

Information, Education, Discussion

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Who We Are

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

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

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

“All members of the party must begin to study, completely dispassionately and with utmost honesty, first the essence of the differences and second the course of the dispute in the party. . . . It is necessary to study both the one and the other, unfailingly demanding the most exact, printed documents, open to verification by all sides. Whoever believes things simply on someone else’s say-so is a hopeless idiot, to be dismissed with a wave of the hand.” — V.I. Lenin, “The Party Crisis,” Jan. 19, 1921.

BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism, No. 55, September 1988

Closing date August 1, 1988.

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

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Fourth International's 50th Anniversary Celebration Planned for October in New York

In September 1938, the Fourth International was founded. As part of a series of celebrations of the 50th anniversary of this event taking place around the world, supporters of the Fourth International in New York are planning to hold a number of panels and a major rally beginning on Friday evening, October 14, continuing on Saturday, October 15.

The Friday evening discussion will deal with "Trotskyism in America." In addition to talks by American Fourth Internationalists, it will feature the film, *Labor's Turning Point* — a documentary on the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes. Saturday will feature three panels: "The Soviet Union Today: Glasnost and Perestroika," "National Self-Determination: Revolutionary Perspectives," and "Election Campaigns and Revolutionary Politics."

The final event will be the rally on Saturday evening. Speakers who are so far confirmed for the rally and panels

(the list is still in the process of formation) include: Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, recent presidential candidate of the Mexican Revolutionary Workers Party; Michael Warshawsky, director of the Alternative Information Center which publishes *News from Within*, an Israeli voice of opposition to the oppression of the Palestinian people; Susan Caldwell, a leader of Gauche Socialiste, revolutionary Marxist organization in Quebec; Marilyn Vogt-Downey, translator of the memoirs of Mikhail Baitalsky which are currently being serialized in the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*; and a representative of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

Details on the precise location and schedule will be forthcoming. For further information contact: F.I.T., P.O. Box 1947, New York, NY 10009; or call 212-633-2007, 673-1573.

Editorial

How To Prevent Mistakes

The U.S. downing of Iran Air Flight 655 over the Persian Gulf on July 3 has reminded worldwide public opinion of the price imperialism exacts in human lives. All 290 persons on board the regularly scheduled commercial flight were killed when the captain of the U.S. warship *Vincennes* fired upon it by "mistake," claiming that he thought it was an Iranian fighter plane poised to attack his vessel.

Comparisons with the Soviet downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 on September 1, 1983, were immediate and unfavorable. The Soviet military plane fired upon an unidentified aircraft flying without authorization over restricted Soviet territory in the middle of the night. It was impossible to rule out the conclusion that the unidentified aircraft was on an intelligence mission, or had some other unfriendly military purpose.

Iran Air Flight 655, on the other hand, was flying over Iranian waters in broad daylight with full physical and radar identifications. The charge of trespass can be brought not against the victims of the "mistake" but against its perpetrator, the U.S. government, which has claimed the right to keep its military outposts in every part of the globe.

The U.S. Navy keeps 29 ships in and near the Persian Gulf, ostensibly to protect merchant ships and to ensure the supply of oil. Iran has charged that the U.S. vessels escort ships carrying weapons and other supplies intended to aid Iraq in its eight-year-old war against Iran, and that they seek to provoke military encounters with Iran as a way of justifying an escalation of U.S. military presence in the gulf to the American public.

But the presence of what Pentagon officials have called the greatest concentration of Navy firepower since the Vietnam War is in itself a military provocation. Only overwhelming military superiority, on the one hand, and a mentality that takes for granted American prerogatives to intervene militarily anywhere, can justify the use of deadly force to down an Iranian aircraft a few miles from Iranian shores and thousands of miles from the U.S. The excuse that it was a mistake is beside the point: such a mistake could not have happened if U.S. ships had not been there in the first place.

Whether the killing of 290 persons, from seven different countries, was a mistake or a deliberate provocation, the answer is the same: All U.S. military ships, planes, and bases out of the Persian Gulf!

Soviet CP Holds 19th All-Union Party Conference

by J.L. Lauria

Is the Soviet Union forsaking socialism or moving closer to it? Are Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika, ideological openness and economic restructuring, a threat to the aims of the Bolshevik revolution or are they clearing the way toward their ultimate fulfillment? Or is the reality a bit more complex than either of these simple choices — often posed these days by the bourgeois media and even the left press — might suggest?

The Gorbachev reforms have resulted in an explosion of serious debate inside the Soviet Union, as evidenced by a more aggressive press, outspoken letters to the editor, strikes and demonstrations in some of the non-Russian republics, open political organizing outside of official CP channels, and daring works by academicians and artists. The recent tolerance for earnest debate (even if within strict limits) was especially evident at the 19th All-Union Party Conference in Moscow June 28 to July 1.

The calling of the conference itself was a sign of the urgency felt by the Gorbachev wing of the Soviet leadership to forge party unity on a series of specific changes, published as these weeks before the conference began. This was only the 19th such conference in the 70-year history of the USSR. The last extraordinary meeting of its kind was called by Stalin in 1941 after the Nazi invasion of the country.

Today's invasion, however, is against the hard-line Stalinist wing of the bureaucracy, and it is from within. But in which direction will it go? At stake, many believe, is the future of socialism, not only in the Soviet Union, but around the globe. That assessment may well prove to be accurate.

Glasnost and Perestroika

The policy of openness fostered by Gorbachev raises possibilities which should be welcomed by democratic-minded socialists. Anything which permits the free exchange of opinions can only strengthen genuine proletarian tendencies in the USSR by allowing them more freedom to explain their ideas and organize.

The proposed economic restructuring of Soviet society, however, has a less clear-cut content. Under bureaucratic control it cannot lead to the kind of worker-controlled and regulated economic system which is really required. Forcing state enterprises to function under the laws of the marketplace and permitting an economic space for limited "free enterprise" can result in the rapid growth of economic inequities and ills — such as large-scale unemployment — which the Soviet system has been able to avoid up to now. It is unlikely that such a process will sit well with the majority of the Soviet working class.

It is even possible — if the process is allowed to get out of hand — that a rapid accumulation of capital in private hands could result in a buildup of counterrevolutionary pressures, threatening the first workers' state with a restoration of capitalism. While this is not the goal of any vocal wing of the bureaucracy, events could easily outstrip Gorbachev's ability to control them.

An article in the *New York Times* July 25 pointed out the corruption and organized criminal activities that are already flowering under perestroika in a climate of heightening greed. There is a growing class of entrepreneurs — coming from the ranks of economic managers and reformist bureaucrats, as well as from certain layers of the workers and peasants — who support Gorbachev's reforms since an opportunity will now exist to make a quick ruble. They hope to take advantage of the situation while it lasts.

Without doubt there is a need for change in the Soviet economy. Its goods have been inferior to Western products for decades and there are shortages of basic commodities. A procession of delegates to the conference complained about these shortages. Gorbachev justifiably expressed dissatisfaction with bureaucratic management, explaining that state orders did not reflect consumer needs and that the bureaucracy was overly concerned with "gross output" rather than quality output. But it is clear that he has adapted to a classical Western bourgeois definition of the problem: "Socialism has trouble because without competition there will never be product quality." Starting from the false premise that the bureaucratically deformed system which has operated in the USSR for decades is actually socialism (a notion shared by Soviet bureaucrats and Western industrialists), one can only envision a solution within certain defined limits.

The truth is that the Soviet bureaucracy stands over the workers and oppresses them in a manner that causes resentment, lack of incentive, and poor workmanship. Simply changing a bureaucratically planned economy into one where individual firms compete in a free market will do little to alleviate the oppression and alienation felt by Soviet workers. The "Gorbachev revolution" is in actuality a struggle between layers of the bureaucracy looking for a way out of their present predicament, with the workers seen as little more than pawns in the game. The threat of unemployment as an incentive to produce has nothing in common with socialism.

Gorbachev does not want to sweep away the bureaucracy, but merely to transform its methods. He is striving to maintain the power of the ruling group, above and apart from the workers.

Gorbachev's Gamble

Gorbachev's program represents a gigantic gamble. It is an attempt to straddle the fence between those forces which will inevitably build up in opposite directions: pushing for a genuine proletarian solution to the present crisis of bureaucratic rule on the one hand, or a real bourgeois solution on the other. Those elements of the bureaucracy who oppose Gorbachev recognize the risks involved and are afraid of losing their balance. Gorbachev, too, is aware of the risks. But the alternative—of trying to keep things in the USSR as they have been up to now in the face of an increasing stagnation of the economy—appears even more risky.

By allowing a controlled social explosion today, Gorbachev hopes to avoid a cataclysmic one in the future. The dilemma he faces, in the final analysis, is the classic dilemma of bureaucratic rule.

The Conference Decisions

The 4,991 delegates at the conference passed the following resolutions proposed by Gorbachev:

- A "fundamental reform of the political system" in order to "overcome the bureaucratic methods of management typical of the command style of administration."
- "Food supplies for the country's population should be improved substantially . . . by spreading diverse forms of contract and lease arrangements, building a far-flung network of cooperatives both in the framework of the existing farms and in relations with other enterprises and sections of the economy."
- "Increase the volume and rate of housing construction."
- To let "every worker know the principles of the reform. We must make people much more interested in the best end result, utterly overcome equalization tendencies, adhere more boldly and everywhere to the principle of remunerating work in accordance with its quality and especially quantity, to rule out a possibility of living a comfortable life while doing shoddy work."
- "Further democratizing the sphere of science and culture," with less control by the party.
- Women should "be better represented in governing bodies from top to bottom."
- The proposals on "the reform of the political system set forth in the report by Mikhail Gorbachev . . . together with the reform of the judiciary system." (Gorbachev only hinted at a jury system.)
- Protection of the individual by law in privacy of telephone and postal communications.
- The withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and further arms-reduction talks with the West.

Gorbachev urgently called in his three-and-a-half-hour opening speech for speedier reforms and proposed political changes that would create a new presidential system and less party control over the national and local governments. He warned that "if the political system remains immobile and unchanged we will not be able to cope with the tasks of perestroika."

Gorbachev admitted that opposition to reform from the bureaucracy "turned out to be more serious than we had thought." In rejecting conservatives' complaints about the exposure of the brutality of Stalinist leaders of the past, he said Soviet life had become "more diverse, more interesting and richer," in the last three years. He proposed that the president of the Supreme Soviet, now a figurehead position held by former foreign minister Andrei Gromyko, should take on real executive power. It was widely anticipated, not unexpectedly, that Gorbachev himself would want this post.

Later in the conference, Vladimir Melnikov, party secretary in the Siberian autonomous republic of Komi, asked for Gromyko's dismissal for past offenses, a move perhaps orchestrated by Gorbachev to free the presidency for himself. His ascendance to such a powerful position would even more clearly illustrate the ironies and contradictions of his own efforts, purportedly committed to dismantling a totalitarian system. In true bureaucratic fashion, reform is ordered from above—soon, perhaps, from a presidency with far-reaching, if not dictatorial, powers.

Gorbachev, who proclaims he is a democrat, is astute enough to recognize that his goals are sufficiently opposed to the interests of the Soviet masses that only a strong president can be relied on to carry them out. At the same time he knows that without at least minimal support of the population he cannot succeed against the resistance of those elements within the bureaucracy which remain opposed to glasnost and perestroika.

As proposed by Gorbachev, the new presidency (as other party posts) would be limited to two five-year terms, and the president would be in charge of all domestic and foreign policy decisions. He would be elected by secret ballot, and could be recalled—though not by the masses but by the Supreme Soviet, or parliament. The ability to recall elected officials has been an important component of proletarian democracy since the days of the Paris Commune. It was advocated by Engels, and was a feature of the soviets in the early days of the Russian Revolution when they constituted genuine democratic bodies representing the workers and peasants. Today it appears in a totally different guise—the granting to institutions under the control of the bureaucracy some measure of ability to regulate their highest elected official.

Gorbachev also called for a reform of the Soviet parliament: it is to be expanded to 1,500 members with 500 of them in permanent session—instead of meeting twice a year as at present. Representatives are now to be chosen in multicandidate popular elections (though of course the choice of alternative candidates will be strictly controlled). It is unlikely that these changes will result in anything other than cosmetic improvements. It is worth remembering that parliament, as a governing institution, remains a feature borrowed from bourgeois democracy. It is not a socialist institution. This, too, is totally in keeping with the narrow perspective of the bureaucrat. Gorbachev is much more comfortable with something resembling Westminster or Capitol Hill than he ever will be with soviets run by the workers.

Bureaucratic Rhetoric vs. Leninism

Nevertheless, Gorbachev doesn't hesitate to use whatever rhetoric he deems necessary to pose as a proponent of genuine socialism. In fact, he invokes the idea that socialism's very future is imperiled if his reforms are not carried through. In our age, however, words are so often divorced from material reality. Bettino Craxi, Francois Mitterrand, General Jaruzelski, each in his own way, proclaim themselves champions of socialism. Gorbachev is as far removed from the ideals of socialism as are these other "socialist" politicians. Although he is unlikely to become a champion of free-market capitalism as the bourgeois press in this country implies and hopes, and the final result of his reforms is in the uncertain future, one thing can be said with certainty: in Gorbachev's lexicon, socialism has nothing whatsoever to do with proletarian democracy.

Justifying his proposed political reforms in the opening speech, Gorbachev went so far as to exclaim: "Comrades, it is a fact . . . that at a certain stage the political system established as a result of the October revolution underwent serious deformations. This made possible the omnipotence of Stalin and his entourage and the wave of repressive measures and lawlessness." The language is almost that of Trotsky, especially the use of the term "deformations" of the workers' state. But that is where the similarity ends. While Gorbachev wants to give more authority to local parliaments, which he wrongly calls soviets, he does not want these bodies to become real soviets — the organs of proletarian, peasant, and soldiers' power that led the October revolution before its "deformations."

Gorbachev also showed his hand on the opening day in aligning himself with the conservatives on the national question, condemning in his speech "redrawing boundaries."

This position is clearly at odds with a Leninist approach — despite Gorbachev's fondness for quoting Lenin. It represents a continuation of Stalin's policy: imposing Moscow's rule and Russian culture on the dozens of ethnic lands that make up the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev's stance as one who is resurrecting Lenin against Stalin is, of course, pure posturing. For example, Lenin explained: "It is clear that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible . . . without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class" (*State and Revolution*). The state is a "power," Lenin wrote, that arises from society and "places itself above it and becomes more and more alienated from it. It consists of special bodies of armed men which have prisons, etc., at their disposal." Gorbachev indeed has all of these things. Rather than acting in line with Lenin's thesis, which saw the socialist revolution as the beginning of the end of a repressive state, the commencement of its "withering away," Gorbachev shows no intention of weakening the repressive apparatus inherited from Stalin. At best he plans to curb its most extreme abuses.

Whatever the ultimate outcome of glasnost and perestroika, Gorbachev has broken a social reality in the USSR that for decades has remained frozen. There is movement afoot. The majority of Soviet workers have been taught a perverted idea of socialism from the time they could read and write. With the present formation of political clubs and unions, and with the wider publication of once forbidden books (perhaps shortly even the works of Leon Trotsky, see accompanying article), all kinds of possibilities are opening up. Gorbachev, whatever his intentions, is responsible for this. The new policies he has introduced will irreversibly change the conditions of Soviet life.

Soviet Minister Tells Delegation: Trotsky Will Be Rehabilitated

by J.L. Lauria and Roy Rollin

Igor Yakovlev, Senior Counselor on Legal Affairs to the USSR's Permanent Mission to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, along with two other Soviet diplomats, in a meeting June 29 with a delegation from the Moscow Trials Campaign Committee, claimed that Leon Trotsky would soon be rehabilitated by the Soviet government and that his works would eventually be published in the USSR.

However, opinion was divided among the diplomats as to whether Trotsky would be posthumously readmitted to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. While Yakovlev, who claimed to have read Trotsky, favored admission, one of his colleagues, who never read a word of this great Russian

revolutionary, opposed the move. Their differences reflect the depth of discussions within the USSR today.

In a two-and-a-half hour meeting at the Soviet UN Mission in New York City, requested by the delegation from the U.S. branch of an international campaign to rehabilitate the victims of the Moscow trials of the late 1930s, Yakovlev also discussed the political and economic reforms of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, which were being debated at the 19th All-Union Communist Party Conference then underway in Moscow. (See accompanying article.)

Yakovlev said the exoneration and rehabilitation of Trotsky would be a natural outcome of Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) and

was surprised that an American group would even bother to make such a fuss over the issue, as he hardly saw it as the most pressing matter facing Soviet society today. The U.S. delegates remained cautiously optimistic about Yakovlev's pronouncement.

By coincidence, on the previous day, the Soviet youth newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* published an appeal by a leading Communist Party member calling for Trotsky's legal vindication and the publication of his writings. Otto R. Latsis, an economist and deputy editor of *Kommunist*, the party journal, was quoted as saying Trotsky was "neither a spy nor a murderer" and had "never committed any crimes." It is believed to be the first time since the trials that Trotsky's name has appeared in this light in the Soviet press.

Since the international Moscow Trials Committee was formed in July 1987, most of the victims of the trials, including Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, Pyatakov, Rakovsky, and Bukharin have been exonerated by a special party commission set up to review the trials. Radek, Pyatakov, and Rakovsky were all at one time or another leading supporters of Trotsky in his struggle with Stalin.

Founder of the Red Army, first foreign commissar, and principal opponent of Stalin until his murder in 1940, Trotsky has remained overlooked in the review. Gorbachev, in his speech commemorating the 70th anniversary of the October revolution last November, continued to repeat the time-worn Stalinist slanders against Trotsky at the same time he was calling for a reassessment of the Soviet past.

The Moscow Trials Campaign Committee had requested the meeting at the Soviet mission to present to the Soviet government the appeal that has been circulating internationally, asking for the rehabilitation of all victims of the show trials. In the first of these, in 1936, 16 leading Bolsheviks, including Zinoviev and Kamenev, were executed. The following year, 13 were sentenced to death and four, including Radek, were imprisoned. In 1938, 18 of 21 defendants were shot. In all three trials, the defendants were falsely linked with the exiled Trotsky and accused on fabricated charges of espionage for the Nazis, economic sabotage, and even of "mass poisoning."

The petition presented to Yakovlev read, "It is now over fifty years since the infamous Moscow Show Trials. It is astounding that at a time when the Soviet government is at pains to emphasize its concern with 'human rights' and proclaims the need for 'glasnost' [some of] the accused in these trials . . . are still considered guilty of being paid agents of Nazism and other crimes."

The petition went on, "They should be immediately rehabilitated, their honor restored, their families compensated, and their graves marked."

Begun in the British House of Commons, the international campaign to clear all the victims currently has supporters in 47 countries. Among the signers of the petition are Bruno Kreisky, former Social Democratic chancellor of Austria;

British Labor MPs Eric Heffer, Ken Livingstone, and Paul Foot and historian and editor of the *New Left Review*, Perry Anderson; 32 members of the Brazilian parliament; Jiri Hajek of the Czech dissident group Charter 77 and former foreign minister under Alexander Dubcek in 1968; Pierre Guidoni of the international secretariat of the French Socialist Party; West German Green Party leader Petra Kelly; Italian playwright Dario Fo; Mexican presidential candidate Cuauhtemoc Cardenas; Esteban Volkov, Trotsky's grandson; novelist Norman Mailer; activists Philip Berrigan, Studs Terkel, Noam Chomsky, Grace Paley, Pete Seeger; Nobel prizewinner George Wald; and civil rights attorney Conrad Lynn.

The length and depth of the discussion at the mission, ranging over current proposals to reintroduce market forces into the Soviet economy, the role of women in the USSR, and the nature and position of soviets (workers councils) in the process of democratization, surprised the seven-member delegation. Many remembered that it wasn't too long ago that defenders of Trotsky were dismissed by the Soviet bureaucracy and their supporters in much the same language as was used at the trials themselves, not invited to participate in a wide-open discussion.

Yakovlev vehemently defended Gorbachev's plans to allow market forces greater influence in the economy. He dismissed the revolutionary Marxist alternative for the Soviet Union—represented by Trotsky's thinking and the Fourth International today—as he dismissed the Left Opposition's positions in the economic debates of the late 1920s as irrelevant today. Yet it has been Stalinist policies of the bureaucracy that have plunged the country into stagnation and repression for decades, and the decentralizing market-oriented reforms envisioned by Gorbachev and his followers are bureaucratic alternatives to a democratically planned economy advocated by Trotsky and his followers.

Because Trotsky severely criticized the bureaucratization of the Russian Revolution and provided a Marxist analysis and a program to combat it, it is obvious that today's bureaucrats are yet wary of his works. Glasnost seems to have its limits.

Bukharin, the leader of the Right Opposition to Stalin, who was legally vindicated in February, was politically rehabilitated July 9. This is significant for it is his thinking that appears to provide a blueprint and the legitimacy for Gorbachev's reforms. It was Bukharin as Stalin's ally against Trotsky who called upon the peasants to "enrich themselves" through the New Economic Policy in 1925. Likewise, Gorbachev wants individual enterprises to accumulate capital and drive other firms out of business if need be. Trotsky's ideas could provide a program for Soviet workers to fight those bureaucrats and managers who see perestroika as a chance to get rich, as well as the forces of capitalist restoration that could be unleashed. Nevertheless, Yakovlev called "Trotskyism" a "bourgeois" idea.

MEXICO

HOWEVER, this year the fraud took new forms. Up until now, it has consisted mainly of stuffing ballot boxes with votes for the official candidates. This time, it was mainly effected by removing ballots for the other candidates, especially the PRI "dissident" and leader of the National Democratic Front (FDN), Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.

Cárdenas is officially credited with 31.12% of the vote. The PRI's official candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, is supposed to have won by a razor-thin majority of 50.35%. Thus, even with the fraud, he ended up far from the comforting predictions that gave him more than 60% of the vote.

Likewise, the rate of participation, which on the evening of July 6 was supposed to be one of the highest in the history of the country, nearly 80%, fell to about 51% when the results were announced. On election night, the minister of the interior and the president of the elections commission (the grand master of the fraud), Manuel Bartlett, hailed the "exceptional civic spirit of Mexicans" on the evening of the elections, at the same time as he announced the "smashing victory" of Salinas de Gortari. Subsequently he has preferred to enthuse over this "demonstration of pluralism unprecedented [sic!] in the history of Mexico."

"Salinas cannot win, but the PRI cannot lose." This pithy sentence by an PRI official says a lot. But despite the efforts of the experts in election-rigging, these results were a terrible rebuff for the policy followed by the ruling party, as well as for its methods of domination, which are based on patronage and corruption.

Compared to the 70%, 80% or even 98% scored by his predecessors, Salinas' 50.35% make him look falsely elected, and he will have a lot difficulty living that down.

Cárdenas playing with dynamite

If the official results are examined in greater detail, the PRI lost the presidential elections in four of the country's 32 states, including the Federal District. Mexico City is located here and it includes 20 million people and more than a quarter of the voters. For the first time, the opposition got into the Senate (the most important of the two chambers), with the election of four representatives of the FDN.

With regard to deputies, the results are more complicated, given the mode of election for this House — 60% of deputies are elected directly, 40% on a proportional basis. The PRI elected 249 deputies by "direct" vote, as against 31 for the National Action Party (PAN, the right-wing bourgeois party) and 20 for the FDN. But according to the estimates (the official results of the proportional vote has not yet been announced) the PRI should have a total of

Elections destabilize regime

MORE THAN 300,000 people marched on Saturday, July 16, through the streets of Mexico City to protest against fraud in the July 6 elections. The vote was for the president of the republic, as well as for all senators and deputies. As usual, the official results of the election were announced only 10 days after the vote. That left the local and national representatives of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which has held undivided power for 60 years, plenty of time to adjust the outcome to suit their needs.

ARIANE MERRI

slightly more than 250 deputies, the rest being divided between the two big opposition parties. However, in order to make the constitutional reforms to which Salinas is committed, he needs two thirds of the House, which he will now only be able to get by negotiating with one or the other of the two parliamentary opposition parties.

By voting for Cárdenas, the daily *La Jornada* wrote, Mexicans "wanted to express their rejection of a policy that has aggravated social inequalities. They censured corruption and arbitrariness."

Will Cuauhtémoc be able to "take advantage" of the formidable movement that crystalized around his name in an often spontaneous way? That appears doubtful. Cárdenas wants to be seen as a statesman, and he knows that he is playing with dynamite. The army voted massively for him, and when the minister of defence, General Juan Arevala, announced the day after the elections that the military would support the victor, whoever he was, it was not for nothing.

Moreover, after announcing his victory

over the PRI candidate, Cárdenas finally accepted the official result of the elections, declaring that it was necessary to pursue the struggle against the fraud in the strictly legal channels, in other words not by pressure in the streets. As the Madrid daily *El País* noted, "the son of the socialist general [Lázaro Cárdenas] now holds a part of the responsibility for the future stability of a country that shares a 3,000 kilometer frontier with the United States, and which is considered one of the potential major centers of conflict in the world."

PRT also suffered from electoral fraud

The Fourth Internationalists of the Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT) also suffered the consequences of this fraud. When it turned out that Cárdenas had to be "granted" more votes than expected, the PRI had to take them away from somewhere else. The PRT was credited with 0.42% of the vote, or 80,000 votes, as against its official vote of 1.7% and 300,000 votes in 1985. If you count all those who came to the rallies and meetings organized by the PRT, the official results mean that less than half those attending voted for them. Since the official PRT vote is less than 1.5% it has lost representation in parliament and its legal registration.

A few days before the vote, 50,000 people attended the rally concluding the PRT's campaign. As soon as the fraudulent official results were proclaimed, the PRT took up the fight, meeting with the two other opposition candidates and calling for demonstrations against the government's abuses.

Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, the PRT's presidential candidate, held a press conference on July 9 together with Cuauhtémoc, in which she said: "Our presence in this press conference reflects our profound democratic conviction that only truth is revolutionary. For two days, we have been pointing out that according to the data in our computer center, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was winning the elections. This view has been confirmed with the passage of time. We consider Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas the president of our country."

"We take this position despite our ideological differences — in fact, because of our ideology, since we are firmly convinced that the only way to achieve socialism is through a clear commitment to democracy. And today in Mexico the fight for democracy involves precisely defending the sovereignty of the voters. We think that those Mexicans who voted for Cárdenas did so in the firm conviction that it was necessary to defeat the PRI. We share this view entirely, although we do not agree with the governmental alternative represented by Cárdenas. We say explicitly that if Cárdenas were president, we would be part of the intransigent opposition to him, outspokenly supporting a socialist alternative." ★

The Rainbow at Atlanta or: 'Gone with the Wind'

by Bill Onasch

General Sherman took Atlanta with a wall of fire. Michael Dukakis took Atlanta with a wall of hot air. Governor Clinton of Arkansas, who delivered the speech nominating Dukakis, droned on so long that even Dukakis delegates started chanting "Bring on the Hook!" It is reported that Kitty Dukakis fell asleep while reading her husband's draft of his acceptance speech. But, on the final night of the Democrats' stage-managed, prime-time convention, it was this monotoned manager of the "Massachusetts Miracle" who occupied center stage as the Democrats' nominee. Flanking him were the representatives of the two wings of the party—the Dixiecrat and contra-supporter, Senator Lloyd Bentsen, number two on the slate, and the Rev. Jesse Jackson, leader of the "progressive wing." The thousands of balloons that plummeted from the ceiling of the Omni convention center were symbolic of the collapse of the dreams of thousands of partisans of the Rainbow Coalition.

Dukakis arrived in the Georgia capital determined to show that he was in control of the convention. He began with a calculated slap in Jesse Jackson's face when he left it to Jackson to find out from reporters that he had been passed over

for the vice president's spot. Jackson and his supporters were furious. They allowed that they would not deliver the Black vote, baled up like cotton, to the plantation master Dukakis. But within 24 hours unity had been assured.

Jackson was given a night at the convention where he could deliver a televised speech, introduce his family and civil rights leaders, and receive many ovations. The Jackson forces were also allowed to debate three of their platform proposals that had been vetoed by the Duke: tax increases for the rich; renunciation of nuclear first strike; and a call for a Palestinian minstate.

A poll conducted by the *Times-Mirror* group, cited in *New York Newsday*, indicated that 84 percent of the convention delegates, including a majority of those pledged to Dukakis, favored the plank calling for increased taxation of corporations and the rich. But among the 16 percent opposing was Governor Dukakis and all of his delegates were obligated to vote to reject. This was a good example of Democratic centralism. The opinions of the delegates count next to nothing. The candidates, handpicked by the ruling class, make all



of the decisions at a convention and communicate their marching orders through whips on the floor.

The no-first-strike proposal, also favored by a majority of delegates, is a particularly sticky wicket for the Democrats. It was one of their own — “Hiroshima Harry” Truman — who has gone down in history as the only one to date to order the use of nuclear weapons on human beings — mostly civilians in a defeated country already suing for peace. Making this cheese all the more binding was the fact that the new vice presidential candidate had urged Truman to launch an atomic attack on China in 1950, during the Korean War. The ruling class is not prepared to issue even a diplomatic renunciation of nuclear terror today. No, this plank had to be deep-sixed.

The Palestinian plank was not allowed to come to a vote. According to prior agreement, the Rainbow leaders withdrew it after a token debate. None of the rest of the Rainbow’s program was even discussed on the floor in Atlanta.

Jackson’s speech demonstrated his unquestioned oratorical skills. But while he broke the silence on some questions — such as support for the rights of gays and lesbians and calls for reductions in military spending — the central theme was the necessity for the Rainbow’s troops to take to the hustings

in support of the ticket. He saluted and praised the governor of Massachusetts and he repeated his oft-stated axiom that “it takes two wings to fly.”

So, what did the Rainbow get in Atlanta? A night of tribute to Jesse Jackson. The right to make the record on three platform planks. A few aides added to the Dukakis staff. A few spots on the national committee. After the unprecedented delegate successes of a Black populist candidate, the bottom line is that the platform and candidates of the Democrats are the most conservative in living memory. In short, the Rainbow had no impact on the way the ruling class will run the elections in 1988, and certainly did nothing to create an alternative.

Many of the Rainbow delegates expressed disgust and despair and threatened to abstain from the elections. On the other hand, most Black elected officials were generally pleased with the unity achieved at the convention. They hope to make further strides toward junior partnership in the bosses’ electoral shell game. They, along with many radicals, and, of course, Jackson himself, will turn on the pressure to turn out the votes for Duke in November.

As if another lesson was needed, the Atlanta convention confirmed once more the futility of trying to influence the Democratic Party in a progressive direction.

Notebooks for Study and Research

- Number one: “The Place of Marxism in History,” by Ernest Mandel \$3.50
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Revolutionary Marxists and the Jackson Campaign

by Joanna Misnik

The writer is editor of the Solidarity pamphlet, "Jesse Jackson, The Rainbow and the Democratic Party—New Politics or Old: A Socialist Perspective." To obtain a copy of this pamphlet, send \$1.50 to Solidarity, 7012 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, MI 48210.

I read with interest Bill Onasch's article "Socialists and the 1988 Elections," in *Bulletin IDOM* No. 52, May 1988. It was gratifying to see that the *Bulletin IDOM* has not taken the path of some on the revolutionary left who share our intransigent opposition to the two capitalist parties and recognize the need for class independence in and out of the electoral arena. Among the relative handful of left groups who have not followed Jackson into the Democratic Party are some who dismiss his campaign as "business as usual" and a calculated maneuver of the capitalist rulers of the Democratic Party.

In this, they fail to recognize the underlying social significance of the Jackson phenomenon—the large numbers of Black and white workers who vote for Jackson, a Black civil rights leader, as a protest against the efforts of the capitalist economic crisis. Reformist though it is, Jackson's anticorporate peace and justice program is much to the left of anything the Democrats or the traditional labor leadership have had to offer. Given his identification with the protest movements and striking workers, as well as the "underdog" character of a Black leader campaigning for "empowerment" and the highest office in racist America, Jackson's campaign style lends itself to this sense of protest.

Those on the left who see Jackson Action simply in conspiratorial terms utterly miss this important gauge of sentiment and spirit in the U.S. today. The top leaders of the Democratic Party, in the full throes of a shift to the right to accommodate corporate backers, have at least mixed feelings about the Jackson effort. On the one hand, they are dependent on the Black vote to help ensure Democratic national supremacy. On the other hand, they wish to be independent of any kind of volatile Black leadership for that vote, especially one that is popularizing the type of program Jackson espouses. . . .

Given what appears to be a common understanding between us about this, it is dismaying to see Onasch then slip back from the plane of real politics onto that of never-neverland leftism. He criticizes Solidarity's pamphlet, "Jesse Jackson, The Rainbow and the Democratic Party," for calling on Jackson and the Rainbow to break with the Democrats and run Jackson as an independent as a step to building a radical, third party alternative in the U.S. We made this call at the same time that we stated the obvious—Jackson and much of the Rainbow leadership have no intention of leaving the Democratic Party. However, in our view, such a call is consistent with the proper analysis of the social significance of

the Jackson groundswell and the need to end the stranglehold of the two capitalist parties.

Onasch cautions that the problem is not "purely a formal one." Agreed. We see some motion, some desire to fight back among working people, led by the Black voting population. Admittedly, this protest does not take an organized form, but is a weak, atomized, and misdirected ballot-box revolt. We thought it appropriate to comment on what strategic next steps (among others, of course) are needed to propel this protest forward.

We thought it particularly important to enter into discussion with those radical activists who have been drawn to the Rainbow by the attractiveness of Jackson's base among Black voters. Many are highly suspect of the strategy of working inside the Democratic Party. Many have had experiences in the Jackson campaign that deepened their cynicism about this strategy and enhanced their understanding of the need for independent organizations. Solidarity is conducting a national campaign designed to stimulate debate on this key strategic question. The campaign will continue into the fall, when even more Rainbow activists will be repelled by the prospect of working for Michael Dukakis. This is not the vision of the Rainbow that these activists had in mind when they signed on; there was a widespread belief that the Rainbow was not identical with the Democratic Party.

The forces that oppose working inside the Democratic Party are quite small in relation to the general left in this country. Despite that, assuming a comradely attitude and appreciation for what is different about the Jackson campaign, we have been able to get a hearing for our minority position. We have noticed that some groups who share our views on class independence join in this debate to criticize *us* for how we present our arguments. Onasch's article is one example. All well and good; that is their right. But given how few we are in face of this rush of well-meaning activists into the Jackson campaign, it is surprising. We are not suggesting any kind of deceptive "united front" that masks our disagreements. *Our* political instinct led us to concentrate on trying to win people away from the Democratic Party strategy. *Your* instinct, unfortunately, goes first toward doing a "purity check" on us and then winning us to your superior understanding.

Onasch feels that if Jesse Jackson's "electoral machine" broke from the Democratic Party, the result would just clutter the political landscape with yet a third bourgeois political party that "would be of no value from a working class point of view." Those who caution against viewing things formally should heed their own warnings! It is true that the

Rainbow as it is presently constituted is NOT a mass movement; it is a coalition of movement leaders and the Black elected officialdom that has arisen since the 1970s. That's what it is *now*, inside the Democratic Party. If, speaking hypothetically, Jackson were to run independent of the Democrats on his, dare we say it, *reformist* program, we believe this would at least have a salutary effect on U.S. working class politics today. It would present a serious challenge to lesser-evil bourgeois politics that would have a real echo in a *key sector* of the working class—the Black working masses.

The Black vote is the only extant voting block within the working class (among that minority portion of it that still bothers to vote). We are all familiar with the demise of the New Deal coalition and the crisscrossing of the ballot that has characterized the white labor vote over the past decade in particular. Jesse Jackson running as an independent Rainbow candidate would not break *every* Black voter from the Democrats. Decades of dependence on lesser-evilism conditioned by the absence of independent working class leadership do not disappear miraculously. But it would *shake* the two-party system and help break the myth that you can't go up against the two parties because the object is to get the "better" one elected.

Albeit small, a force that fought the civil rights battles of the '60s and now says both parties are "bad" and it's time to create our own power base and fight for our needs would be *very* different from a Jackson inside the Democratic Party. Recent history reveals that potential for such a breakaway has always resided in the Black community, given how it retains the character of a self-identified, self-interested voting block. Periodically, breaking from the Democrats becomes an actual topic of discussion among Black activists. As the Jackson campaign demonstrates in a highly distorted manner, the failure of the labor movement to lead a fight-back against economic and social misery in the recessionary economy *increases* the potential for voter rebellion among Blacks. Their disproportionate burden is not being addressed by any kind of vibrant, fighting labor movement. Moreover, also because of this default, this Black protest has shown the ability to draw in white workers and farmers.

For those who view social motion strictly in terms of program, it's easy to miss this point. Undoubtedly, an independent Jackson campaign would not be socialist, or even consistently anti-capitalist. But such an effort could NOT be dismissed as a "bourgeois political formation," unworthy of our support — all five hundred or so of us. Such a break would NOT be the product of any objective need or subjective desire of ANY sector of the American capitalist class. Their austerity drive requires, among other things, *deepening* the myth of *two-party* bourgeois electoralism and liberal consensus (a slippery technique to master for the Democrats in this period). However unevenly and however lacking in anti-capitalist understanding, such a breakaway would either die a quick death or assume a dynamic to the left, toward

developing a progressive working class appeal and activated membership. The base to which Jackson's program appeals and the political space left unoccupied in this country today would determine that.

Parenthetically, Onasch's brief overview of the Socialist Workers Party election campaigns does not treat what had been SWP electoral *policy* beyond running its own candidates. The SWP had (and may still have) a tradition of support to independent candidates, particularly Black candidates, who had far worse "programs" than Jackson's today. For example, Cleveland's first Black mayor, Carl Stokes, ran as an independent in 1965 to threaten the racist, exclusionary Democratic machine from the outside as a means of forcing entry for Black aspirants to office. The SWP supported this and other such campaigns that occurred in the 1960s and early '70s. This was a time when illusions about "getting into the power structure" were at their height, given the relative health of the economy and the newness of the gains of the civil rights movement. The SWP correctly saw these campaigns as exemplary actions worthy of support because of their dynamic, and not because of the individuals or programs involved. Today, illusions that Black empowerment flows through the Democratic Party are much more fragile, given the actual results produced by this near-exclusive strategy over the past decade. Though cynically perpetuated by the "new class" of Black politicians, these illusions are tempered by their inability to deliver the goods.

In my young days as a revolutionary socialist, I had a somewhat mechanical vision of the strategic next step in U.S. working class politics—a labor party based on the trade unions. The labor movement, undifferentiated in my younger days, would finally make this break as a result of having achieved a linear level of consciousness. Life and the passage of time and events should sensitize us to the sheer complexity of the process of breaking "labor" from class collaborationism. Partial, hesitant first steps, uneven in terms of region, sector, race, and gender, could well add up to what I now understand will be a *process* and not a *conference*. This does not deny the need to continue to pose the "if" — "if the labor movement broke, etc."

But, also by some hypothetical miracle, *if* the trade union movement broke from bourgeois electoralism in the future, I have little doubt that we would be confronting a program that was "procapitalist" and "bourgeois" in its stated content. Rather than simply "if," Solidarity is urging a beginning "in order that." I would venture to suggest that because of the racism permeating U.S. society we would often find ourselves working with former Jackson supporters who cut their political teeth on the attempt to get a Black populist nominated by the Democratic Party back in 1988.

Unhappily, the possibility of a significant Jackson break is not a realistic one for 1988, or beyond. Our emphasis has been on the *glimpse* of the possible that this campaign offers.

June 4, 1988

A Reply to Joanna Misnik

by Bill Onasch

Joanna Misnik raises some interesting points in her letter. While clearly the F.I.T. and Solidarity share a similar analysis of the impact of the Jesse Jackson campaign and both are opposed to supporting that campaign within the confines of the Democratic Party, there are substantial differences between our organizations in respect to the Rainbow Coalition and our general electoral policy.

Based on her letter, the Solidarity pamphlet, and the presentations made by Misnik in panel discussions at the Socialist Scholars Conference and elsewhere, I believe one would have to conclude that, in her view, the "indicated strategic next step for independent working class political action" would be not a labor party, as traditionally advocated by the Trotskyist movement, and as we in the F.I.T. continue to call for, but a third party with a composition and program similar to the Rainbow Coalition.

If such a party were to be formed revolutionary socialists would certainly have to pay serious attention to its development and work out an orientation toward it. Depending upon its composition, program, and direction, it is not excluded that revolutionary Marxists could give such a new party critical support, join with it in united fronts, or even enter it. Such a nebulous vessel could conceivably be filled with almost any content.

We think the healthy development of such a party to be most unlikely and certainly is not what we would *advocate* for a "strategic next step."

Misnik stipulates that the Rainbow Coalition, as presently constituted, is not a mass movement and that Jesse Jackson and the Black elected officials that run the Rainbow have no intentions of breaking with the Democratic Party. However, after accusing me of a "slip-back from the plane of real politics onto that of never-never-land leftism," she goes on to construct a hypothetical scenario where Jackson *would* run as an independent, on a reformist program, creating "a salutary effect on U.S. working class politics." It is around this "hypothesis," that Misnik does not expect to ever occur on the "plane of real politics," that Solidarity bases its campaign to influence supporters of the Rainbow Coalition.

But let's suppose, hypothetically, that Jesse Jackson were to be convinced to launch a "populist" drive for the presidency, independent of and in opposition to the Democratic Party. According to Misnik, this would represent a big blow to the capitalists who require ". . . deepening the myth of two-party bourgeois electoralism and liberal consensus. . . ." Hailing from Missouri, I'll need to be shown.

There is no question that the capitalists prefer to continue the present two-party shell game which has worked so well for them. But two and only two parties are not *essential* to capitalist rule. Stable capitalist rule in countries such as

France, Italy, Denmark, and Israel feasts on an alphabet soup of numerous bourgeois parties. And, let's not forget, U.S. capitalism has survived previous "populist" challenges from Bob La Follette (1924, nearly five million votes or about 18 percent of the total), Henry Wallace (1948, about one million votes), John Anderson (1980, nearly six million votes). But these impressive electoral machines that excited many about the prospects of reforming capitalism vanished without a trace after election day. Being nominally independent produced no magic for them and certainly had no salutary effect on the workers' movement. Devoid of program and without a genuine mass base, they caused only a fleeting irritation for the bosses' main parties.

While acknowledging that the Rainbow is not itself a mass movement, Misnik asserts it "is a coalition of movement leaders and the Black elected officialdom that has arisen since the 1970s." This assertion certainly needs some qualification. The term "movement" has been thrown around very loosely by some who have appointed themselves "movement leaders." What are these movements? What are their organizational expressions? Where is their mass base?

These "movement leaders" are in fact largely middle-class radicals hoping to parlay mass *sentiment* against racism, sexism, apartheid, intervention in Central America, etc., into some kind of "movement" that can influence the Democratic Party or, perhaps, realign "progressives" into a new left liberal party.

The Solidarity pamphlet correctly urges that movement-building not be subordinated to electoral politics. That's good. But, unfortunately, Solidarity's propaganda campaign aimed at what the pamphlet calls "the radical Rainbow" component, urging the transformation of the Rainbow into an independent party, reinforces the miseducated and disoriented "movement leaders'" illusions in coalition politics.

Misnik points out one of the components of the SWP's electoral policy, not mentioned in my overview of presidential campaigns, of supporting independent Black candidates and cites the example of Carl Stokes's first campaign for mayor of Cleveland.

In the F.I.T.'s opinion that *policy* was and remains valid. We view the revolution in the United States as having a *combined character*. As well as a working class struggle to overthrow capitalism we will also see a struggle by oppressed nationalities—Blacks, Chicanos, American Indians, and Puerto Ricans—for national liberation. Neither of these struggles can win without the other.

The independent political organization of the oppressed in struggle against the white capitalist power structure is progressive and deserving of our support. The SWP not only supported Carl Stokes's first campaign as an independent but also the Freedom Now Party campaigns in Michigan and

New York, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in Alabama, the La Raza Unida Party in Texas and California, and, more recently, the National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP).

But within the guidelines of this general policy it is necessary to make concrete judgments. The SWP did not *call* on Carl Stokes to run as an independent for mayor. It had to take a position on, not a hypothetical, but very real campaign in the city of Cleveland. In a judgment call, the party decided to give *critical* support to Stokes while assessing what kind of impact that campaign would have on the Black struggle. Stokes soon entered the Democratic Party and that was the end of the SWP's support for Stokes and his political machine.

Would a Jesse Jackson campaign outside the Democratic Party qualify for support as an expression of independent Black political action? Looking at Jesse Jackson, and not creating an imaginary figure with a completely different perspective, we don't think so. While Jackson has won overwhelming support among Blacks, and impressive support among other oppressed nationalities, taking advantage of deep nationalist sentiments, it is not his perspective to lead a nationalist movement. He has specifically rejected this course and for good reason. Like revolutionary socialists, Jackson recognizes that the dynamic unleashed by a nationalist movement among oppressed nationalities would inevitably tend to not only challenge the two-party setup — it would challenge the fundamental props of capitalist rule as well. Jackson is quite willing to accept nationalist support — but on his terms. He wants to build a reformist electoral machine, not nationalist movements mobilizing the oppressed of the ghetto, barrio, and reservation.

Misnik confides, "In my young days as a revolutionary socialist, I had a somewhat mechanical vision of the strategic next step in U.S. working class politics — a labor party based on the trade unions." However, she now recognizes that "Life and the passage of time and events should sensitize us to the sheer complexity of the process of breaking 'labor' from class collaborationism." The mature Joanna Misnik judges the prospects for the formation of a labor party to be in the category of a "hypothetical miracle."

Though I am perhaps a few years older than Misnik, I have not kept pace with her maturity. I *still* believe, as I did 25 years ago as a young recruit to the YSA, that the indicated next strategic step for independent working class politics is the formation of a labor party based on the unions. I have to admit that there hasn't been much visible progress toward this next step in the past 25 years. Unfortunately, the same could be said about most aspects of the perspective of revolutionary socialism. I think I have gained a greater appreciation of the "sheer complexity" of the process and have learned that reality doesn't change as quickly as we would like.

I have also followed attempts by radicals to bypass the workers' movement and launch new electoral formations — Peace & Freedom Party (and its short-lived rival the Freedom and Peace Party), the Citizens Party, the Convention for New Politics, to name a few. I've seen many more "practical" people go into the Democratic Party to "take it over" or "split off a workers' current." It doesn't seem to me

that these people have had much more success in making that strategic next step than the advocates of a labor party.

The fact is that the U.S. working class is yet to be heard from on the political front. We are convinced that they will be heard from sooner or later and that it is likely that they will take their first steps toward working class political action through their only existing mass organizations.

Of course, Misnik is absolutely correct when she writes, "Partial, hesitant first steps, uneven in terms of region, sector, race, and gender, could well add up to what I now understand will be a process and not a *conference*." Just as isolated local strike battles in Toledo, Minneapolis, and San Francisco in 1934 set the stage for the great national organizing drives of the CIO beginning two years later, a labor party movement may very well begin with local examples. The F.I.T. has no master blueprint for how a labor party will be constructed.

We view the importance of a labor party not in the creation of electoral machinery — after all, we don't believe any fundamental change will be made through the electoral process — but as an expression of the class independence of working people and an instrument of their struggle. In the context of the employers' offensive and their declining ability to maneuver and to grant concessions, a labor party will be born out of *struggles* against the bosses, their government, and their parties. That's why I cannot agree when Misnik argues, "... *if* the trade union movement broke from bourgeois electoralism in the future, I have little doubt that we would be confronting a program that was 'pro-capitalist' and 'bourgeois' in its stated content." I don't share this pessimism.

A labor break from the capitalist parties has been a long time coming but when it comes it will undoubtedly be as the result of big struggles that will *transform the unions*. It is possible that a labor party could be formed with the present bureaucracy still in control. It is also possible that a labor party, forged in heated struggles, would have a revolutionary program and leadership from the outset. Perhaps more likely would be the emergence of a labor party with both reformist and revolutionary wings fighting it out for hegemony — similar to the development of the Workers Party in Brazil.

But even a labor party dominated by the present class-collaborationist bureaucracy would be a giant step forward from the unions being tied directly to the bosses' parties in the same way that a bureaucratic union is better than no union at all. The mobilization of the workers *as a class* is essential even if they are temporarily disoriented by a collaborationist leadership.

Misnik stops short of dismissing the labor party perspective altogether. Indeed, she writes, "This does not deny the need to continue to pose the 'if — if the labor movement broke, etc.'" However, the Solidarity pamphlet edited by Misnik, which, by the way, is excellent in presenting arguments against working in the Democratic Party, doesn't mention the idea of a labor party *at all* — not even as an "if" or a "hypothetical miracle." There is a very good section in the pamphlet entitled "Labor, the Democrats and the New Deal." But this section ignores the Farmer-Labor Party ex-

perience in Minnesota and the American Labor Party in New York.

Despite its many weaknesses, the labor movement remains a genuine mass movement reaching into every layer of the working class, every community across the country. The biggest organized concentration of Blacks in this country is in the unions. The biggest organized concentration of women is in the unions. The only really mass demonstrations to date against apartheid, or against intervention in Central America, have been those which have been actively supported by unions. The only significant contingents of Blacks to participate in anti-intervention demonstrations have been those mobilized by the unions.

That is why we continue to believe the strategic next step for independent political action will come from this real movement and not the "movement leaders" of the "radical Rainbow."

Misnik does not mention, either in her letter, or in the pamphlet, what advice Solidarity offers to voters for the general election, where there will be no "populist" on the ballot. While I suspect that she and Solidarity do not join us

in endorsing the SWP, I do wonder: Is there a campaign worthy of support? Or should working people abstain in this election?

Of course, the endorsements of F.I.T. or Solidarity are not going to have any impact on the outcome of the fall elections. James P. Cannon often said that the Socialist Workers Party was not yet a real party but a propaganda group aiming to become a party and, of course, today even that propaganda group has been fragmented into four separate groups. But he also argued that to get a serious hearing from the workers you had to sometimes talk and act like a party. That's why socialists run in election campaigns in a period like today.

Socialists try to take advantage of the heightened interest in politics around election time to carry out some basic socialist education and to recruit new members. That's the main thing we can do. We urge the comrades of Solidarity to join with us in carrying out an independent, and necessarily critical, campaign in support of the SWP candidates this November.

June 28, 1988



No New Abortion Law

by Anne MacLellan Brunelle

In January the women of Canada won a great victory. The women's movement and its allies forced the Supreme Court of Canada to declare the old abortion law unconstitutional. There is no law restricting abortion in the Canadian state now. The Progressive Conservative government in Ottawa wants to change this.

The government is determined to make abortion illegal in at least some circumstances. The Tories feel that "our society" needs to be protected from "irresponsible women" who will want late abortions or will use abortion as birth control.

Study after study, the most recent being the Powell Report commissioned by the Ontario Liberal government, has shown that women do not use abortion as a form of birth control.

Statistics reveal that only .05 percent of all late abortions were done after 20 weeks' pregnancy. These late abortions were done because there was no access to an early abortion, because of medical risks to the woman or to the fetus, or because of major changes in the life of the woman that made carrying the pregnancy to term impossible.

The old abortion law, with all its problems, did not restrict the performance of an abortion to a particular time in a pregnancy. It is completely unacceptable that the right to control one's body, the most basic human right, could be legal one week and illegal the next. That is what the proposed new law would do.

The Tories in Ottawa are pushing a three-option proposal. None of the options allow women the right to choose. The government is also demanding a "free vote" (i.e., a vote in parliament without following party discipline), claiming that it's most democratic to allow the sitting members of the House of Commons to "follow the dictates of their consciences." So 282 people, mostly men, will be allowed to act according to conscience, but the women of Canada will not.

But women are not criminals and they must be able to make the choices appropriate to their lives.

Although there is no legal restriction on abortion at the moment, there is also nothing to compel the provinces, hospitals, or doctors to provide this much-needed medical service.

Only a small percentage of hospitals offer abortion services. There are only two free-standing abortion clinics outside of Québec, both in Toronto. Several provinces have very restrictive policies around medical funding of abortions.

Obviously the legal right is not enough. The federal government should withhold transfer payments to any province that refuses to pay for all abortions, just as the Liberal federal government did to prevent doctors from opting out of medicare in 1983.

The provinces must help set up fully funded, community based, women's health clinics that will provide a full range of health services, including abortion.

These demands are basic, their implementation simple if the governments had the political will. Abortion should be a matter of health policy; good health care is something that every government claims to favor.

The Pro-Choice Network, a coalition of mass action-oriented groups across the Canadian state, is working to demonstrate to the government that the women of Canada demand nothing less.

As part of this campaign, the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC) held a picket/rally outside Progressive Conservative Party headquarters in Toronto on June 1.

Two hundred and fifty people heard Niki Colodny, one of the doctors at the Morgentaler Clinic, Judy Persaud of Women Working with Immigrant Women, Dick Barry, a vice president of the Ontario Federation of Labor (OFL) and president of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of Canada and co-chair of the OFL Women's Committee, and Lynn Lathrop of OCAC speak out.

All demanded full access to free abortion and the unfettered right of every woman, without the help of members of the House of Commons, to decide when and if to have children.

What Can Be Done About the Scabs?

by Richard Scully

After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad, the vampire, He had some awful substance left with which He made a scab. A scab is a two-legged animal with a corkscrew soul, a waterlogged brain, a combination backbone of jelly and glue. Where others have hearts, he carries a tumor of rotten principles. When a scab comes down the street, men turn their backs and angels weep in Heaven, and the Devil shuts the gates of Hell to keep him out. No man has a right to scab so long as there is a pool of water to drown his carcass in, or a rope long enough to hang his body with. Judas Iscariot was a gentleman compared with a scab. For betraying his master, he had character enough to hang himself. A scab has not. Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Judas Iscariot sold his savior for 30 pieces of silver. Benedict Arnold sold his country for a promise of a commission in the British army. The modern strikebreaker sells his birthright, his country, his wife, his children, and his fellowmen for an unfulfilled promise from his employer, trust, or corporation. Esau was a traitor to himself; Judas Iscariot was a traitor to his God; Benedict Arnold was a traitor to his country. A strikebreaker is a traitor to his God, his country, his wife, his family, and his class.

Jack London's classic definition of a scab was accepted and appreciated far more widely decades ago than it is today. Workers who scabbed then not only risked life and limb, they were socially ostracized and their children shunned at school.

As part of today's antilabor offensive, the big business media are doing their best to clean up the image of scabs. This was seen most graphically during the recent professional football players' strike. During the strike, proscab banners and chants at the "replacement games" received favorable comment on national TV and in the press. The scabs themselves were widely interviewed and portrayed as your down-home, regular-guy, family-member type. After the strike the scabs were seen returning to their communities where they were welcomed and acclaimed.

What happened to the striking football players was only the latest in a recurring pattern of broken strikes and often busted unions. These include the air traffic controllers (PATCO), Brown & Sharp Manufacturing Co., Hormel in Austin, Continental Air Lines, Trans World Airlines, Greyhound Bus Lines, Chicago *Tribune*, Colt Firearms, Phelps Dodge copper mines, and countless others. Strike victories, while they occasionally occur, are by contrast few and far between.

If the probable result of a strike is the displacement of workers by scabs, then it may appear that the strike is a relic of the past. That at least is the conclusion many union leaders

are drawing. They are searching for alternatives to strikes: in-plant strategies, boycotts, corporate campaigns, etc.

But shutting down the profit-producing enterprise remains the working class's most important weapon in defending itself against today's corporate onslaught. In the face of this attack, workers will only be able to maintain and improve their standard of living and their working conditions if they are capable of conducting effective strikes.

But how can this be done when there are so many people out there apparently ready to scab and break strikes? That is the question that has to be directly confronted.

Solidarity on the Picket Line

The starting point has to be the rebirth of genuine solidarity among *organized* workers in this country. If trade unionists won't stick together, how can anyone expect unorganized workers to respect picket lines?

Look at what happened in the PATCO strike. If the unionized airline pilots, mechanics, and flight attendants had grounded all planes by respecting the air traffic controllers' picket lines, the strike could have been won.

The same thing happened at the Chicago *Tribune*. When the printers went on strike, the other newspaper unions crossed their lines. The *Tribune* soon had all the scab printers at work that it needed.

This ability of the employers to play off one union against another will lead to the mutual destruction of all unions, if it remains unchecked. Agreements among unions to respect each other's picket lines is an absolute must and can no longer be delayed. Since top union leaders have done little to cope with the problem, conscious, militant leaders on a secondary level and among the rank and file must raise the demand: "Picket lines mean don't cross! Solidarity of all union members!"

Beefing Up the Picket Line

The most serious problem confronting workers defending their strike is repressive legislation which permits court injunctions barring mass picketing. Sheriff's deputies, municipal police, and, if necessary, state police and national guardsmen—not to mention company security guards—will be on the scene to ensure that the injunction is enforced and that the scabs' "right to work" is protected.

Where workers decide nonetheless to mass at the plant gate to keep scabs out, the full fury of the law predictably descends upon them.

Take, for example, what happened with the United Food and Commercial Workers strike against John Morrell at Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The workers there began a sym-

pathy strike on May 1, 1987, in support of the strike at Sioux City, Iowa. They were determined to keep all scabs out. But the company secured an injunction prohibiting the workers from gathering within 500 feet of the plant and interfering with those entering and leaving. The company claimed that its scabs were still unable to enter the plant because hundreds of striking workers had assembled there and were throwing rocks and using clubs to hit scab cars. Morrell's lawyer screamed about "artillery fire," "war zone," and "anarchy" in the streets. There was terrific tension in the community and the union demanded that the governor shut down the plant and force Morrell to negotiate. But that's not what happened. Instead, the matter wound up in court, where the judge:

- Found the union in contempt.
- Fined the local \$25,000 a day.
- Threatened the union's president and business agent with fines of \$100 a day if they did not act to control the union.
- Ordered the union leaders to inform members that no more than 25 people could gather in front of the plant; call a membership meeting to inform workers of restraints, with the meeting taped so it could be played to the judge; and call a news conference to urge the membership and sympathizers to stay away from Morrell's and not engage in violence.

The injunction was complied with. The strike proceeded peacefully, with scabs going in by the hundreds. Finally the strike was ended.

What can workers do about situations like this? How can they defend their livelihoods against these kinds of odds?

There is something to be learned from labor's history. There have, after all, been significant strike victories *in spite of court injunctions*. One example was the famous Auto-Lite strike in Toledo, Ohio, in 1934. Soon after the strike began, the company got an injunction limiting picketing. The strike began to die on its feet as 1,800 scabs were brought into the plant. Then a group of strikers went to the Unemployed League for assistance. A new strategy was devised: Ignore the injunction! Leaders of the league wrote the judge that they would violate his injunction by encouraging mass picketing. When they went out and did so, they were arrested. When they were released, the judge warned them to picket no further. Whereupon they immediately returned to the picket line. Sam Pollock, secretary of the league's Anti-Injunction Committee, wrote the judge a letter which ended by saying:

[W]e believe that the spirit and intent of this arbitrary injunction is another specific example of an organized movement to curtail the rights of all workers to organize, strike and picket effectively.

Therefore, with full knowledge of the principles involved and the possible consequences, we openly and publicly violate an injunction which, in our opinion, is a suppressive and oppressive act against all workers.

There was an additional point Pollock made in his letter: he said the Unemployed League was acting in *defense* of democratic rights and the U.S. Constitution, which the injunction was attempting to abrogate.

Pollock and his coworkers believed that defying a court injunction could help win the strike only if that defiance was linked with the mass mobilization of workers. Within a few weeks, 10,000 workers were on the picket line. And a week after that, 40,000 turned out for a mass rally at the Court-house Square.

To be sure, the police mustered their forces. And the National Guard was sent in as well. But they were no match for the massive throngs of workers that confronted them. The workers fought a six-day pitched battle with the Guardsmen, winning over some of them in the process. Two workers were killed in the fighting.

Finally, the troops were removed and the company capitulated. The union got a signed contract and the scabs were ousted. Quite a different outcome from what we are experiencing today!

A similar experience occurred in Minneapolis in 1934 involving Teamsters Local 544. This fight proved to be an inspiration for Local P9 in its fight against Hormel. But there was one crucial difference: P9 adopted Ray Rogers's tactics of non-violence and civil disobedience. This proved totally ineffective in keeping the scabs out.

P9's strike was the most significant fight-back effort by any section of the labor movement in the past ten years of the employers' heightened antilabor offensive. But a golden opportunity was missed. P9 had electrified and won the support of huge sections of the U.S. working class, including 3,000 local unions which contributed to its cause. If ever there was a time or an occasion to tap that support and call for a mass mobilization of workers—not only to come from the Austin-Minneapolis area but from all across the country—to protect the strikers' picket lines, this was it. In the absence of such an approach, Hormel's Austin plant filled up with scabs and the strike was lost.

The conclusion to be reached from all of this is clear: if injunctions are regarded as sacred cows in strike situations, and if all the laws favoring the employers are scrupulously obeyed, the employers will win every time. The power of the labor movement will continue to wither. If, on the other hand, a unified labor movement flexes its muscles and mobilizes its forces to shut plants down and keep scabs out, it can win. This will require a commitment to do what is necessary to defend jobs, defend picket lines, and defend strikes, including the use of flying squadrons and other militant tactics. It also means doing everything possible to prevent the struggle from being derailed by government repression, in whatever form. But for this strategy to be successful, something further is required: broad-based support for the struggle from among masses of people, both in and out of the work force.

Winning Allies

Workers who might be tempted to scab can be deterred from doing so by the solidarity of organized workers and by massive, militant picket lines. If would-be scabs decide there would be more pain than gain in robbing another worker of his or her job, they can be dissuaded from crossing a picket line.

But there has to be another, more positive — and in a sense more basic — approach to the problem. That involves winning the *loyalty, sympathy, and support* of other workers so that *the idea of scabbing never occurs to them*. But it is precisely in this area that the labor movement has demonstrated what is perhaps its greatest — and most costly — failing.

A society like ours, wracked by social crises, convulsions, and breakdowns, spawns protest movements by the scores. Unemployed workers; consumers; senior citizens; minorities; defenders of civil liberties; women; family farmers; antiwar, anti-intervention, and anti-apartheid activists; environmentalists; handicapped and disabled people; low- and middle-income students; gays and lesbians; the homeless; and other oppressed and concerned groups create organizations to voice their demands. These groups are looking for allies that have some clout and will support their struggles. The labor movement — through the sheer power of its numbers, its highly developed state of organization, its resources, and most importantly, its ability to affect the means of production, distribution, and communication — can often decisively affect the outcome of such struggles. If, however, the labor movement stands apart, it may pay a very severe price: its own isolation.

The labor movement's record in fighting on broader social issues is a mixed bag. Certainly there are some positive experiences, such as the participation of tens of thousands of unionists in the April 25, 1987, demonstrations in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco in support of peace and justice in Central America and Southern Africa. Labor representatives are part of numerous coalitions for progressive social change. Indeed, that is part of labor's agenda, as the AFL-CIO *News* has stated:

Building bridges between labor, the Black and Hispanic communities, and the women's movement helps to assure, wherever possible, a united front. . . . To successfully stave off the onslaught against civil rights, women's rights and labor's rights, cooperation and coordination must exist between these communities. (8/2/86)

Unfortunately, despite these good sentiments, there remains a wide gulf between what labor ought to be doing in support of the struggles of others and what it does do. Nowhere is this more clear than with the unemployed, from whose ranks scabs are largely recruited.

When organized workers are laid off, they are too often forgotten by their unions. No longer dues payers, they are

“out of sight, out of mind.” It's every man for himself and every woman for herself as workers compete with each other for the few low paying jobs that may be available.

The unemployed know little about labor's program on their behalf. (That program is a far cry from what is needed. While it includes a call for a shorter workweek and a public works program, its main focus is protectionist trade legislation, which will not provide a single job.) The labor movement's method of fighting for that program is basically lobbying and campaigning for “friendly” politicians. Mass actions in the streets organized by the labor movement to demand jobs for all are rare. After all, Solidarity Day I occurred over seven years ago.

So along comes a strike. An ad appears in the paper for workers to replace those on the picket lines. If the unemployed workers feel little or no solidarity with the strikers — and experience over these last years proves that many thousands do not — they cross the lines and steal the jobs.

Now suppose that the labor movement had been actively *organizing the unemployed*, opening its union halls for their meetings, providing them with funding, supporting their marches and rallies, assisting them in getting material relief, and in every way championing their cause. Might not many of those jobless workers be won over to *support* strikes instead of breaking them through scabbing? And if at the same time the labor movement was more deeply involved on *many fronts* — against poverty, war, discrimination, pollution, neglect of health and education, etc. — *might not the broad support of the community be won for labor's struggle as well?*

Getting the Laws Changed

The key to labor's success on the strike front — as well as legislatively and politically — lies in building broad coalitions with its allies around a program that meets the needs of the great majority. The more this is done independently — i.e., without relying on the “friendly” politicians of the Democratic Party who time after time order the national guard or the police to break our strikes — the more effective it will be.

Ultimately, the laws that protect scabs and punish strikers must be wiped off the books. When we in the labor movement start to elect people to political office from our own ranks — instead of electing business people and well-heeled lawyers — we can more realistically talk about getting this done.

SWP's 'Action Program': The Latest Guide to Inaction

by Tom Barrett

There are a few occasions in political life when one would like to be proven wrong. With much fanfare (most of it for the benefit of its own members), the Socialist Workers Party has published "An Action Program to Confront the Coming Economic Crisis" in the June 24 issue of the *Militant*. It is based on a report given by SWP national secretary Jack Barnes to a December 1987 meeting of the party's National Committee. If the working class were actually to respond to the SWP's "action program," limited as it is, that would be a good thing—it would advance the cause of international proletarian solidarity and revolutionary socialism. However—and we would like to be proven wrong—that is not likely to happen. It is more likely that this "action program" will join many another SWP scheme in the graveyard of false starts and pipe dreams. Rather than constituting a means to activate the party within the class struggle in the U.S., this latest document is far more likely to deepen the abstentionist trend which has become so pronounced in the party's work over the last few years.

The tragedy is that this abstention is so unnecessary. Though conditions are bound to get much worse, as implied by the *Militant's* headline, the economic crisis is not "coming"; it is *here*. The working class is fighting back in many areas; though, like the crisis itself, that fight-back is uneven. Working people and impoverished farmers are looking for leadership—their willingness to fight far exceeds the effectiveness of their strategies and tactics. An action program is just what is needed. However, the SWP's "action program" does not address the issues about which workers are most concerned. Furthermore, the party has not provided an adequate "delivery system." Very few people will ever read its program, and those that do are most likely to shrug it off.

The Crisis of the Present

The program's premise is that the October 19, 1987, stock market crash signaled the beginning of a worldwide economic crisis in the same manner that the 1929 stock crash did. That is a simplistic view, but probably valid as far as it goes. However, the SWP's leaders seem to see nothing else. Any reader of the "Action Program" will be struck by the fact that all of its sentences are in the future tense. "Farmers *will be* driven off the land; more and more workers *will join* the ranks of the unemployed; impoverishment *will hit* with a force not felt since the 1930s," and so forth. This is, of course, true. In all likelihood, these things *will* happen. The full effects of the stock market crash—or, rather, the effects of the economic disease of which the stock market crash was a prime symptom—have yet to be felt. However, revolutionists

have plenty to address in the present and have no need to wait until the future.

There *is* a depression in the United States right now, not in the future. It is not, however, generalized nationwide: the two coasts have not yet been affected. In the Midwestern states, conditions are grim. The economy of the south central United States has for most of the twentieth century been dominated by oil production. Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Arkansas may not have one-commodity economies, but a crisis in the oil industry can be sure to have devastating effects on the people in those states. The worldwide collapse of oil prices, which has fueled (literally) economic recovery in the Northeast, has led to a full-blown depression in the oil-producing states. Even geologists and engineers are reduced to finding jobs as short-order cooks. Enormous office buildings in Tulsa, Oklahoma, are less than 50 percent occupied, and the developers are unable to meet the terms of their financing. Property values have collapsed: housing is priced at about one-quarter the amount of comparable housing in the Northeast. But houses and apartment buildings cannot be sold, because people can't find jobs.

Conditions in the manufacturing heartland are so bad that reporters have taken to calling the region the "Rust Bowl." The American steel industry's collapse and the resulting outright economic destruction of a whole region of the United States—the northern Appalachian-Great Lakes area—has been commented on extensively for several years now, in this publication and many others. Many small cities, dependent for economic survival on a single steel plant, a single manufacturing plant, or a single mine, face becoming ghost towns.

All of this is covered over in official economic statistics, which amazingly show a dramatic decline in unemployment. The trick is that the long-term unemployed (those who are no longer eligible for unemployment benefits) aren't included in the figures. Also left out are those who have given up hope of finding a job—including growing numbers of homeless—those who have never been able to find employment, who are forced to take part-time work instead of full-time, or who can only find jobs far below their level of training or accustomed wages because nothing better is available. There is a growing division between the well-off sections of the population—for whom there is, indeed, an economic boom—and the poor who are driven more and more into hopelessness.

The farm crisis is several years old. It is not accurate to say that "farmers will be driven off the land." Farmers *are now* being driven off the land, by the hundreds, into a job market which has little room for them in their region. As if condi-

tions weren't bad enough, this year's drought is creating a more northerly version of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. The lack of rain has destroyed the spring wheat crop in Nebraska and the Dakotas, and even though winter wheat in Kansas and Oklahoma was ready for harvest by the time the drought struck, livestock farmers in those states are being hurt now. Pasture lands are parched, requiring farmers to feed their herds and deplete their winter stores of hay. However, the hay will not be replenished in time for winter feeding, forcing farmers to reduce their herd by selling early to the feedlots (where the animals are fattened prior to sale to the packinghouses). Consumers will notice an abundance of meat, albeit of poorer quality, and possible price reductions, but these will be short-lived. A severe shortage of meat will follow, as the effects of herd depletion are felt.

This can only exacerbate the already severe attacks on workers in the packinghouses. They have faced plant closures, wage reductions, and, in the plants which have remained open, speed-up and unsafe working conditions. As has been often reported here, packinghouse workers have taken the lead in fighting back against the employers. They have not been the only workers to fight back, however. Laid-off steelworkers in the Monongahela Valley, papermill workers and shipyard workers in Maine, state employees in Oregon, newspaper printers and mailers in Chicago, and even TV scriptwriters in New York and Hollywood have all taken strike action since the employers' offensive began. *None of these strikes gets any mention in the SWP's "Action Program."* There is not one word of what striking workers should do to *win* or what the rest of us can do to help them win their strikes, so that all workers can face their employers in a stronger bargaining position.

Though the economy in the Northeast and West Coast is not in a depression, and official unemployment rates are relatively low, conditions are far from rosy for working people. The greatest growth in employment has been in low-paying service-sector jobs. In New Jersey, the most industrialized state of all fifty, there has been a decrease in manufacturing jobs, as there has been everywhere, and those which remain are either nonunion or organized by unions with such corrupt and class-collaborationist leaders that conditions are little better than nonunion in many workplaces. As a consequence, workers in the Northeast have not been able to keep up with rising prices, especially for housing and medical care. The price of a modest home in a working class neighborhood in New York, New Jersey, or Massachusetts can easily exceed \$150,000—in fact, that price is considered a bargain in today's market! That is far out of reach for a working family buying a home for the first time. Apartment rents in New York have gotten so astronomical that among the homeless are now whole families—one or two members of which are actually employed!

Health care costs have increased so drastically that employers are attempting either to cut back on benefits which workers have gained in past collective bargaining or to make the employees pay for part of their health insurance. Many workers—especially the growing ranks of part-time and temporary workers—have no health insurance coverage at all. Even a short hospital stay can mean economic ruin for

them. And—maybe most tragically of all—many elderly workers are staying on the job because they can't afford to retire. The rights which should be guaranteed to all working people, the right to comfortable, sturdy housing, health care, education for our children, and a comfortable and secure retirement, are not universally enjoyed even in the "prosperous" regions of the United States. This is *now*, not later, and workers in massive numbers are looking for answers. Just because hundreds of thousands are not hitting the bricks in militant strike action each day does not mean that they are satisfied—not in the least. The dramatic increase in vote totals for Jesse Jackson demonstrates the depth of dissatisfaction, even though voting for Jackson is no solution.

An Exercise in Revolutionary Rhetoric

The "Action Program to Confront the Coming Economic Crisis" takes up six tabloid-size pages; most of it consists of rhetoric like this: "Hundreds of millions more people will join the already enormous ranks of those out of work and with no way to make a living in the countryside or city. The devastating plague of mass unemployment and underemployment will not only worsen throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In the imperialist countries . . . joblessness and impoverishment will hit with a force not felt since the 1930s." This kind of phrasemaking is easy to do, requiring little thought or factual research. It glides off any experienced socialist's pen.

At best, the "Action Program" provides a description of the evils of capitalism in the 1980s, and that is not bad in itself. Every socialist newspaper worth the price of a subscription informs its readers of the capitalist class's crimes throughout the world. Some even offer strategies for depriving that class of power. It is in this area—the area of what to do now and what to do next—that the SWP's "action program" has precious little to offer.

What the SWP Proposes

The entire SWP action program is actually summarized in a photo caption on its first page, and readers may judge for themselves if working people in massive numbers will rise to the party's call: ". . . a united international fight by workers and farmers is needed for a shorter workweek, cancellation of the foreign debt, and affirmative action." These three points constitute the sum-total of the six-page program. Each is reiterated several times, in different forms, but the reader waits in vain for a discussion of a myriad of other problems facing working people in the U.S. and around the world: opposition to imperialist military policies; the need for independent working class political action; a call for improved education, housing, social services, medical care, etc.; the need for a fight against the rising tide of racist attacks; and the list could go on.

There is nothing wrong with any of the three things called for by the "Action Program," and revolutionary socialists support them without reservation. All three would be of benefit to working people the world over. Winning a generalized shorter workweek or cancellation of the foreign debt

would be serious blows to the capitalist class's power—though the employers seem to be able to live grudgingly with affirmative action (hiring women and people of color does not cut across the corporations' ability to make profits).

However, the measure of effectiveness of a campaign is not whether there is anything *wrong* in principle with the goals being advocated; rather, the campaign must be judged on whether it will actually reach working people at their present level of consciousness and help educate them and bring them to a higher political consciousness. And even the best, most sensible democratic and transitional demands are completely useless without an effective, well-organized plan to get them out to the people who will be receptive. It will take more than a *Militant* subscription drive and the publication of the "Action Program" as a pamphlet selling for \$1.00 to build an "international fight by workers and farmers."

The SWP is right on the mark when it explains how imperialism uses debt to maintain its grip on the former colonies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It is important that workers in the imperialist metropolises be educated about this issue. However, though workers in countries whose governments *owe* the fantastic sums of money to U.S., Japanese, and European banks may respond to a campaign for cancellation of the debts, workers in the United States—and probably other imperialist countries as well—are not sufficiently conscious of the problem at the present time to take *action* in response to it. More education is needed, and the *Militant* and the SWP are absolutely right to do what they can to raise people's consciousness of the debt issue. However, agitation in the U.S.A. around the demand for cancellation of foreign debt is not a realistic idea at the present time.

The demand for a shorter workweek with no reduction in pay—often summarized in the slogan "thirty for forty," that is, thirty hours' work for forty hours' pay—is a traditional militant labor response to unemployment. If plants put on four shifts instead of three it would put hundreds of thousands more people to work and create a tremendous improvement in workers' overall standard of living and quality of life. But, as any one who has participated in collective bargaining in the 1980s will testify, it's all unions can do today to keep "thirty-five for thirty-five," as employers are demanding "forty for thirty." The well-dressed union busters have their briefcases loaded with "giveback" demands and schemes for returning industries to open-shop conditions. Employers are even intentionally provoking strikes, knowing that the union leaders, with unfortunately few exceptions, are unwilling to do what has to be done to win. Before any campaign for "thirty for forty" can be realistic, a militant campaign must be begun to defend basic trade union rights—to organize, bargain collectively, and strike. The principles of class and trade union solidarity must be reinstilled in every workplace. Once we blunt the union-busting offensive, we can go on the offensive ourselves, demanding, among other things, "thirty for forty."

Affirmative action—including numerical quotas—is an effective means of fighting against racist and sexist discrimination in employment and education. A great deal of progress has been made in this area, in part because affirmative action has become legally recognized. Trade unions, together

with women's and civil-rights organizations, have to make sure that the law is enforced, and that employers who discriminate are brought quickly to justice and forced to comply. However, because affirmative action has become a formal legal right it is actually more difficult to organize an effective *agitational* campaign around it.

A related issue, which has not been adequately addressed, is the question of pay equity and comparable worth. Jobs in which large numbers of women and people of color are employed pay significantly less than those where white males predominate. This is something that the victims of this kind of discrimination are quite conscious of and willing to struggle around. However, on this question the SWP is, in its action program, completely silent. On other occasions, the SWP has even expressed its *opposition* to the demand for equal pay for jobs of comparable worth, complaining that it contradicts the struggle for affirmative action. Actually, the opposite is true: it is a necessary part of and complement to the struggle for affirmative action.

How Will the Party Turn Program into Action?

How the Socialist Workers Party intends to rally the working class to its action program is not spelled out in the pages of the *Militant*. One way to circulate it would obviously be through the presidential election campaign of James Warren. One need only look back at the success the party had circulating its "Bill of Rights for Working People" in the Camejo-Reid campaign of 1976 to see what *could* be done.

The vote for Jesse Jackson has shown that working people, farmers, and students all over the country, of all races and both sexes, are looking for a political alternative. Jackson and his Rainbow Coalition are, of course, simply providing a conduit for channeling activists into support for the Democratic Party ticket in November. But the interest generated by the Jackson campaign shows that socialists have a big opportunity in the electoral arena as well. We find it inexplicable, therefore, that the SWP has failed to give its presidential campaign a high priority this year. Without a vigorous campaign, it is hard to see how the party leadership expects to reach very many people with its new "Action Program."

Labor Political Action

The electoral framework is exactly the proper place for workers to discuss the ideas which the SWP presents, along with the many others which need to be raised. A more aggressive Warren-for-president campaign would certainly be a good thing. However, if labor is really to implement its own program, which includes a shorter workweek, national health insurance, comparable worth, U.S. hands off Central America, an end to racist violence, and all of its other legitimate demands, it must have a political organization equal in strength to its industrial organizations—the unions themselves. Just as a fighter who only punches with his right cannot expect to last more than ninety-one seconds in the ring with Mike Tyson, labor cannot expect to prevail against

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Is There a Simple Solution To Nicaragua's Economic Crisis?

by Steve Bloom

The economic crisis in Nicaragua is well documented—in both the major news media in this country and the left press. Rampant inflation, declining production, a growing deficit in international trade, outrageous profits being reaped by those who speculate in scarce goods; these are a few of the difficulties faced by this small country.

In the June issue of the newspaper *Socialist Action*, Alan Benjamin has written an article titled "Nicaraguan Revolution at Critical Crossroads" which discusses this crisis and the way he believes it can be resolved: abandonment of the "mixed economy" project of the Sandinistas in favor of a nationalized economy under control of the state. Here is what he has to say:

It is obvious that one of the major reasons for the fiscal deficit—and for the hyper-inflation—is the U.S.-backed contra war. But another factor, which flows from policy choices made by the Sandinista government, is the decision to offer incentives and pay guaranteed prices to the agro-export capitalists.

This incorrect policy, flowing from the Sandinista government's continued commitment to the "mixed economy," has fueled the deficit, the inflation (which affects the workers the most), and the process of decapitalization of the economy.

And further:

The FSLN government, if it is to meet the needs of the masses and prevent the dynamism of the revolution from being continually eroded, must break out of the bonds of the mixed economy and take the path the Cuban Revolution took in 1960. This will require the overturn of capitalist property relations.

There can be no doubt that the contradictions of the mixed economy are a severe strain on Nicaragua. The Sandinista government represents the armed power of the workers and peasants of that country, taken by force in 1979 through the overthrow of the hated Somoza dictatorship. But this political power in the hands of the laboring masses has not yet been translated into the seizure of the main engines of economic power. As long as this is true, the old ruling classes—which maintain their ability to exploit for their own profit—will use their economic clout as best they can to sabotage the country and undermine the political conquests of the Sandinistas.

Benjamin understands this, and he explains it very well in his article. It is, however, only one component of the problems facing the Nicaraguan revolution today. To focus on this alone, while ignoring other important features which

ought to modify our thinking, will give any analysis a one-sided character.

Reasons for the Crisis

A list of factors that have contributed to Nicaragua's present economic turmoil will, of course, prominently feature sabotage undertaken by the private sector. But a number of others need to be given at least equal billing: the boycott of Nicaragua by the U.S.; destruction caused by the contra war; the need to devote a majority of the Sandinista budget to fighting that war, which has taken essential resources away from economic development; an increasingly unfavorable international trade situation, where prices for Nicaragua's exports (like those of other developing countries) decline while the price of goods it needs to import soar; the refusal of the USSR—under the influence of Gorbachev's striving for improved relations with Washington—to give Nicaragua even a modicum of the economic aid it needs.

To be sure, Benjamin mentions these points in his article. But they get a decisive second place in his overall analysis. Is that a correct approach? Can one really come to grips in a practical way with the economic difficulties of Nicaragua without dealing with the totality of factors which are affecting the country? How would Benjamin's prescription—nationalization and a planned economy—resolve any of these other things? At the very least, we have to acknowledge that major difficulties would still remain in a Nicaragua with an economy taken out of the hands of the bourgeoisie. And even though the nationalization of the Nicaraguan economy would resolve the problem of sabotage by the bourgeois and landowning classes, it would at the same time create some new contradictions of its own. This is a point we will return to.

A More Profound Appreciation of the Contradictions

One of the most important things to keep in mind is that socialist economic forms were never really designed to operate in the context of poverty, of grinding economic scarcity such as exists in Nicaragua. The development of backward "socialist" economies around the world is a product of the failure of the international proletarian revolution to succeed in a single advanced industrial country—such as Germany, France, or Italy, all of which had their opportunities in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s (and in France as recently as 1968).

Simultaneous with the stagnation of the anti-capitalist revolution in the advanced industrial world it has been extended to countries such as China, Vietnam, and Cuba. These nations were compelled, in the process of the fight for their liberation from imperialism, to begin organizing their economies on a socialist basis despite the conditions of poverty and underdevelopment which prevailed. Thus expropriation of the old ruling classes and economic planning has come to be identified in the minds of Marxists with the very notion of revolution in such countries, and in an important sense this is correct: Countries that failed to move in this direction after achieving independence from imperialism have tended to stagnate and fall back into the imperialist economic net as semicolonial slaves of the industrial powers. Those that broke definitively with the capitalist economic system have been able to advance their own independent economic development, even if within limits. As a general rule this truth is unassailable.

Still it has to be acknowledged that the imposition of socialist forms of property and planning in backward countries hasn't worked flawlessly. In fact, virtually all of these countries — from the Soviet Union on down the line — have suffered from serious economic problems. Many of their difficulties are caused by the parasitic bureaucracy which has imposed itself on most of these revolutions. But to blame things entirely on this would be a mistake. The contradictions inherent in the idea of utilizing socialist forms to try to build an economy responsive to the needs of the masses in a situation of pervasive economic scarcity and hostile capitalist encirclement mean that in the most profound sense these revolutions remain holding actions — until they receive decisive support from the industrial proletariat in the imperialist centers.

The Specific Case of Nicaragua

The questions that have to be asked, then, about Nicaragua are: Do the Sandinistas appreciate this fundamental contradiction? And do they have a reasonable approach to dealing with it?

The answer to both of these is clearly affirmative. Note, this still leaves open the question of whether they are right or wrong in the course they have chosen. I don't believe that this can be adequately judged by anyone except those who are able to see the situation firsthand. At some point the Nicaraguan workers and peasants will have to expropriate the expropriators. But as long as the Sandinistas are not conscious ideological opponents of such a course, as long as they are not active betrayers of the workers and peasants — and no one with an ounce of political integrity could believe that they are — I am inclined to rely on them to make the tactical judgment as to when that moment arrives.

(It is not without interest that some of the present central leaders of Socialist Action have been declaring the absolute necessity for mass expropriations in Nicaragua since the victory of the FSLN in 1979 — while they remained members of the Socialist Workers Party. When the time actually arrives that this judgment proves accurate, leaders such as this will have little claim to any deep political insight.)

The leaders of the FSLN have not decided on their course because they suffer from ideological blindness, nor because they are ignorant of the options they have before them. When they consider it necessary, as in the case of the San Antonio sugar plantation which was nationalized in the middle of July, they have not hesitated to take decisive action. They are aware of the economic benefits that would theoretically come their way as a result of sweeping expropriations of the propertied classes. Yet they have concluded that for other reasons this would not be wise at the present time. Here is what Daniel Ortega said in a speech he gave on June 14 (the quotation is taken from the July 1, 1988, *Militant*):

At different times, we here have discussed whether or not it would be correct to propose a line of action that would lead to the abolition of private property in this country. But what we have here is a society made up of peasants, small, middle, and big peasants. Just imagine the impact it would have if we had a policy of expropriating the land of the small, middle, and large peasants, and converting the land into large state farms with irrigation and advanced technology.

This would increase and multiply the production of corn and beans, since peasant production is very backward and poor. Then, we wouldn't have to take liberal economic measures such as leaving the sale of basic grains to the free market. Thus, from the technical-economic point of view, it would be a very wise measure.

But it would be a stupid move from the political point of view. Because we can't lose our perspective when facing all these problems, when we have to defend the revolutionary power.

Our revolution has a socialist orientation. That's definite. But we are not in a stage where the application of some socialist measures would contribute to the principal objective, which is defending the revolutionary power.

Ortega is clearly attempting to factor a series of complex economic and political realities which the Nicaraguan revolution faces into his thinking. Moving decisively against private property would provide a plus in important respects. However it would also be a minus for other reasons. And for now these minuses outweigh the plus in his view, and in the view of the majority of the Sandinistas.

Let's consider just one of these minuses. Today Nicaragua is faced with an economic boycott imposed by the United States government. At the same time it cannot rely on substantial aid from the USSR or from other workers' states. (This latter point, by the way, makes the situation faced by the Sandinistas qualitatively different from that of the Castro leadership in Cuba in 1959, and makes Benjamin's advocacy in his article of the "Cuban model" for Nicaragua a bit stretched, to say the least.) Nicaragua is largely dependent on credits and aid received from capitalist countries other than the U.S.A. Wouldn't a move to decisively expropriate the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie and landowners make securing such aid and credits qualitatively more difficult?

The approach of the Sandinistas is a very practical one, stemming from very practical problems. Programmatic and theoretical generalities can be of help in analyzing the situation, but by themselves they can't be decisive. It is necessary

to be as concrete as possible. And any criticism of the Sandinistas' course must respond to the sum total of the factors they are considering. Anything less cannot be convincing.

Maintaining Mass Support

In one essential respect Ortega's speech, quoted above, addresses the real heart of the matter. Although economic questions are important, even decisive in the long term, the main problem in an immediate sense is not, primarily, an economic one. It is political—the maintenance of the political power of the Sandinistas.

The reason that the Trotskyist movement has historically insisted on the necessity for socialist economic measures as the decisive step in consolidating a workers' revolution is that this is—in general—the most important single thing which can be done to maintain the mobilization of the masses in favor of the revolutionary government. It demonstrates beyond any shadow of a doubt the commitment of that government to the interests of the workers and peasants, its decisive opposition to any return to a bourgeois solution. This maintains the morale and sharpens the fighting spirit of those who made the revolution, and helps to mobilize additional layers in support of it. It strengthens the working class and weakens the bourgeoisie.

But how does this general truth, which is unassailable as a general truth, relate to Nicaragua? Does the Sandinista government have a serious problem with a significant layer of the masses in maintaining confidence in itself and its rule? Has there been a great deal of difficulty mobilizing the workers and peasants against the bourgeois-led counter-revolution? Do *these factors* seem to dictate a decisive shift in the economic policies of the Sandinistas?

Of course there has been some erosion of support for the revolution among certain layers. But this is not at all surprising given the circumstances. The fact is that in every major revolutionary upheaval in the history of the world (including bourgeois revolutions) the initial result has been a decline in the living standards of the masses. This is an interesting contradiction, since the question of living standards is one of the factors that most often sparks mass support for the revolutionary movement. Nevertheless, the generalized destruction and economic dislocation which results from a serious struggle for power between two contending classes means that it is generally years, and occasionally decades, before economic productivity even matches prerevolutionary levels. That was true, for example, in the 13 American colonies after their successful revolt against the British crown in 1776, as well as in the USSR after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. It is certainly true in Nicaragua today.

This reality sets up a tug-of-war between the ideological consciousness of the masses, conquered in the very process of struggling against the old regime, and the economic reality which they face after their victory. The ideological consciousness forged in a revolutionary confrontation with a dictatorial government, like that of Somoza in Nicaragua, is not easily undermined or destroyed. That struggle involved virtually the entire population of the country. Those who have conquered power through such a process, who can see the

vision of a better future for themselves and their families—as well as for those who struggled on the barricades alongside of them or who suffered in the torture chambers of the National Guard—will make tremendous sacrifices in the immediate period so that this vision can be realized. This represents ideological capital which the Sandinistas can bank on to help maintain the revolutionary power while efforts are pursued to overcome the crisis of material resources which the country faces.

At the same time, however, a serious deprivation in terms of basic consumer goods tends to undermine the ideological strength of the mass movement—creating the basis for the revival, in the case of Nicaragua or of any working class revolution, of individualistic tendencies, pressure for each person to do whatever is necessary to survive despite the consequences those actions may have for the revolution and for society as a whole. If these tendencies become strong enough they can undermine revolutionary consciousness to the point where a revival of the fortunes of the old ruling classes is possible.

It is very difficult to accurately assess the relative strength of these two tendencies in Nicaragua today. The key question that has to be posed regarding the continued capitalist predominance in the economy is: To what extent is this undermining the ideological commitment of the majority of Nicaragua's workers and peasants? Obviously it is doing so in part. But the main trend certainly seems to continue on the side of the Sandinista government and its policies.

What factors can we point to in support of such a conclusion? Here are a few: the Sandinista army apparently had little difficulty with morale or fighting spirit in the war against the contras; the contras had little or no success in building a base of support among the civilian population; the FSLN continues to be able to mobilize masses of people, while the bourgeois opposition cannot; and on the whole the Sandinista Workers Federation is successful in its appeals to working people to hold the line on demands which the economy is unable to fulfill at the present time. All of this indicates that the ideological consciousness of the majority of the Nicaraguan population remains firm, despite the economic hardships.

What is surprising about Nicaragua today, in fact, is not that the overwhelming problems which the revolution has confronted since 1979 should have undermined some of the determination and support of the working masses. Rather it is that so little of this has taken place—that after nine years of incredible difficulties the majority of the population of the country remains firmly in support of Sandinista rule.

Nicaragua is not a bureaucratic dictatorship, where the opinions of the masses of the people are silenced through repression or intimidation. There is clearly a continuing discussion and dialogue between the government and the population as a whole about the policies of the revolution. The Sandinistas seem to be responsive to that dialogue. They have shown an ability to adapt and change on the basis of real life and their discussions with the masses. Of course this process isn't perfect. But it does seem likely that if there were a severe erosion of popular support for the revolution as a result of the "mixed economy" project then that would

quickly become manifest. The Sandinistas are certainly capable of making the needed corrections in a timely fashion.

A Solution for Nicaragua?

Toward the end of his article Benjamin himself poses a key question concerning the Nicaraguan revolution, but he seems not to draw the obvious conclusion from his answer: Is it possible for the Nicaraguan revolution to survive and prosper in the context of encirclement by hostile capitalist states, in the absence of an advance of the revolution to the other countries of Central America and, ultimately, to the imperialist centers?

The obvious answer for any revolutionary Marxist is: no. (Benjamin understands and explains this in the context of his assessment that the Sandinista government has made too many concessions to the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie and to imperialism as a result of the Central American "peace

process" which has led to the current cease-fire with the contras. His approach to this is also one-sided, but a discussion of it is beyond the scope of this article.)

Yet if it is not possible for Nicaragua's revolution to survive and prosper in isolation, in the absence of other revolutions in the region and around the world which could come to its aid, how can Benjamin assert that a policy of nationalizing the economy will somehow be able to resolve the current economic crisis of Nicaragua?

It is by no means excluded that the Sandinistas might decide, or be forced, in the short term to implement a policy of sweeping expropriation of the exploiting classes under compulsions similar to those that led to the nationalization of the San Antonio sugar plantation. If they do so, however, given the terrible backwardness of Nicaragua, there is no guarantee that this will actually improve the situation. Nationalization can create serious problems in its own right in a situation where there are inadequate resources and in-

A View from Managua

by Michael Frank

Contrary to the impression one might get from reading the bourgeois press in the United States, there is enormous support by the workers, campesinos, and small merchants in Nicaragua for the revolution—and for the Sandinista leadership. That is my conclusion after a two-week trip organized by Casa Nicaraguense de Español. It included living with a working class Sandinista family and visits to labor unions, factories, agricultural cooperatives, women's groups, etc.

Each barrio is organized for self-defense in the event of a U.S. invasion. People are trained to use arms and there is a planned division of labor among those who will do the actual fighting, those who will prepare food, and those who will provide medical support. There are underground passages for the safety of the children.

The factories are also organized for defense. Workers are skilled in the use of arms and are trained both to defend their factories and keep production going under conditions of

war. In addition, voluntary battalions from the barrios and the factories perform military service in the northern regions and do educational and political work with the campesinos.

This degree of commitment and mobilization is all the more remarkable given the economic hardships imposed by the U.S. trade embargo and the war. Food prices are high and the basic meal is a small portion of rice and beans. Water is shut off two days a week in Managua because the campesino influx from the war zone has overburdened the supply system. But the causes of the economic crisis are understood by the masses.

Living with a family in the barrio of Altagracia helped me to better understand some of the roots of popular support for this revolution. Our hostess, Nora, fought alongside her neighbors and erected barricades against Somoza's tanks. During the civil war, airplanes also strafed the working class districts. Nora lost her sister-in-law who was riddled with bullets across the neck and shoulder. She

died after undergoing eight operations in Cuba to reconstruct her vocal apparatus. We heard many stories like this in the barrio, all of them told with a mixture of pain and pride.

These families made the revolution and consider it their own.

The contras have suffered a strategic defeat and have not been able to establish a popular base in the country. The U.S.-imposed economic crisis has not significantly reduced support for the Sandinista government. Imperialism's last option is a military intervention. But in Nicaragua this could not be a quick mop-up operation as it was in Grenada, but a protracted struggle against an armed population.

My trip underlined once again for me how important it is to build mass mobilizations in this country which can put an end to all contra aid and lift the embargo on trade. That would enable the Nicaraguan revolution to survive and realize its full potential.

sufficient technical or managerial skills on the part of the masses to make it work — a point that the Sandinistas are fully aware of. A policy of sweeping nationalizations which Nicaragua was unable to support, and which therefore led to a worsening of the economic dislocation, would actually set back the progress of the socialist revolution in Nicaragua and the rest of Latin America, not advance it.

The Crystallization of Contradictions

Ultimately the present contradictory situation in Nicaragua has to be resolved. Either the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie will reconquer state power or the workers of Nicaragua will expropriate the productive process. But acknowledging this fact doesn't tell us anything about the timetable.

If we had tried to predict in 1979 how long we might expect the process of transition to take, certainly nine years would have seemed exceedingly unlikely. The dynamics of revolutions simply haven't allowed that kind of leeway in the past. We would no doubt have explained that if the Sandinistas waited that long before moving in an overtly socialist direction the most probable result would be their overthrow. But nine years it has been, and Sandinista power remains intact.

The reason for such an erroneous judgment on our part would have been that we were basing ourselves on past experience. That was the only thing we could do before events unfolded in Nicaragua itself. But now we can look at what has actually transpired in that country. Nicaragua isn't a revolution from the past. It's a new experience, and it's necessary to view and analyze this experience in its own right.

Today the primary contradiction of the situation remains. The bourgeoisie and landowners, despite their economic clout, don't seem much closer to resolving things in their favor as a result of the events of the last nine years. Their major effort — the contra war — was not successful. The Nicaraguan workers and peasants remain firmly in control of the state apparatus.

In retrospect I venture the suggestion that perhaps this is not so surprising as might appear at first glance. If we look at the international situation since the end of the second world war it would not be unreasonable to characterize it as a period of the crystallization of transitional forms. That is, social phenomena which ought to be transitional from one kind of society to another have hardened, become semipermanent — at least far more permanent than their transitional nature would ordinarily justify. Isn't this precisely what has happened in Nicaragua?

The most obvious example of such a process, if we stop to think about it, is the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR. A classical Trotskyist explanation of this bureaucracy is as a parasitic growth on the workers' state, one with no political or economic viability whatsoever, which has resulted from a partial counterrevolution. It represents a transitional phenomenon which should prove the prelude to either the completed counterrevolution and the destruction of the Soviet workers' state, or else a resurgence of working class power and a political revolution that will overthrow the bureaucracy. Trotsky himself predicted one or the other of

these outcomes as a direct result of World War II. Yet this did not come to pass, and the reasons why are instructive.

Trotsky based his prognosis on the two most probable outcomes of the war: either it would lead to successful revolution in one or more of the imperialist countries, which would provide the impetus necessary for the Soviet working class to remobilize itself and kick out the bureaucrats, or else it would see the USSR defeated by the capitalist powers and bourgeois rule restored. The actual outcome of the war, however, confounded Trotsky's prediction. Neither the international proletariat nor the international bourgeoisie was able to resolve the crisis of society in its favor. The USSR was not destroyed, yet efforts by the working class to take power were also unsuccessful in the major European countries.

The result of this has been a stalemate in the international class struggle for the past 40 years. Neither capital nor labor has been able to definitively impose its own solution on a world scale. To be sure, there has been a gradual undermining of bourgeois power through the success of the colonial revolution and the establishment of workers' states in a number of former colonies. But this has not qualitatively changed the nature of the international balance of forces. The main imperialist strongholds maintain their grip. The consequence of this stalemate has been that transitional forms — such as the degenerated workers' state in the USSR, or the deformed workers' states in Eastern Europe, China, etc. — have developed a stability which would otherwise not seem theoretically possible.

But if, as a result of such a process, we can grant viability to the Soviet bureaucracy for some sixty-odd years (and still counting, despite the upheaval being experienced in the USSR today), what is so hard about acknowledging the possibility of a transitional development maintaining itself in Nicaragua for nine years? If every new revolution didn't hold some surprises for revolutionary Marxists, then Marxism would have to deny its own commitment to *dialectical* materialism — i.e., a philosophy of change and growth in our own understanding of the material world, as well as in the material world itself.

Of course it is possible that the decision of the Sandinistas to extend the transitional process in Nicaragua as long as possible is mistaken. There has never been a revolutionary leadership in history that hasn't made costly mistakes. That's part of the inevitable overhead of the revolutionary process. But the Sandinistas seem to be aware of the problems and the contradictions, and if we can judge by their past performance they are likely to recognize errors in time to correct them before they lead to the sacrifice of the Nicaraguan revolution's key conquest: governmental power in the hands of the workers and peasants.

General Theoretical Consequences

Some may fear that drawing such conclusions about Nicaragua might constitute a dangerous challenge to the Trotskyist program and traditions about the role of expropriations and a planned economy in an overall process of permanent revolution. This fear can only come from a narrow and ultimately sectarian conception of Trotskyism. Marxism cannot be approached as a series of immutable

laws. If it were, it could no longer lay claim to being *scientific* socialism — since there can be no such thing as a finished and completed science, one which does not and cannot change based on new events.

The growth and development of science consists *precisely* in the testing of the accumulated knowledge of any discipline — that is, the scientific laws derived from the generalization of past experience — against new phenomena which constantly appear on the threshold of that discipline. If there were no dissonance between our past experience and the new realities we face, no contradictions that needed to be resolved, then our science would be a boring affair indeed. But we needn't have any fear on that score. Human knowledge of the material world — the object of study of the natural sciences — will never be so complete that there are no new discoveries to shake things up. And what is true for the natural world is ten times more true for the laws of change in human society — the subject of Marxist analysis.

Nicaragua should be treated like a newly discovered biological specimen. We have to see if it fits into our old categories. If it does there are no problems. If it doesn't, then we have to determine in what ways the fit is imperfect, how it might confirm our previous thinking and how it seems to challenge it. We then have to see to what extent the ideas it challenges are wrong, as opposed to simply being more limited than was recognized in their previous application.

The key is to always insist that reality itself, and not our theory, is primary. This is what makes us materialists. In

Marxism, as in any science, general laws can never be invoked to overrule events in the real world. Historical or programmatic insights we might have to offer can never be *substituted* for the day-to-day experience of Nicaraguan revolutionaries in their struggle to defend themselves against the onslaught of a hostile imperialism. Correct programmatic perspectives and knowledge of historical experience are essential, but they aren't in and of themselves sufficient. Their application in any specific case — as has often been noted by revolutionary Marxists — is profoundly concrete.

An exceptional development in Nicaragua today, where the economic transition to socialist property forms is delayed for a relatively prolonged period, need not overthrow any previous theoretical generalities of the revolutionary Marxist movement. It is, however, an unexpected and extreme variation, one that allows us to see that there is a more flexible limit to a process already well recognized in past theoretical work.

Refusing to recognize the reality of the Nicaraguan revolution in the interest of defending what is rigidly perceived as our programmatic integrity is the worst thing we could do. A *genuine* defense of programmatic integrity requires precisely the opposite course — dealing honestly and uncompromisingly with what is actually happening in Nicaragua. We must have the flexibility to recognize how this can help our programmatic and theoretical insights to grow and become even more powerful.

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Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

23. My Second Arrest

December 1, 1934, became a day many will remember forever. I was on leave. As usual, I gave up the summer to other things and, not going away anywhere, I was spending some time off at home and keeping myself busy with my little pieces of iron.

In the evening, Yeva came home. She looked awful.

"Misha, did you listen to the radio?" Radio broadcasting had then only just been born. I had an EChS-2 receiver; you won't even find one in a museum.

"I was busy and didn't listen. What happened?"

"What a dreadful thing! Kirov was murdered!"¹

And having reported in a confused way the shooting by Nikolaev, she added:

"I told the regional party committee who you are. Therefore, from this day on you can consider me not to be your wife. We are getting a divorce."

I thought I had heard her wrong. Was this Yeva? Was it so long ago that I had proposed that we separate and she had cried on my chest, and I had felt sorry for her and kissed her damp eyes? And now? Who was this? Can she really believe that I could have had even an indirect, even a remote connection with the murder of Kirov?

She seemed to be only half-present. She was constantly listening for something, flinching at the sound of every automobile horn. We lived on an out-of-the-way street. Cars rarely passed here. What car was she expecting? Squeezing her temples with her hands, she repeated:

"I don't want you to live here! Tomorrow go look for an apartment!"

I got angry and slammed the door, not delaying the matter until tomorrow.

It was midnight. The trolley cars were making their last trip. Where to go? I headed on foot for the center. Traffic had finally begun to disappear. Dare I knock on a comrade's door at so late an hour? I stopped in at a police station and in a confused way explained that I had lost my key and asked permission to stay on a bench for the night.

"Of course, citizen, if it isn't too hard for you."

In the morning, I went to look for shelter. After having made arrangements of sorts with a comrade, I set off for the editorial office. Tsy-pin met me with a wan look:

"You know what kind of attitude there will be toward you people now. Nikolai Ivanovich [Bukharin] instructed me to speak to you about leaving the job. Keep in touch."

For the second time during the course of our relationship (or should I say friendship?), he fired me because of highly ideological considerations. He was troubled.

"If you are not able to find work," he said, and his voice sounded less confident than usual, "come to see me at my home. And in the meantime, I will release something for you from the editorial fund."

For many days, I walked about Moscow. The only room I could find was very expensive. After a month, I went to see Grigory Yevgenevich at home and told him of my failures. He sighed, Marya Yakovlevna became melancholy. Accompanying me, he descended several steps and awkwardly thrust a packet into my pocket. In the street, I unfolded it. It turned out to be money. I quickly gave it to my landlady for two months rent in advance. Would there be any new opportunity to pay her?

The same situation that I had had with Rafa was being repeated, but now I was in his place. If Tsy-pin and his wife had believed what was being said about me, they would not have helped me. Stalinism gave birth to a new moral conflict that was not illuminated by the writers. Even a person very close to the leadership, if that person had a spark of integrity, was forced to act like a hypocrite before the leadership.

* * *

Grigory Yevgenevich and I never met again. At the end of the 1930s, I ran into his older brother in a camp. They did not correspond. But the older brother soon learned that the

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.

younger had also ended up in a camp, sharing the fate of hundreds of thousands of Communists.

The mechanism of the repression became more precise as it grew. In the first days after Kirov's murder, a whole group of Communists were shot: Katalynov, Rumyantsev, and others, basically former Komsomol workers. But their wives were not immediately imprisoned. I knew one of them. She received administrative exile; this also existed and for it, no judicial decision was required. You aren't expecting anything and suddenly you receive through an agent of the militia a notice: Be out of Leningrad in 48 hours. Over two years they had refined the repression and had begun to send the wives of enemies of the people to camps so that they would not bore the judiciary workers with their complaints and depositions.

With one stroke, I was deprived of my wife, my work, my shelter, and the Prague restaurant. I really tightened my belt. The main item of expense I considered to be the rent for my room, and only what was left over would I spend on bread, tea, and sugar—that's what I had on my table. Although I lived next door to Gorbатов, I never even thought of visiting him.

Volodya Serov, who was thrown out of *Evening Moscow*, succeeded in making ends meet by casual notes on international themes for various editorial offices. There were people prepared to pretend that they did not know how dangerous he was. "Radicals," Volodya called them.

Serov was considered a very talented internationalist journalist. No one had ever taught him either journalism or languages. He learned everything on his own: he read, bought dictionaries, learned German and English. He was quiet about his past achievements, and for a long time I considered him the same kind of young Komsomol member as Saava and Arkady. I had become acquainted with all three at the same time and somehow equated them in my mind. Meanwhile, he was among those who had founded the Komsomol organization in Elizavetgrad (today Kirovograd).

Volodya was able to think up sharp epithets: for example, "Private ear reporter"—that's what he called people who are now called informers, using a Ukrainian pronunciation.

During the time that I was unemployed after being fired from *Izvestia*, Volodya shared everything that he earned with me. I would have barely entered the room and he would have turned on the electric kettle, brought out a jar of eggplant pate—the poor man's caviar, by his definition—and amidst a copious tea-drinking bout, our banquet conversation would begin.

Truly, Shalom Aleichem foresaw all my occupations. Mother hadn't called me a Shalom Aleichemesque hero for nothing. I undertook the most surprising trades to procure my daily bread. I even sewed collars, but was not able to sell a single one and had to wear them myself. I finally managed to get a job as a metal worker with the help of my brother, in the Lyuberets machine-building plant, where he had been a metal worker for several years.

The blow I had received evidently aroused me. No matter how much you may have declined in spirit, at such a time you cannot but look around to see where the blow came from. If the Stalinist measures that started after the shooting in the Smolny had not happened, I very likely would have never

awakened from my spiritual lethargy. The copious meals had lulled me to sleep, and the shot woke me up.

In my hometown, we had our village idiot, Yukel the *meshugenah* [Yiddish for fool]. He loved to stand on the shore and throw stones into the river.

"Why are you throwing them, Yukel?"

"I know why better than you do!"

No one could get an explanation from Yukel. However, the boys overheard him muttering to himself—the classic madman without fail mutters. It turned out that the circles radiating out from the stone made him mad and he wanted to destroy them. He threw at every new circle a new stone. But the more stones he threw, the more circles were created, and he had to use bigger and bigger stones.

After the murder of Kirov, huge circles were created in the water and Stalin's affairs took on a new scope. Through the press, radio, and the party apparatus, the slogan was hurled at the masses: "Vigilance and still more vigilance!" Because it was solely due to their lack of alertness that we lost Sergei Mironovich [Kirov], who was the great leader's best friend. Internal enemies are darting about among us, just looking for a chance to shoot somebody.

But Kirov had had a personal bodyguard. The reports of his murder hushed that up. Meanwhile, Nikolaev had been detained twice, for tailing Kirov with a pistol in his briefcase. But on direct orders from Moscow, he had been released twice. Is that not strange?

Nowadays, no one can imagine how insistently over the intervening years the slogan "Vigilance" was transformed into one of the main slogans of socialism—so as to achieve what was soon to be achieved under the pretext of the slogan, inordinately increasing the number and role of the punitive organs. Look for the enemy! Look for him above all among your friends! Look for him in your bed, in the street, and at work. Seek and you shall always find!

Thus they hypnotized us, and the hypnosis was totally successful.

From that decisive December 1934, everywhere, in all the high and not so high institutions, passes were issued. How many ministers and officials the passes saved from the bullets of an imperialist hired assassin has not been established, but it is well known that they did not save a single person from arrest, camp, and execution. On the other hand, they served another purpose exceptionally well: to protect the heads of departments from the people.

The aspiration of the bureaucrat to withdraw into his office, so no one will bother him, received its theoretical foundation. The pass into his office, and the pass into his private distribution point, were, strictly speaking, closely linked. And from this in and of itself flows the need to institute a pass to the private polyclinic. If the growth of privileges is outstripping the magnitude of service for which they are given, it is impossible to get by without shrouding the privileges in the deepest secrecy. Almost every department began to construct for itself departmental living quarters, sanatoria, stores, polyclinics, and pharmacies—a whole little isolated world, protecting them from the indignant looks of the rest of the citizens in their dirty work clothes, covered with machine grease.

Every provincial city has its special polyclinic; there is even one in the city where I live. There is no sign above the door. It is a secret building built, however, in the same solemn, heavy style as the main administrative buildings of the city, with thick columns and porticos in the style of the Parthenon. The service here is outstanding: no lines, no crowds. But in the city polyclinic for the common people, creating the material basis for communism, it is like a beehive, with the worker bees standing in the longest lines. But in the Polyclinic, you will see none. The doctors there are better, too. There the nurses are polite and are not in a hurry, and they are ready to give you a detailed answer to any question you may have, and to do everything for you with unprecedented haste.

There is no question that the state must feed its apparatus and the army which guards its borders. But just beyond every border there is another state, so the sizes of the remuneration to state servants of socialism has its limits, designated by Lenin in his time and while he lived strictly observed. Should salaries to servants of the people (plus the additional benefits that automatically go along with the job) outstrip the improvements in the well-being of the rest of the population?

The old Kharkov worker Petya Ryzhov correctly felt the danger as far back as 1927. He too did not want to overindulge the guardians of our common good.

Stalin received his power from the hands of the party. But in order to turn his power against the party, he chose for assistance the most secretive of state organs, the one which could lend itself to a secret reorganizational process more easily than the others. And he placed at its head Yagoda, his man, a blind implementer; and after him Yezhov, still more servile, cruel, and ready for anything.²

Under Dzerzhinsky, Cheka workers did not receive the same status as military workers.³ Cheka had at its disposal military divisions; but this was another matter. An official of a Cheka department was a department official and no more; and an investigator was an investigator. And the work of the Cheka at that time was far more dangerous and far closer to wartime work than in the years the old nurse of Svetlana Iosifovna [Stalin's daughter] received a military rank.

The special conditions created by Stalin for workers of institutions that were especially important to him received, like the awarding of military rank to Svetlana's nurse, high moral approval: the people fighting against the Trotskyists and the Bukharinists, against the secretaries of the provincial committees, the learned biologists, the Kremlin doctors, and the unwelcome writers, were equated with soldiers, heroically defending the Homeland under fire from artillery and aircraft.

The maximum pension for officers (not stipulated in the law on pensions), which would be paid to an investigator retiring after he had sent several hundred women to camp like those I heard being interrogated from the window of Cell No. 9, is significantly higher than the 120 rubles to which an ordinary citizen is entitled. And this, a reward for such an interrogation, is specially singled out and included in the military budget. Into the army of soldiers who give their lives, Stalin pours whole divisions of people (how many there were under Stalin!) who were not risking their lives but ordering other people around. I am not speaking here of the military

personnel who risked their lives to arrest armed bandits; nor about people like Ricardo Zorge, who work in military intelligence. Such people are heroes, playing with death every minute. But by the very character of their work, they were only a handful. I am speaking of those to whom men and women who had already been arrested and searched were delivered. And because they interrogated these arrested persons, led them around, searched them again, and sent them to punishment cells, gave them orders in the camps, wrote up reports about their conduct, and read them moral admonitions—for doing all this, Stalin gave these people officer status and officer pensions.

And we are used to it. It does not surprise us. Anyone who is surprised should try simply to express that surprise, and nothing more. For this, several very serious ideological charges get dumped on you immediately, cast in ready-made reinforced concrete blocks and standardized verbal panels from "lack of faith" to "slander," inclusive. And indeed: officers and soldiers defending the Homeland from foreign enemies do have their military hospitals. That means that it is logical to set up special hospitals and polyclinics for those who defend the Homeland from domestic enemies. However, the military hospitals are not hidden and have signs over the doors; but the special polyclinics are concealed from the people.

* * *

In the questionnaire for the All-Russian census of members of the Russian Communist Party in 1922, Lenin indicated his earnings: 4,700,000 rubles—then they were counted by the millions. And the average earnings of a worker was 3,420,000. This was the average, and not the highest. Lenin received only 26 percent more than the average worker. For the sake of clarity, it wouldn't hurt to report that the average wage for factory and office workers, taken together, in 1968 was 112.5 rubles, according to a report in *Pravda*, January 26, 1969. Thus, if we calculate Lenin's pay on today's scale, we get 141 rubles and 50 kopeks, 141.5 rubles.

To be sure, Lenin wrote about the need to "buy" specialists, i.e., to pay dearly for them. So specialists need to be bought, but not office workers in the state apparatus, and certainly not members of the Communist Party.

There are no objective laws of socialist economy that prevent the restoration of the Leninist norm, as they now say in our country, for payment to state workers in general and Communists in particular. It is only the subjective aspect (which undoubtedly over the decades has taken on a certain objective character) that serves to hinder this; the disinclination of workers in the state apparatus to equalize their salaries with those of the working class and to submit to working class standards. Attempts to raise the wages of job categories that are lagging behind are being made at the expense of those who generally speaking create all the wealth. The just thing would have been to raise these lagging wages at the expense of those whose salaries have grown too quickly in comparison with the wages of the rest of the workers.

Why is it impossible to restore wage leveling, if not at the average worker's wage, at least at that of the skilled worker,

as regards the maximum pay to workers in the state apparatus? And why is it impossible to reestablish the party maximum, starting from this level, which is high in comparison with the past?

Because there are Communists who do not want to give up their excessive funds? If that is true, good riddance. We would be better off without them.

In just the same way, absolutely unjustified from a communist point of view are the dachas, the especially well constructed departmental residences, the private polyclinics, hospitals, and sanatoria. There is a very small circle of leaders, certain of whom have acquired such political weight that there is reason to fear attempts on their lives from enemies. It is necessary to give these leaders personal bodyguards and to take care that they live, rest, and get medical treatment in conditions guaranteeing their safety. But how many such people are there? In the entire country, maybe fifteen, including the chief designer of ballistic missiles.

Scientific figures need an office at home because they are constantly thinking about their scientific problems. And state workers, if they work at home, also need such an office. That person may also need a telephone, automobile, and some may even need an airplane. But no job requires more.

Privileges of this type, necessary for the good of the cause, can be granted in an absolutely open way. But secret privileges?

* * *

Surely I made a mistake in not leaving Moscow immediately, to bury my head in the sand somewhere in Central Asia and not see whether my tail was noticeable from a distance? Some comrades saved themselves that way! But not for long. The wise Yukel again walked all along the bank and wherever he found a stone, instantly threw it into the water. It is better to throw too many than not to throw enough.

And all the same, I did have a chance to be saved. This chance was barely nineteen years old. When Yeva and I got married, Ida was playing with dolls and now she had grown up and blossomed and, having come to visit us just at the right time, told her elder sister:

"If I were in your place, I would never break up with Misha; I would love him my whole life, believe me!"

She was an unpretentious girl and too enthusiastic, and I was a stone that had grown too deeply into the shore. And I remained in Moscow to await my fate; and she left to meet hers. She ended up under the German occupation and worked in the underground; someone turned her in, and the fascists hanged her as a partisan and, moreover, a Jew.

Almost a year flew by. Having gone to the factory in Lyuberets, I moved in with my brother and began to visit Moscow only rarely. I now and then visited the children, Volodya, Mama — she came to visit Anna, my youngest sister. Mama never asked questions about anything; it seemed she was content to know that both her sons were working in the same factory and were living together.

Once I went to visit Volodya. The landlady let me in. "They arrested your friend the day before yesterday. I'm still shaking."

"And what were they looking for?" I asked.

"And do you expect me to remember? They turned his entire library upside down, and ransacked the books all night long. I had to sign something. The poor young fellow! You don't know why this happened?"

It was difficult to believe but I, in fact, could not imagine why this had happened, and it didn't occur to me to prepare for my own arrest. It was spring, May, a time of highest hopes.

About three weeks passed. My brother and I were home alone; his wife had gone to the country. On May 25, the thirteenth anniversary of my joining the party, at 11:30 at night, they came.

"Allow us to conduct a search of your home."

There were no proclamations in my books. They uncovered only the letters from Lena Orlovskaya, her photo, and the top of a cigarette box with her message: "Farewell, my only friend." I had kept this piece of cardboard.

They hauled me off to a bug-infested place in Lyuberets and in the morning took me to Moscow.

[Next month: "My Second Arrest," continued, and "We Know All About You"]

Notes

1. Sergei Kirov (1886-1934) was a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU from 1923 and was party secretary in Leningrad from 1926. His assassination signaled the start of the purges that culminated in the Moscow trials and the extermination of the entire remaining leadership of the Russian Revolution. The assassin, Leonid Nikolaev, was tried behind closed doors and shot in December 1934. The assassination evidently resulted from bungling on the part of the Soviet secret police during an effort to manufacture a plot that could be used to smear Trotsky as a terrorist. Many of the details are still unknown to the public, despite the fact that Nikita Khrushchev exposed the official version as a frame-up in his famous speech to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956.

2. Henry Yagoda (1891-1938) was the head of the Soviet secret police until 1936, when he was succeeded by Nikolai Yezhov (1894-1939?). In 1938 Yagoda, who had supervised the organization of the 1936 Moscow trial, was himself made a defendant and shot. Yezhov disappeared after the third Moscow trial.

3. Felix Dzerzhinsky (1877-1926) was a founder of the Social Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania. He became the first Soviet commissar for internal affairs and first chairman of the Cheka, the Soviet secret police, later called the GPU.

New Developments in Mark Curtis Case

This article is excerpted from a letter sent out by the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, July 23, 1988. Curtis is a 29-year-old worker at the Swift/Monfort packinghouse in Des Moines, Iowa, where he is a member of Local 431 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. Because of his union activities he was arrested on March 4 of this year on frame-up charges of attempting to rape a 15-year-old Black high school student. He was severely beaten by the cops. The committee's address is: P.O. Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa 50311; phone (515) 246-1695.

The July 3 International Defense Rally struck a real blow against the prosecution. The prosecution struck back. At a July 12 hearing they tried to "accelerate" the trial date, subpoena Mark's lawyers' files and denounce the International Defense Rally. The county prosecutor put the head of a county agency—Victims Services—on the stand to report on the defense rally. People "clapped and cheered" about the two-month postponement of the trial, she complained. On June 30 a judge had ruled in favor of our motion to postpone the trial from July 6 to September 7 so that the defense investigation could continue.

At the hearing the prosecutor put the father of the alleged victim on the stand. He threatened Mark. And he tried to carry out the threat three days later. He missed Mark but did \$2,000 damage to the bookstore where the defense committee has an office. The police and prosecutor have still not filed charges.

Messages demanding justice for Mark Curtis should be sent to Polk County Attorney James Smith, 408 Courthouse, 500 Mulberry St., Des Moines, Iowa 50309; telephone (515) 286-3737.

Contempt Charges and Jail Sentences Against Seattle Socialists Dismissed

This article is based on a news release, dated June 12, 1988.

On May 25 in the Washington State Court of Appeals, Commissioner Larry Jordan approved the dropping of contempt charges and jail sentences against Freedom Socialist Party founder Clara Fraser, one of the defendants in a lawsuit against the FSP by a disaffected former member, and attorneys Valerie Carlson and Fred Hyde. Judge Anthony Wartnik of King County Superior Court had dismissed the charges on April 22, as part of an unusual bond arrangement worked out to protect the defendants from collection by Richard Snedigar on a \$42,139 judgment levied against them without a trial. In lieu of a \$50,000 cash bond, defendant and FSP national secretary Guerry Hoddersen and her sister, Heidi Durham, put up their home as security.

Both the original default decision and the contempt sentences resulted from the courts' refusal, to date, to support the defendants' assertion that the U.S. and state constitutions guarantee the privacy of the FSP's internal documents. Snedigar sued the FSP and nine individual defendants in 1984 in an effort to reclaim a \$22,500 donation made to a party-building fund five years earlier. He and his lawyers demanded that the FSP release lists of members and contributors and several years' worth of meeting minutes. Be-

cause the FSP refused to obey a court order to surrender the minutes, citing the havoc that compulsory disclosure would wreak on the First Amendment rights of all voluntary organizations, King County Superior Court Judge Warren Chan awarded the case to Snedigar through default in September 1987.

Four months later, Judge Noe ruled Fraser, Carlson, and Hyde in contempt when they declined to answer questions about their finances in a hearing initiated by Snedigar's lawyers. The three explained that divulging facts about their own finances would inevitably reveal information about FSP money matters as well. Their privacy rights were being invaded before their claim to those rights could be heard on appeal.

The defendants filed their major appeal brief with the state Court of Appeals on March 5. Oral arguments are expected in the fall.

Support is still needed for the defense effort. For further information contact: Freeway Hall Case Defense Committee, 5018 Rainier Avenue South, Seattle, WA. 98118, 206-722-2453.

Reclaiming the Truth

Materials for a History of Trotskyism in the United States

Organizational Principles and Practices, edited with an introduction by Evelyn Sell. *Revolutionary Traditions of American Trotskyism*, edited with an introduction by Paul Le Blanc. *Trotskyism in America: The First Fifty Years*, by Paul Le Blanc. Published by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

Reviewed by Tom Barrett

As the Socialist Workers Party has, over the course of the 1980s, distanced itself from its Trotskyist heritage its leadership has found it necessary to distance itself from the truth. In order to justify its political decisions, it has falsified or ignored actual events, the ideas and actions of its opponents, and even its own history. The Fourth Internationalist Tendency's very existence is a result of the SWP leaders' dishonesty, for the F.I.T.'s first members were expelled from the party on false charges of "disloyalty." The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* was first published to set the record straight on the internal party crisis, and it continues to refute the lies, distortions, and half-truths which pass for news and political analysis in the pages of the *Militant*.

The party's falsification of its own past — done in the name of "revolutionary continuity"! — is particularly criminal. In its alleged attempt to reestablish continuity with "the first four congresses of the Comintern" the party ignored the Trotskyist movement's acquisitions of the late 1920s and 1930s. The SWP leaders openly characterize the party's activity in the post-World War II period as "semisectarian"; in so doing they underestimate the invaluable party-building work done during that period, work which made possible the party's growth in the late 1960s. In fact, revolutionists could learn a great deal from the SWP of the 1945–65 period which they could apply to the present day. Even the proud years during which the party played the leading role in the anti-Vietnam War movement are downplayed today. Jack Barnes, in his remarks at a memorial meeting for Fred Halstead, discounted the relevance of the Vietnam War experience to the party's work at the present time.

It is unfortunate that the Socialist Workers Party has either lost or expelled so many of its members who participated in its activity during the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, and even the 1960s and 1970s. Those veteran comrades who have remained have not had the courage to set the record straight, though some have made revealing slips: when oppositionist Asher Harer confronted SWP Control Commission member Clifton DeBerry with the truth about James P. Cannon's "unauthorized" correspondence with party members around the country, DeBerry responded that Cannon would have been expelled from the party had he acted in a similar fashion today.

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency has taken on the responsibility of "setting the record straight" to the best of

its ability. The three-pamphlet series "Materials for a History of Trotskyism in the United States" is hardly the F.I.T.'s first exploration of party history, but it is the most ambitious to date. The attempt is to write neither an "official" history nor a hagiography of past leaders, but to put into print the actual words which SWP leaders wrote and spoke in past periods, so that readers may understand for themselves that the SWP's policies now are hardly "the way we have always done things."

Organizational Principles and Practices

In 1985, the F.I.T., jointly with Socialist Unity (the precursor of Solidarity's Fourth Internationalist Caucus), published *Don't Strangle the Party*, a collection of letters and speeches by James P. Cannon, which proved how far removed the organizational concepts of today's party leaders are from Cannon's. *Organizational Principles and Practices*, Evelyn Sell's contribution to the "History" project, continues where *Don't Strangle the Party* left off. However, Sell goes beyond the immediate issue of the SWP's present practices as contrasted with the past to address several important questions: "What kind of party is needed to challenge successfully the rule of U.S. imperialism? Does the Leninist party equal dictatorial bureaucracy? Can democracy flourish within and through a Leninist party?" *Organizational Principles and Practices* is important reading for all working class militants, for those newly radicalized, and for the veterans of different currents in the workers' movement as well.

Included in *Organizational Principles and Practices* are three selections written in previous years and one written expressly for this volume. It begins with an excerpt from an introductory pamphlet which the party published in 1948 entitled "The Socialist Workers Party: What It Is and What It Stands For," by Joseph Hansen. The excerpt which Sell chose for this volume details the rights and responsibilities of every party member and leader, from the mundane details of dues and initiation fees to the life-changing experience of participating in momentous historical events. Hansen made clear that thinking out political questions was the responsibility of all members, not a chosen few, and that party membership in no way stifled the individual member, but in fact led to her or his personal growth and development. He explained as well that the leadership bodies were subordinate to the membership as a whole, and not the reverse. In three sentences Hansen summarizes the practical meaning of democratic centralism: "Democratic centralism gives the party great cohesiveness and the ability to hit hard. This method of organization ensures that the party will continue to be a party of *action* and not a debating club. At the same

time, it gives everyone full opportunity to present his viewpoint, to criticize, discuss, and win adherents to his position.”

“How SWP Members Learned about Party Organizational Principles and Practices,” which Evelyn Sell wrote for this pamphlet, is a more detailed explanation of democratic centralism and the rights and responsibilities of party membership. She draws on lectures given to branches and larger party gatherings. A particularly valuable lecture is one given by Farrell Dobbs in 1966 to an SWP West Coast Vacation School. This lecture, entitled “Building the Revolutionary Party,” has never been published, and the SWP would do well to rectify that oversight. In this speech Dobbs explained the erroneous methods of monolithism and “all-inclusiveness.” He contrasts the “self-criticism” practiced in bureaucratically dominated organizations with the self-correction process necessary in a genuine revolutionary party:

A revolutionary party has to be composed of a membership that is self-acting and critical-minded. You can't make a revolution with yes-men. That means that the membership must have full democratic rights in all policy decisions.

However, Dobbs explained, the party as a whole has rights of its own:

The party has the right to require that all of its members help to carry out majority decisions. It has the right to demand that its work not be disrupted and disorganized, and the party has the right to call irresponsible individuals to order. . . . There's no room in our party for people who support an imperialist war. . . . It's a violation of principle to cross class lines in politics, and we'll have no part of it! . . . We will tolerate no manifestation of racism in our party. We'll have no truck whatever with strikebreakers or strikebreaking. In short, limitations on advocacy are defined along clear, sharp class lines.

Sell also quotes Dobbs on the question of leadership—the role of the individual leader, the leadership as a team, and the problem of transition. Sell uses this and other examples to explain the organizational principles which were preached and practiced in the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party. Bea Hansen's 1964 educational lecture to the Chicago branch, entitled, “Organizational Procedures of the Socialist Workers Party,” and Evelyn Sell's 1976 talk to the Crenshaw branch in Los Angeles, “Organizational Norms of the Socialist Workers Party,” provide further insights into the way a revolutionary party organizes itself.

Revolutionary Traditions of American Trotskyism

Revolutionary Traditions of American Trotskyism is less specific in its mission, containing articles on past leaders and experiences in the American Trotskyist movement. Several of the selections are about James P. Cannon, the principal founder of the U.S. Trotskyist movement and its central leader for its first quarter-century. Included are a biographical piece by Paul Le Blanc, entitled “James P. Cannon and the Fourth International,” and reviews of two of Cannon's books: *The Left Opposition in the U.S.: 1928–31*, reviewed by George Weissman, and *The Communist League of America:*

1932–34, reviewed by George Breitman. A Cannon bibliography, compiled by Breitman, is also included. A short biographical article on Antoinette Konikow, written by Dianne Feeley and first published in the January 1972 *International Socialist Review*, begins the pamphlet. Konikow was the first member of the U.S. Communist Party to be expelled for “Trotskyism,” though her sole “crime” consisted of asking that the members be allowed to read what Trotsky had to say before denouncing him. After Cannon, Shachtman, and Abern were expelled and founded the Communist League of America, Konikow joined it and remained an active party builder until her death.

Half of this volume consists of three remarkable lectures by George Breitman entitled, “The Liberating Influence of the Transitional Program.” They were originally given at a national SWP gathering in 1974; and were first published in an internal party bulletin. The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* serialized them in 1985—the first time they were made available to the general public. Breitman had no way of knowing at the time what a powerful weapon these talks would become against the leaders of his own party, for all he was doing was telling the truth as he remembered it and as it was written down in party documents.

A reader who is looking for insights into both the theoretical and organizational principles of revolutionary Marxism would do well to draw on this source. Breitman demonstrates that political positions and organizational norms are not handed down from on high on tablets of stone. He explains the learning process which American Trotskyists went through during his earliest years in the movement (he joined in 1935, at the age of 19). The Transitional Program itself ran counter to many established political positions which the Trotskyists had held for several years, and Breitman explains what Trotsky did to convince his comrades in the United States to support the resolution which he had written for the founding of the Fourth International. Trotsky even omitted one thing—a labor party based on the trade unions—because the SWP would not have supported the resolution if that point had been included.

Today, of course, revolutionary Marxists in the United States are fighting within the labor movement for a break with the Democrats and for the building of a labor party, but it took some time and effort to convince them. The SWP's election campaigns, especially its presidential campaigns of 1968, 1972, and 1976, were among its greatest achievements. Breitman, however, explains that the SWP had to be practically dragged by the hair to an understanding of using the elections to build the socialist movement. He writes:

Our record was so bad that when the National Committee had a plenum at the end of 1938, it adopted a resolution which was printed in the *Socialist Appeal* [the SWP's newspaper at that time] under the title “Political Committee Rapped on Election.” This resolution criticized our failure to try to get on the ballot where it was possible, put the responsibility on the Political Committee, and directed it to correct the faults shown in the 1938 elections. But there was little improvement until around the end of World War II.

In the final lecture Breitman compares the SWP of 1938 with the SWP of 1974; again readers will find a great deal to

think about here. The most important point which Breitman makes, however, is that the party had been continuing to grow—politically if not in size and influence—but that the party's growth had not been in a continuous upward direction, and that it had not been without conflict. "There has been much change and considerable progress since the founding of the SWP," Breitman writes. "Much of this we owe to the pioneers, without whom we couldn't have done half of what we did. But we would have perished if we hadn't gone beyond the pioneers, and we have gone beyond them, learning how to sharpen the ideas and improve the practice that they initiated or developed. And this is good because the time is coming closer when we shall have to storm revolutionary heights that the conditions of their time prevented them from reaching."

Trotskyism in America: The First Fifty Years

Trotskyism in America is the only pamphlet in the "History" project series which is entirely new. In its forty pages it can hardly provide an exhaustive and detailed history of the Socialist Workers Party and its predecessors, but it provides important political insights. In addition, it is one of the few contributions to party history written by an activist from the post-World War II generation of radicals, indeed, from one who came to the Trotskyist movement after considerable political experience in the "New Left."

Sixty percent of the pamphlet covers events which took place within the author's lifetime, and this is important, because the postwar period is only now beginning to be examined historically. Especially useful is the chapter entitled "Years of Resurgence," which covers the period of 1954-1970. The present SWP leaders like to call the party's activity in the 1950s a "semisectarian existence which was imposed on us by objective conditions." As Le Blanc shows, it was nothing of the kind. Though the SWP, like all militant workers' organizations, had taken severe blows during the witch-hunt period of 1947-54, it was quick to involve itself in new struggles as they emerged, especially the civil rights movement.

During the late 1950s thousands left the Communist Party under the impact of the Khrushchev revelations about Stalin's crimes and the brutal suppression of the Hungarian revolution. At the same time, a section of Max Shachtman's organization refused to follow him into the fossilized Socialist Party. The SWP looked outward to these new opportunities, and applied creative methods to regroup radical-minded militants, especially *young* radical-minded militants, in a revolutionary-socialist organization. In 1960, these efforts crystallized with the formation of the Young Socialist Alliance.

Le Blanc's account of his own experiences are one of the better features of this pamphlet. A great many, if not most, of the young people recruited to the Young Socialist Alliance in the 1960s and 1970s were quite young and politically inexperienced when they joined (I was 19, for example) and have difficulty looking objectively at an experience which dominated much of their adult lives. Le Blanc is an exception.

Coming out of a six-year experience in the "New Left," I approached the American Trotskyist movement as a fairly critical-minded outsider. I joined it only after a considerable amount of study and close observation. My evaluation of it at the time that I joined it is contained in an article published in the November 1972 issue of the *International Socialist Review*, entitled "Leaving the New Left" (see Appendix III), which still strikes me as an accurate portrayal of a vital movement. My subsequent experience [the party's degeneration and Le Blanc's expulsion as an oppositionist] reinforced many of my earlier impressions.

A First Step

A necessary component of restarting the revolutionary party-building process in the United States is an accurate understanding of past party-building experiences. It is necessary to assemble the facts which can refute the lies propagated by the current Socialist Workers Party leadership. Revolutionists need to learn from past experiences in order to avoid repeating mistakes and put back into practice effective political strategies.

The three-volume "Materials for a History of Trotskyism in the United States" is only a first step in that process, a process of discussion and clarification which has as its goal the laying down of a programmatic foundation on which a future revolutionary party must be built, whether or not that party maintains organizational continuity with the Socialist Workers Party.

There is a tendency among too many revolutionists who have broken with the SWP to either idealize the party's past, and thus fail to see the roots of the party's degeneration, or else reject all past practices as being somehow the cause of the future degeneration, and thus fail to put to use theoretical concepts and practical organizing methods which could be quite helpful in the current period. There is one simple corrective for both of these mistakes—the truth. We have to accurately assess and analyze the past, and then explain it in such a way that socialist militants can use it to improve our knowledge and understanding.

The three volumes of this series present quite a positive view of the SWP in contrast to the SWP of 1987, and that is as it should be, because that is an objective and accurate view. One of this series' purposes is precisely to contrast the party's proud past with its wretched present, especially for the benefit of those young recruits who are now asking questions. However, the problem remains for all of us, "How could this happen to our party?"

Revolutionists have an obligation to discuss why the SWP degenerated, so that a repetition of the experience will be more difficult in the future. One thing is clear—no one event, condition, or person can be singled out as *the* cause for what happened to the party. Furthermore, the relative ease with which the leadership brought the overwhelming majority of the active party members around to its anti-Trotskyist politics is disconcerting. Equally disconcerting is the exodus of hundreds of dedicated activists from the socialist movement, unwilling to fight for the ideas which they once defended so passionately.

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency has begun this project, but does not see it as its own exclusively, nor does it see the volumes published so far in this series as the end. The preface to the collection expresses the hope that the project to reexamine SWP history

will be of interest to a broad array of individuals, some of whom may wish to participate in making it a success. In particular, we hope that members and supporters of other U.S. groupings that are in political solidarity with

the world party of socialist revolution, the Fourth International, will contribute materials and articles to future volumes in the series. This may generate divergent interpretations and controversies within the pages of these volumes, but we believe this can be fruitful as we seek to comprehend the lessons of our rich common heritage. We believe it can also contribute to the strengthening and eventual unification of revolutionary socialist forces in the United States. □

Continued from page 20

the employers on the picket line alone. It needs a political weapon, too.

The United States is the only imperialist country in which the working class is not politically organized. One of the twin employers' parties, the Democrats, has been able to get away with posing as the "friend of labor" only because that role has never been challenged. Labor doesn't need friends like those; it needs to rely on itself.

Economic crises of the nineteenth century led to the first trade unions in the United States. The depression of the 1930s gave birth to industrial unionism and the CIO, a giant step forward. As the current crisis deepens, the labor movement needs to take another giant step forward: the creation of its own political party. This step will not only provide workers with the political representation they so desperately need, it will revitalize the labor movement, creating the kind of hope and excitement which will bring workers back into the union halls and rekindle the spirit of labor solidarity. This is labor's crying need, and it should be a central feature of any action program for working people in the U.S. today. A labor party is the kind of organization which can not only educate around, but fight for and *win* the things like improved affirmative action, a shorter workweek, and even cancellation of foreign debts. One needs only to look at the Canadian New Democratic Party, which is led by politicians completely tied to the conservative trade union bureaucracy, to see what progress can be made even when a labor party is badly led.

Explanation for the Default

Unless a reader is familiar with the overall political goals of the Barnes leadership of the SWP the obvious problems and deficiencies of the "Action Program" seem inexplicable. But a knowledgeable person can divine, from the last few paragraphs, what this effort is apparently all about. Here the program talks about the call by Fidel Castro to create a "New World Economic Order." For many years now the SWP leaders have been sacrificing their own programmatic perspectives in the interests of trying to eliminate those

points which distinguish them from the ideological perspectives of Castroism. What has been done with the "Action Program" is simply to look for a few points of compatibility between the broad perspectives of the SWP and those of Castro, and to single these out for attention while excluding everything else. Only if we look at the document in this light can the reasons for its limitations become understandable.

The result of such an eclectic exercise can hardly be expected to correspond to the actual needs of the U.S. or international class struggle. That is not its purpose. All it's really designed to do is to serve as one more programmatic bridge to the politically utopian organizational goal of the Barnesites: formation of a "new international" which is supposed to come about via a fusion of Barnes's international current with the Castroists and other "revolutionists of action" in the world today.

As it has done too many times in the past, the Socialist Workers Party has missed another good opportunity to advance the socialist movement and build its own organization. It has failed to address working people's concerns at the level of their present consciousness. It has failed to confront the false strategies being presented to workers, people of color, women, and radicalizing young people. It has failed to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the presidential election to participate in political discussion and debate. And it has failed to address the most important need faced by the labor movement in the United States today, the need for independent labor political action. It's time for the party leadership to stop pontificating and to start listening, to stop looking for justifications for previously made decisions and to start seriously considering what is needed to advance the cause of socialism in this country. Most importantly, it is time for party members to stop leaving questions of program to their leaders, whose major concern is with their phantom effort to regroup a "new international," and to start looking for the answers to these questions in their own experiences. That would be the first step towards developing a program of action which can really build the Socialist Workers Party and the socialist movement in the U.S.

July 13, 1988

New Australian Magazine Launched

International Solidarity, a new magazine in support of Trotskyism and the Fourth International, has reached us from Australia. The first issue has articles on Poland, Nicaragua, Palestine, Kanaky, the worldwide cry to clear the names of the accused in the Moscow show trials of the 1930s, the October 1987 stock market crash, and the dim prospects of unity among groups of ex-Stalinists and ex-Trotskyists in Australia. Write to Solidarity Publications, P.O. Box A105, Sydney South, NSW 2000, Australia.

Statement of Purpose

■ **Solidarity stands for socialist revolution:** the creation of a humane society based on the common ownership of wealth and resources under the democratic control of working people. It is capitalism that threatens the world with nuclear catastrophe; that condemns billions to exploitation, poverty and starvation; and that is raping the environment in its remorseless drive for profit ahead of human need. The catchcry Socialism or Barbarism! rings truer today than ever before.

But capitalism exists on a world scale as imperialism; it can only be finally defeated on a world scale. The chain of revolution must be international: socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries, permanent revolution in the dominated and neo-colonial countries, political revolution in the bureaucratic dictatorships. These three sectors of the world revolution are closely inter-related, but they do not march in step.

In the dominated and neo-colonial countries, demands for democratic rights, land reform, independence and the satisfaction of elementary needs - deep yearnings both created and frustrated by imperialism - spark frequent upheavals. But these struggles are time and again thrown back, posing the need for both anti-capitalist solutions and leadership. Where such a program and cadre have been forged in the heat of battle, an uninterrupted, permanent revolution that combines national democratic and socialist tasks becomes possible. Revolutions led by the bourgeoisie in the dominated countries are doomed to be stillborn; the permanent revolution, on the road to socialism, is the only way forward.

However, the grip of the bourgeoisies cannot be broken until they are overthrown in their strongholds - particularly the United States and Western Europe. Without proletarian revolution led by the self-organised working class in the bastions of imperialism, there can never be socialism.

One third of humanity has thrown off the yoke of capitalism and taken the first steps towards a socialist future. We defend the nationalised economies against any attempt to re-establish capitalism, and we defend the workers states against imperialist economic sanctions and military attack. But in nearly all these countries a parasitic bureaucracy has erected a repressive state machine that degrades and exploits working people. The grim rule of the Stalinists in the Soviet Union has discredited socialism in the eyes of the working class everywhere. There can be no socialism in the bureaucratic dictatorships until there is political revolution; the parasitic states must be smashed and nationalised property must be socialised under

workers' control. Support for political revolution is the best defence of the workers states.

■ **Solidarity stands for internationalism:** We seek actively to build a section of the Fourth International in Australia because of our commitment to internationalism.

■ **Solidarity stands for an end to oppression everywhere:** a humane world is a world without racism, patriarchy and heterosexism. The victory against oppression can only be won by the oppressed themselves, but it cannot be won within capitalism. We give unconditional support to the independent movements of blacks, women, lesbians and gay men, while seeking to build revolutionary socialist politics within those movements.

■ **Solidarity stands for revolutionary politics in Australia:** It is the fundamental duty of all socialists to work for revolution in their own countries.

We work for a class struggle left wing in the labour movement, which will defend and strengthen the trade unions and fight the pro-boss policies of union officials and Labor governments. Against social contracts, which weaken and demobilise the labour movement; for independent action by the working class to defend its own interests.

We campaign for the liberation of women. Against sexism inside and out the labour movement; for integration into the workforce on the basis of full equality, for increased social service and sexual and reproductive freedom.

We give priority to anti-racist struggles. Against White Australia, against the Bicentenary and other celebrations of genocide; for labour movement defence of non-Anglo workers, for Aboriginal land rights and sovereignty.

We work to subvert Australia's role in the region as an imperialist power and South Pacific policeman. Against Australian aid to the armed forces and elites of the region; for militant solidarity with the peoples of the Pacific and Asia struggling against colonialism and imperialism.

We campaign to stop capitalism ravaging the planet beyond repair or annihilating the world in a nuclear bonfire. Against the warmongers and capitalist despoilers; for militant campaigns to protect the environment, for unilateral disarmament and the expulsion of US bases.

■ **Solidarity stands for building revolutionary parties:** the main obstacle to socialist revolution is the crisis of leadership. Without combat organisations capable of uniting all the most advanced militants, capitalism will never be defeated and humanity will march down the road to global catastrophe.

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