and other areas.

It is our firm hope and expectation that, despite the debacle for American Trotskyism created by the Barnes faction, we can emerge at the end of our present process with a better appreciation of our tasks based on all of the experiences of all of the Fourth Internationalist currents in the U.S. today. If such a synthesis can be collectively conquered by everyone who sincerely wants to contribute to building a revolutionary party in the United States, then we will be able to move forward on a stronger footing, with a far better programmatic understanding, and increased possibilities for fruitful mass activity. ■

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES A TURNING POINT

A Report on Discussions in Europe

by Paul Le Blanc and Barry Weisleder

We appear to be approaching one of history's turning points. The capitalist economy once more faces a global crisis. The ruling bureaucracies of the USSR, Eastern Europe, and China give evidence of a deepening crisis of their own. Tyrannies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America wonder if they will be capable of surviving the 1980s. It is also the case that new, complex, often exciting developments face the revolutionary vanguards of the workers and the oppressed. In this fiftieth year of the Fourth International, the World Party of Socialist Revolution, militants of the Trotskyist movement are engaged in taking stock of our heritage, our recent experiences, and the challenges we face. There are controversies within our ranks over principles to be reaffirmed, experiments to be considered, balance sheets to be drawn. Serious differences have arisen over what paths will lead to further growth of our movement and over the role of the Fourth International as a distinct entity.

The two of us have recently had an opportunity to spend a few months in Europe, where we had contact with comrades in various sections of the Fourth International in a variety of contexts: meetings, conventions, demonstrations, the international cadre school, private discussions, etc. In this article we want to convey a sense of thinking that is going on among the revolutionary activists whom we met. We both share similar views on the continuing relevance of the "classical" perspectives expressed in the *Transitional Program* and represented by Leon Trotsky, James P. Cannon, Ernest Mandel, George Breitman, and others. We were able to interact with other comrades who identify strongly with this "classical" tradition, as well as some who are new to it and some who raise serious questions about aspects of it. Obviously we are not offering "official" positions, but rather our impressions of a rich and important process of political clarification which is taking place.

Education and Clarification

In 1979 the Eleventh World Congress of the Fourth International decided to set up a school in

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order to bring together leading activists from as many countries as possible for the purpose of deepening our knowledge of theory, history, and the realities of our time. Every year, two three-month sessions take place—one in Spanish and French, another in English. The school can accommodate twenty-four students at a time. Although only a dozen were able to participate in the most recent English-language session (an unusually low attendance reflecting political divisions and difficulties in English-speaking countries), ten countries were represented. It is a remarkable experience for serious activists from a variety of countries—relatively different cultures, different political traditions, different experiences—to come together in an intensive educational process. The rich interactions which take place in this context serve to deepen the actual *internationalism* of those involved, giving a vibrancy to what is all too often a flat abstraction among revolutionaries who are immersed in their specific national situations. Afterwards, these activists go back to play an important role in their organizations throughout the world. This has been the case with over 200 people so far. The cumulative effort of such a process promises to have an impact far beyond these numbers.

The discussion process in the Fourth International is obviously reflected most strikingly in such a context. It may be useful, before giving attention to specific issues under discussion, to indicate the general framework within which the discussion is taking place. This too is reflected in the structure of the school.

Each three-month session is divided thematically into five cycles, each lasting from two to four weeks in duration. The first and longest focuses on the formation of Marxism, encompassing the texts of Marx and his cothinkers, but also much more: social classes, their composition and conflicts; bourgeois and proletarian revolutions; the different historical sequences of modes of production around the world, and their implications for revolutionary strategy; the nature of the state in class society; the formative (and deformative) experiences of the international workers' movement—the First International, the Second International, Russian Marxism, the Third International, the failed German revolution, the first wave of feminism.

The second cycle focuses on revolution in the dependent countries, examining the complex and varied nature of the social formations, the weight of the agrarian question, the question of social alliances, and the dynamic of permanent revolution.

Case studies through which these issues are examined include South Africa, the Philippines, Cuba, and Nicaragua.

Cycle three takes up transitional societies, those countries where socialist revolutions have occurred. China and the USSR provide the backdrop for an examination of intrabureaucratic conflict, economic stagnation under the weight of bureaucratic privilege, and current debates between advocates of the plan and the market in the context of the contemporary crisis of Stalinism.

The imperialist countries are the focus of cycle four. Here the theme is "hope, defeat, followed by uncertain prospects," with the study of the betrayal and destruction of the most class-conscious and highly organized workers' movements upon the rise of fascism in Germany and Spain; the founding of the Fourth International under these exceptionally unfavorable circumstances; the post-war economic boom; the colonial revolutions; and the reemergence of workers' and students' revolts in the late 1960s in the imperialist countries.

The concluding and fifth cycle of the session centers on party-building: the teachings of Marx and Lenin on the revolutionary party; the knowledge gained from the second wave of the women's liberation movement; practical questions regarding the functioning of the party apparatus; and problems of party-building in countries as diverse as the United States and Brazil.

This final cycle tends to be less "finished," which is hardly surprising because it is, in fact, a "work-in-progress" with different perspectives on what can best bring it to a successful completion. Just as these differences also find expression in discussions of the earlier cycles, so does the political seriousness manifest in the earlier cycles rise to a peak in this conclusion to the session. The present and the future of the Fourth International, and of all our political efforts, are the questions under discussion in this cycle—and this is also the case throughout the Fourth International.

The 'Cows Principle,' the Abacus Principle, and the Question of Principles

In a presentation on a complex theoretical question, one of the lecturers during the second week of the recent English-language session said something which sounded like this: "Although we must be critical minded and open to new realities as we approach the complexities of our time, it's essential to avoid cows—to ground our orientation in historical materialism." He looked at his listeners gravely for a moment and then emphasized: "Unless we do this, it's cows." This startling intrusion of cows into the realm of theoretical discourse lent a surrealist quality to the presentation and caused one of the students to make an inquiry at the end of the presentation. As it turned out, the lecturer was saying the word "chaos" with a French accent. The cows/chaos question became one of the most popular jokes (repeated

with many variations) throughout the session. It also illustrated the need to listen closely and to ask questions to ensure that the school's participants were hearing and understanding each other properly. This applied not simply to pronunciation but also to different connotations, definitions, and conceptualizations flowing from different national experiences, contexts, and traditions.

Reflecting a larger reality within the Fourth International, there was considerable variation among participants on a number of questions—historical, theoretical, currently practical, etc. Some of this can be traced to differences between "advanced" and "underdeveloped" capitalist countries, differences between Fourth International groups of various countries (there are significant differences within Western Europe itself—the Belgian, French, German, Swiss, Dutch, and Swedish sections each have different characteristics and predispositions), and even differences between political generations within the Fourth International.

Flowing from this, it is possible to have a controversy over whether a group producing a magazine should instead be producing a newspaper. A more serious controversy at the school arose over the nature of Stalinism—especially in regard to the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions (i.e., whether the Communist parties which lead successful revolutions can still be considered Stalinist). Another controversy is over whether it is unprincipled for Trotskyists ever to tactically cast a vote for a bourgeois political candidate (e.g., during the 1986 Marcos/Aquino race in the Philippines). Related to these issues is the question of to what extent one or another aspect of Marxist theory and program are historically and nationally specific. Marxist theory is largely the summation of the experience of the class struggles. But a tension naturally arises between the tendency, on the one hand, to see the value of the generalizations which provide guidelines for those engaged in struggles in our own time and, on the other hand, the desire to avoid overgeneralizations which can blind us to changed realities and new possibilities in current and future struggles.

In lectures at the school, reference was made to the "abacus principle." The abacus is a calculating device invented by the ancient Chinese which contributed substantially to their ability to deal effectively with a number of mathematical problems. Its superiority was seen as so obvious, however, that it ultimately led to the stunting of mathematical thought. Other parts of the world which didn't have the benefit of this instrument gradually made breakthroughs which finally resulted in Chinese mathematics being left far behind. The invaluable theoretical acquisitions of the Trotskyist movement must not be allowed to become equivalent to the abacus. Rather, our Marxism must be open, creative, capable of critically integrating useful insights and perspectives arising outside of itself.

While only the most sectarian and dogmatic individuals would disagree with this, differences arise over exactly how to apply it. To state one

side of the controversy in its most extreme form: Should Marxist tactics be determined by abstract programmatic principles or by a realistic assessment of the concrete situation and balance of forces in a given time and place (grounded, of course, in a commitment to the goal of socialist revolution)? To respond no less provocatively: Doesn't a failure to apply the programmatic principles of our movement to current realities mean that we'll fail to see the forest for the trees, being reduced to a pragmatism which will result in unnecessarily repeating the past mistakes of those not guided by the revolutionary program?

In large measure, of course, this confrontation reflects a tension inherent in Marxism itself, a tension which necessarily exists if revolutionary socialists are to remain alive to developments without losing their way. The existence of such a tension within the Fourth International is an indication that it is alive. The experience of the recent English-language session of the school indicates that such controversies can result, as Trotsky put it, "not in mutual ostracism, but mutual influence." This general approach hardly resolves all questions, however. What is required is further clarification through discussion and political work, combined with the crucial "test of events."

The Future of the Fourth International

One major discussion which we encountered centers on the perspectives of the Fourth International, particularly in Europe, since 1968. That was the year of the Prague Spring, the mass student and workers' revolt in France, the Vietnamese Tet offensive, the riots and repression in Mexico City and Chicago, and the year just prior to huge strikes and plant occupations in Italy. Thousands of revolutionary young people joined the Fourth International, many with the view that this was the beginning of the "final conflict" with world capitalism and bureaucratic domination.

As a result, many sections of the Fourth International placed less stress on traditional party-building methods and campaigns, were less concerned with challenging the reformist mass parties to enter into united front struggles. Instead, emphasis was placed on uniting a rather amorphous "new mass vanguard," utilizing its political weight to outflank the traditional Stalinist and social democratic bureaucracies, and developing the notion that the needed mass revolutionary party would be built in the midst of a revolutionary "dual power" situation anticipated in Europe.

Events did not unfold as anticipated, however. Although the International, now considerably reinforced, did manage to stabilize larger and more effective sections, it suffered some disorientation from the nonrealization of its perspectives, punctuated by defeats in Portugal and Spain in the '70s.

Now the reassessment goes beyond the obvious miscalculation and false assumptions of that period to pose new and important questions.

All seem to agree that new mass revolutionary workers' parties will not be built *solely* through the gradual, incremental growth of our existing Trotskyist organizations. But to what extent will they be built out of united front campaigns with others on the left inside and outside the electoral arena? To what extent will they be the product of regroupments or fusions with ex-Maoist, ex-Stalinist, left social democratic, centrist, or radical environmentalist forces? How should fusions be approached?

These are not idle questions, in view of the fusion over a year ago in West Germany between ex-Maoist and Trotskyist groups, resulting in the founding of the VSP (United Socialist Party); the possibilities in Austria and Switzerland among the radical Greens; the orientation of British currents to the left wing of the Labor Party; the electoral bloc in France between the French section and the "renovateurs" who've departed from the CP; the coming together of Trotskyists and ex-Maoists in Spain. Nor are such developments confined to Europe; Brazilian Trotskyists have worked in the mass Workers Party (PT) as a "revolutionary party in formation" and are playing an important and creative role within this organization; the Mexican comrades have been confronted with choices on how to make left wing blocs; and in the United States the SWP has flirted with Castroist currents, while Solidarity puts itself forward as an example of how different groupings on the socialist left should come together.

Not all of these situations are the same, however, and from discussions on the subject of reassessment of perspectives in which we were involved there was no evidence of panic or "rush towards regroupment." In fact, different trends seem to prevail, reflecting the different situations in various countries. Some sections (for example Sweden and Belgium) are in a position to develop a national presence as "small mass parties," which is more a gauge of their influence than absolute size. Others, in the wake of the disintegration of competing radical forces, can exercise decisive leverage through "broad front" activities (i.e., not confined to one issue or a short duration) in the mass movements. And still others are exploring the possibilities for fusion with converging political currents—but here caution, prolonged discussion, and the test of common practice are the main watchwords.

No matter how cautiously experimental the latter (fusion) process may be, however, they may have important implications for the Fourth International. What would it mean if a number of sections of the Fourth International fuse with non-Trotskyist forces in their own countries to build organizations that are not (at least initially) affiliated to the Fourth International? What would this mean for the identity, the visibility, and the function of the International? From discussions that we had, we are inclined to stress the following considerations.

First, it's important to recognize that the very unevenness of the process of recomposition of

the workers' movement from country to country radically reduces the likelihood that fusions involving the bulk of Fourth Internationalist organizations could occur simultaneously or in short order. To this we must add that for a healthy fusion it is important that Trotskyists be able to organize and advance their views within the new, broader organization. A second consideration is this: there is no universal tactic that will magically advance the fortunes of the sections and sympathizing groups of the Fourth International. In some cases fusions will not contribute to the process of developing the revolutionary vanguard. Just as in the past a tendency to prescribe tactics on a continental or even global scale proved to be incorrect (whether it was "entryism" into mass reformist parties in the 1950s or an orientation in the late 1960s and early '70s toward guerrilla warfare), so would it be a serious mistake to advocate a generalized fusion perspective. The usefulness of any tactic will depend on time, place, and circumstance.

The general orientation of revolutionaries must be framed in much broader terms than "to fuse or not to fuse." It is the utilization and development of the revolutionary Marxist program which must form the basis for revolutionary activists coming together to provide effective leadership in real struggles. Without this approach the Trotskyists would not have been able to maintain and dramatically strengthen themselves as a political force over the course of turbulent decades, and the Fourth International would not now exist. At the same time, as Lenin put it, "revolutionary theory is . . . not a dogma, but assumes final shape only in close connection with the practical activity of a totally mass and truly revolutionary movement."

This relates to the actual function of the Fourth International, for no adequately revolutionary program can take shape simply within the confines of a single country. Half a century ago Trotsky explained this in his introduction to the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels:

The international development of capitalism has predetermined the international character of the proletarian revolution. "United action of the leading civilized countries, at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat." The subsequent development of capitalism has so closely knit all sections of our planet, both in "civilized" and "uncivilized," that the problem of the socialist revolution has completely and decisively assumed a world character.

This hardly means, of course, that workers of all countries will unite in a single revolutionary instant to replace capitalist oppression with socialist democracy. It means that—especially in our age of multinational corporations and global power politics—the victories and defeats of the workers and oppressed in one country will affect the consciousness and the strength of those in other coun-

tries. It means that activists who restrict their vision to their own country will be incapable of seeing larger forces which may outflank them. It means that revolutionaries can fully understand their own country and develop adequate strategies and tactics only by coming to understand other countries as well, working in cooperation with revolutionaries of other lands to share and collectively evaluate vital information and lessons, to develop a common analysis, to elaborate a strategic orientation capable of advancing the struggle for socialism on a world scale.

The existence of the Fourth International flows from this understanding and from a commitment to the application and development of the revolutionary Marxist program in the three sectors of the world revolution—advanced capitalist countries, imperialist dominated countries, and bureaucratized workers' states.

But how is this to be accomplished? There is clearly a trend *away* from the notion of "leading from the International center" (some headquarters somewhere which houses "the brightest minds" or the "general staff" of the world revolution) and away from generalizing and prescribing party-building tactics to be carried out on a global scale. At the same time, there is a concern that this can go too far in the opposite direction, resulting in an excessively "hands off" or agnostic approach that leaves sections immersed in national specificities and immediate projects to the degree that they lose sight of the larger picture.

There appears to us to be a reaching for a balance between revolutionary continuity and revolutionary flexibility, between "leading" and "helping" the national sections—in fact, a conception of the leadership of the Fourth International as "helping others to lead." Rather than a centralized general staff producing analyses and directives, the conception is one of a world coordinating body helping to strengthen the different national sections by bringing them into closer contact with each other, to facilitate the sharing of information and perspectives necessary for the development of a coherent general understanding, to help create conditions that will sustain the organic development of indigenous revolutionary socialist organizations and currents in each of the three sectors of the world revolution. For this is the basis, ultimately, of the Fourth International's existence and for the development and realization of the revolutionary program.

The goal must be building strong national organizations, deeply rooted in their countries' cultures and revolutionary traditions, effectively functioning in their very specific situations, yet interlinked internationally and therefore capable of aiding each other in understanding the totality of their common situation and in coordinating their efforts to realize working class rule and socialist democracy on a world scale. That's saying a lot and is far easier said than done.

Among the means for accomplishing this are the periodic world congresses and other such gatherings
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NOTEBOOKS FOR THE GRANDCHILDREN

by Mikhail Baitalsky

18. A Year of Successes in Astrakhan

Yeva returned to Kharkov and I went to Astrakhan. Savva and I rented a huge room together. The woman who managed the building gave us a double bed and a couple of old chairs. But we were rarely home.

I will not report about the Astrakhan fisheries. Gleb Uspensky wrote in an interesting way about that. He asked why, although you clean fish alive, you look on indifferently; whereas you cannot remain indifferent to the death of a chicken being slaughtered in a neighbor's yard because the chicken squawks; it protests. Protests, even a chicken's, Uspensky says, evoke a response in the human heart.

The change did me good. I don't know how. I guess I needed a break. No one wrote to me and I sent occasional letters only to Yeva. The only people I socialized with were Savva and the Tsypin family. Grigory Yevgenevich's wife was also a newspaper editor: he edited the general provincial newspaper, and she edited a paper for the peasantry. Marya Yakovlevna was a worker from a different mold than her husband, less pretentious, mellow, kinder. In truth, he was not an evil man, but he fancied himself a gear in an important machine, and a gear must not be abrasive. The Stalin school taught its people to maneuver their way through underwater political rocks, furling and unfurling the sail depending on the wind.

Tsypin took a friendly interest in me and said over and over again that I should get myself re-established in the party, that I should make a statement to the Central Control Commission.

Evenings, I went to his home. Marya Yakovlevna put tea and biscuits on the table—in Astrakhan that year we lived rather modestly. We shopped on an equal footing with all the hard-working people and did not have special stores for ourselves (distribution centers, as they came to be called).

We entered the year of 100 percent collectivization [1930]. Stalin's "Dizzy with Success" article appeared.¹ In it Stalin did nothing other than place all the blame on those who had implemented his own directives: for speed, pressure, quantity. Everybody hurried. Every provincial committee secretary rushed to fulfill and overfulfill the collectivization plan, the plan for restructuring the consciousness of the many-millioned peasant masses, who in the majority of regions and villages had never seen a collective model and who had learned of the benefits of collectivization of the economy from speeches and reports. But the plan is the plan and everyone wanted to earn approval from on high.

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.

Until Stalin's article, the newspapers were transported with delight about the stupendous tempos of collectivization. Secretaries of Regional Committees made reports like they were Julius Caesar: "We came, we saw, we conquered. After my first report, the peasants understood everything and decided to turn over their farms, their horses, and their cattle to the collective farm." In fact, the peasants slaughtered their cattle. And a peasant's decision to destroy the source of milk for his children speaks more than tens of thousands of fancy words.

One of the consequences of Stalin's methods was the famine in Ukraine. It was not the city dwellers who died but the peasants—people who had grown grain all their lives. How many of them died? The statistics are not known; the very fact of the famine was carefully hidden (from foreigners and from workers in the cities). And over the past quarter century saying these three words "famine in Ukraine" could get you five years in camp for anti-Soviet slander. Stalin has died, but to this day neither the famine nor these five-year terms of punishment have been included in our history books.

* * *

And was I ever bored in Astrakhan! Was it me or the city? Grigory Yevgenevich, a native Musco-

vite, tried to get recalled to Moscow. He had an apartment there. Finally, he said to me:

"I'm going in a month. Will you agree to go with me?"

Of course, I agreed. Besides, Yeva in her letters wanted advice. They were sending her to Moscow for the Red Directors courses. Should she go? The children were a hindrance; you do not show up with children for courses. She ought to study and the children, I answered, should be brought to me for the time being; later I will come with them. That's what we did. We spent the summer in an old dacha that the administrators of her courses had reserved for her. In the fall, she and the children found refuge with relatives. And there I learned many things.

In the communal apartment next door to our relatives, there lived a vigilant individual. Hearing the sound of a door being unlocked, she would thrust her pointed little nose into the corridor and pierce you with a photographic glance. A relative assured us that she kept a card index of his visitors.

I visited my wife in this apartment and sometimes slept there, sometimes slept elsewhere. And sometimes I slept on piles of newspapers at the printshop of *Trud* [Labor], where I had begun working.

The neighbors spied on me in vain. I was up to nothing and was occupied with no activity other than my pure and simple newspaper work. Isn't this what is demanded of a former Trotskyist? Two years had passed since my expulsion from the party. I went to see Shkiryatov of the Central Control Commission.

Having been expelled for belonging to the Opposition, and aspiring to be readmitted, like all my comrades I observed the rule: don't lie to the Control Commission. But this straightforward rule is in fact not so easy to observe when you are given questions concerning not only you but your friends. Very likely, during Lenin's time, the Central Control Commission would not have asked such questions. For the party and the spirit of party loyalty, it is not useful but harmful to push people to make a bargain with their conscience. And the party has absolutely no need for such a thing.

Shkiryatov's questions made sense only if there was a plan to punish all who agreed with me but did not express their guilt before the Central Control Commission and remained outside the party—to punish them criminally, of course, and not through party channels, since the party can only punish its present but not its former members. However, we did not know this in advance and only wanted to be honest.

Shkiryatov's response to me was half-negative and I wrote still another letter, this one addressed to Kaganovich. That is what Grigory Yevgenevich advised me to do. I was not even summoned to see Kaganovich. Five years later, however, my letter figured in an investigation. This means that even in 1930 dossiers had been compiled, planning in advance the means to be used for the total and final solution to the damned Trotskyist question.

19. I Could Have Been Silent About This, Too

Yeva, who was much more energetic than I was, got us a place to live: two small rooms on the edge of Moscow. We acquired a buffet, the first we had ever owned. To use an old Komsomol expression, we started to become fat cats. The truth is, I have not been able to put on weight to this day. The truth is that to this day I have never been able to put on weight.

In these uncomfortable surroundings, my passion for reading was revived. I felt the weakness of my knowledge and became a habitue of the reading room of the House of Unions. I began to keep a thick notebook and made synopses of *Anti-Duhring* and *The Dialectics of Nature*.

No sooner do you take the smallest bite of the apple of knowledge than you are ready to share the newly acquired wisdom. Studying the thirteenth chapter of *Capital*—or what seemed to me to be studying—excited in me the ambitious dream of a book about the history of technology. The venture—thank goodness—did not go beyond the planning stages. I would not want to suggest that this project alone was responsible for my beginning to forget my youthful ideals and to limit my Marxist occupations to the quiet of a reading room. I really did begin to forget many things, and I was estranged from old friends, but not because I was sitting in a reading room. And not because I was afraid, either: even then no one was particularly terrified of old

acquaintances or weighed every word in a letter before sealing it. I began to forget because I degenerated. That was all there was to it.

When you erase the past from your memory you lose the moral "I." I can compare my day-to-day actions with my neighbor's, but I know my motives much more precisely and deeply than my neighbor's, which I judge not directly but only indirectly, according to the things he says that perhaps are not sincere.

Recollections allow me, while seeking the motives for my actions in the past, to compare them with the motives of the present and to judge myself not according to deeds alone but also according to my thoughts. We judge those close to us by their deeds precisely because their hearts are a mystery. But our own? The desire to improve is our moral "I"—and the appeal not to remember what kinds of bargains we made in the past with our conscience is an appeal to renounce moral self-appraisal in general, to refuse to compare future actions with past ones. I could remind many not of their mistakes—mistakes are not immoral—but of bargains they made with their conscience, of which the most prevalent was servility and obsequiousness. It is not for these people to teach others morality, a moral code, intransigence toward evil. What they need is to remind themselves!

But people notice nothing about themselves. Somehow it has happened: You have dropped your "I"

somewhere, your power for introspection has been dulled. This explains why you do not send Mama even a pittance, while receiving heaps of money for literary work (the rescinding of the party maximum affected first of all literary incomes). This explains why the ragged people sitting on Kalanchevsky Square do not stimulate in your consciousness either anxiety or surprise. Near all three stations on Kalanchevsky Square thousands of people sat on their knapsacks and bundles. No one knew where they came from and no one knew how they fed themselves. Their feverish eyes and black faces might have reminded me of the streets of Odessa in the famine winter of 1921, if I had not hastened to forget, to forget everything. And now Mama lived in Odessa; she had followed her daughter and son-in-law there.

Her restrained letters contained not a word about how difficult life was for her and father. And about how my grandfather had died she was also silent. But he died of hunger during that very same famine in Ukraine about which there is not one statistic, not one reference in the history of the 1930s.

Still less frequent than letters to my mother were my letters to Lena. Adversity befell her, too. During the purge of the apparatus, this is what happened: she was dismissed from her job because she was the daughter of a priest. She was harassed for several months until finally a purge commission acknowledged that even a priest's daughter might not advocate religion. But I answered her letter in a very pitiful way.

I helped only Rafa, and then incidentally. He and Maryusa spent two days in Moscow when they were being transferred from one place of exile to another. Not long before, they had had a baby. Maryusa called me at work and arranged for us to meet by the Pushkin monument. She and Rafa looked terrible and the baby seemed quite a puny creature. She rocked it in her arms and repeated, "Now be quiet, Elda, now calm down!" We spoke for only a short time and I asked Rafa to come back to the monument again in about two hours. Then I got on the trolley bus and went home. I had only two suits: one I wore and the other was in the clothes cabinet. I sneaked into the cabinet (Yeva was at work), wound my suit into a tight bundle and hurried to Rafa. He was sitting on the boulevard. He was no broader in the shoulders than I was, but he was taller. Maryusa could let out the cuffs of the trousers.

I don't remember exactly what I thought at that minute. Most of all, I wanted to stifle the screams of my conscience, to choke it with the trousers and the jacket. In those days, the suits sold were not two-piece but three-piece. So I had a vest, too; but in my haste, I had forgotten to bring it. Maryusa could have used it for patches; the pants Rafa had on were badly torn. He and Maryusa did not have desk jobs in exile, but worked hard and lived on next to nothing. In one place of exile, they were quartered in a little room that had been made from a lavatory.

I told Rafa that I would send him money from time to time. But he knew that I was lying and that

I would only give it to him when he was standing in front of me—and he never even sent me his address in exile.

And did Yeva get angry! She didn't feel so bad about the suit—she was not very selfish—so much as she felt annoyed that I had supported Rafael. She had grown furious at all my former friends. They were responsible for all our problems; they had led this unstable fellow astray!

"What are you doing, going back to your old connections? Oh, Misha, you'll end up the same way! You yourself will be considered guilty! You'll see!" Yeva had already been convinced that to give trousers to someone in exile is Trotskyism. This became a "link with the enemy."

Grigory Yevgenevich did not forsake me his protection. He began to persistently invite me to *Evening Moscow*, where he had been appointed editor. The decision had been made to improve the newspaper, to make it more lively and closer to the broad masses. Moscow had joined the ranks of great construction sites. The face of the capital had to be lifted. Moscow was the showcase of the country. They began to demolish Okhotny Ryad and construct the subway.² Photo reporters for *Evening Moscow* took pictures of the prettiest women construction workers and asked them to smile.

In the restaurant Prague, in the Arbat district, they set up a special dining room open only to functionaries of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies and our editor got several passes for his department heads. The system of special dining rooms and special stores appeared, by all indications, as a consequence of the same phenomenon which brought famine to Ukraine and an accumulation of people on Kalanchevsky Square. But the gradual perfection of the system changed its character: it was designed, it would seem, to save functionaries from the famine, but was soon transformed into a means of dividing people into the simple folk and the privileged ones.

In the Prague, we ate supremely and—for those times—royally. We lunched in the dining room and for breakfast and supper we received bulk quantities of meat, eggs, cheese, and other things in abundance, and moreover, at especially cheap prices. My route home from the Prague did not take me through Kalanchevsky Square, despite the fact that that route would have shown me how the other half lived.

In the Moscow River region, where Yeva worked as secretary of the party organization at one of the garment factories, a dining room not far from the party's regional committee was in a like manner closed to ordinary people and reserved only for functionaries. Our children never tugged at their mother's skirt begging for bread.

All the same, I happened to end up in the train stations and saw the ragged women, men, and children sitting on their bundles. But I never stopped to reflect on the matter. I thought they had simply come to town for the higher wages. When they want a servant of the people to stop being concerned about the life of the people, they shift him to a system of special rations.

History is wasteful and people give unsparingly. The latitude of people's generosity is enormous. Those who write about the pathos of the five-year plans never fail to emphasize that an enormous role in them belongs to Stalin. To Stalin? Was there a single communist, even one class-conscious worker, who would not understand what precisely was the task of tasks after Russia's two devastating wars?

The most pathetic aspect of the pathos of the five-year plan was the magnanimity of the working class, its great patience. The workers built Magnitka and Kuznetsk, they erected dams and cities, and never requested passes to the private distribution centers. Did Stalin perhaps teach the proletariat of Russia to work so hard? Stalin only made good use of the irrepressible constructive impulse of the working class—an impulse about which dozens of books could still be written, but showing everything that happened without exception.

Somehow, I happened to get the job that year putting together a text to accompany a series of photographs for the journal *USSR Under Construction*. Surrounding myself with stacks of books and newspapers, I wrote about the scope of the construction and the heroism of the builders, citing facts and figures.

But I did not write anything regarding the most striking social phenomenon—what do they eat, these heroes? It is not difficult for those with a full belly to speak eloquently. But how can you be eloquent on a half-empty stomach? Why didn't I, or much better known and better informed authors, in a single sketch, a single novel, or a single poem ever make the slightest mention of the private distribution centers of the various departments and institutions?

The builders of Magnitka were also issued passes to stores of the workers' private distribution center, but on those shelves they would not find a fraction of what was in the stores of the high Moscow institutions. The ZRK (Special Workers' Cooperatives) served to cloak preferential provisioning.

Three of us compilers were brought together and we devoted a whole book to the work of the five-year plan, with the aim of showing the great working days of the country in a simple prose report. We placed excerpts from ordinary news items of the regional and provincial newspapers one after another, according to theme. We put together, for example, a section devoted to the transition to a six-day week, proclaimed with the greatest pomp but about which now there is not the slightest

reference. In the old film *Volga-Volga* there are preserved captions that are incomprehensible to today's viewer: "the third day of the six-day week, fifth day of the six-day week"—the seven-day week had been abolished and a system of five working days with the sixth day off was established, so that a year ended up being not 52 weeks but 60 "six-day weeks."

Of course, our book was later removed from the shelves: for one thing, the six-day week had to be forgotten, and besides, the title page of the book listed the name of someone condemned. Far less seditious books were withdrawn from circulation.

* * *

Volodya Serov and I met again. He came to Moscow upon the invitation of Grigory Yevgenevich. The third in our group was Sasha Ratskin, the initiator of the book described above. We somehow began assessing what we had managed to do over our thirty years. It turned out that it was not much.

No, you are mistaken if you think you can hide behind the comfortable formula: I created nothing good, but at least I didn't do anything bad! I will open my heart to you and relate the history of my degeneration.

Make life as easy as you can,
For tragedy we have no need, and
Before throwing yourself from the bridge,
Remember how cold the water might be.

It is doubtful you'll drown, and
You'll never get your health back.
Spread yourself some cow's butter,
Share the cow's fate.

She gives joy to the calves,
She gives her master milk,
And damnable thoughts are alien to her.
Her life is good and easy.

But oh, I do love sour cream!
How good it is with carp!
I'll go get the frying pan now,
We'll watch that carp dance, yes, fry!

But the little fish squirms in vain.
It opens its eyes wide to no avail.
It's not true that its fate is so bad.
After all, in its life, it fries only once.

NOTEBOOKS FOR THE GRANDCHILDREN

Memoirs of Ukrainian Left-Opposition supporter Mikhail Baitalsky

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

The fish's tragedy is that it's mute.
It may be the fish knows no truth.
Eat carefully, remove all the tiny bones,
The barbed skeleton is hazardous to your health.

Don't touch barbed problems, either,
Just take the calves for a stroll, and
Should I meet you along the road,
Call me whatever names you're commanded to say.

Live your life in good health,
And be thankful to fate.
And neither with a chisel, nor with ink, nor with
blood
Ever let them write about you.

What does it all mean, anyway?
It's better to be left alone.
Spread the table, . . . invite guests, what's
to eat?
Fried carp or roasted veal? ■

[Next Month: Features of the New Order]

NOTES

1. Stalin's article "Dizzy with Success," published in March 1930, called for a slowdown or temporary retreat in the collectivization drive.
2. Okhotny Ryad was a major Moscow thoroughfare lined with shops before it was rebuilt to accommodate the new subway line. It is now called Prospekt Marxa.

FACT SHEET (Continued from page 11)

In June 1987, a fact-finding mission headed by former Attorney General Ramsey Clark identified over 60 right-wing vigilante groups in the country. By October that number had mushroomed to 152. Human rights organizations have documented scores of murders committed by them between February 1986 and June 1987.

Economic Crisis

There has been no change under Aquino from the basic economic policies of the Marcos era, and the economic situation of most Filipinos continues to decline. More than half of the population lives at or below the poverty level. Hunger and malnutrition actually afflict a *majority* of children on the island of Negros. At the same time *42 percent of the national budget* has been allocated to repay the national debt—which is overwhelmingly owed to U.S. banks. A "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program" (i.e., a land reform), promised by Aquino and touted as a boon for the poor, has yet to be adopted. There is strong opposition to it from landlord interests and their representatives in the Philippine Congress.

U.S. Involvement and Complicity

Clark Airforce Base and Subic Bay Naval Station comprise 167,000 acres of land on which the U.S. enjoys "unhampered military operations." The prostitution industry which surrounds these bases brutally exploits Filipino women and even children. Our government is the main supplier of weapons for Aquino's armed forces. For fiscal year 1988 the Philippines is the only major recipient of U.S. military aid which will see an increase—from \$100 million last year to \$125 million. In March 1987 the *San Francisco Examiner* reported that President Reagan had approved an additional \$10 million and a dozen new agents for stepped-up CIA covert operations in the Philippines.

SCHOOL (Continued from page 31)

of the Fourth International, as well as pre-congress discussions and debates to clarify different understandings and disputed issues. No less vital, however, are such tools as the international cadre school and its literary and educational projects, plus theoretical magazines like *International Marxist Review* and such publications as *International Viewpoint*, as well as innumerable other forms of

contact among revolutionary Marxists of different countries. Yet this hardly answers all questions.

There are differences on precisely how the Fourth International should function, just as there are differences on so many other vital questions. Only through serious discussions and comradely debates over these differences—particularly leading up to the next world congress—will the International move forward. ■

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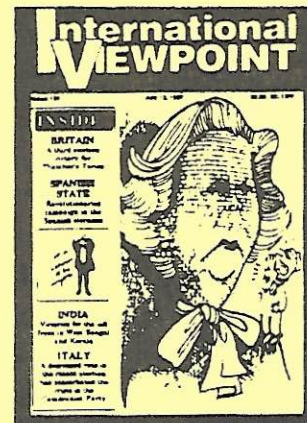
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