

Information, Education, Discussion

# BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism

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## Who We Are

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

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

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

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

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# Polish Workers Confront Government In New Strike Wave

by Tom Barrett

In spite of the disappointing results of last spring's series of strikes, the Polish working class has again risen up in new strike actions, this time led by the coal miners of Upper Silesia. Since August 16 over 100,000 workers have laid down their tools, demanding higher wages, improved working conditions, and legalization of their trade union, Solidarity. As of this writing, the police had crushed strikes at three coal mines, leaving seven mines still occupied by the workers. Shipyard and dock facilities in the Baltic port cities of Gdansk and Szczecin were also totally shut down, in solidarity with the miners. About a thousand steelworker militants at the Lenin steelworks in Nowa Huta stopped work on August 24, but other workers in the plant, which employs 30,000, were reluctant to join them. The steel mill was the center of last spring's strike wave, but it ended in defeat when the police moved in and brutally dispersed the strikers.

The government continued to take a confrontational approach to the workers' protests, confident that it still holds the upper hand. As it did in May, the Jaruzelski regime is using a combination of police violence and conciliation toward the leaders in order to demoralize the rank and file, divide the strikers from the rest of the Polish people, and exploit Solidarity's political weaknesses. So far, there is no indication that the relationship of forces between the government and Solidarity has changed.

If the relationship of forces has not changed in the working class's favor, neither has it changed in the government's favor. The government was genuinely surprised that workers have rallied again so soon after the spring strike wave's defeat. The government's own overconfidence, in fact, provoked the strike: in May the Silesian miners were given a substantial wage raise in order to keep them working. However, by August the government was confident that this concession was no longer necessary, and they took it back. The infuriated miners struck, beginning the current round of labor confrontations.

As in the spring, most of the worker militants are young, too young to have participated in the struggles of 1980-81. Though the strikers have widespread support, many older workers are reluctant to put themselves on the line this time around. Lech Walesa, the main spokesperson for Solidarity, is also in no mood for a fight. Several times he has sought to promote a conciliationist position. However, as price increases continue to exceed wage increases, and consumer goods remain scarce, workers feel compelled to fight back. The younger workers feel, with some justification, that they have nothing to lose.

The Polish riot police—called the Zomos—have surrounded all of the struck factories and mines to present a show of force. They have, however, agreed to negotiation and mediation with the strike leaders. After getting together with Interior Minister General Czeslaw Kiszczak, Andrzej Stelmachowski, a representative of the Roman Catholic Church, was allowed into the Lenin shipyards to meet with Lech Walesa. According to Solidarity leader Adam Michnik, "Stelmachowski came to Gdansk following agreement with the state and Communist Party representatives to find out the stand of Lech Walesa on the present situation." In Szczecin, workers met August 25 with management to discuss labor demands: safe conduct for the strikers, better working conditions, and higher wages. The government, however, has made it clear that the legalization of Solidarity is not negotiable. Jozef Czyrek, a member of the Polish CP Politburo and the head of the security forces, reported to a Central Committee meeting that the "experience [with Solidarity] was a failure both for the trade union movement and for Poland. . . . As a party we are and will be against all solutions which could lead to the reintroduction of political conflicts into factories."

As the Polish CP leadership was meeting, so was Solidarity's leadership, gathered at St. Brygida's Church in Gdansk. The government made it clear to Walesa that they would be willing to negotiate directly with him if he would call off the strikes. Asked if he would talk with the government, Walesa responded, "if Solidarity authorizes me, I will do it, because no chance should be wasted to solve the problems."

Jaruzelski himself took the floor at the end of the CP plenum. His speech was carried on national television, so it was as much an address to the Polish people as to the top CP leadership. His speech was an attack on government failings, and he called for a "courageous turnaround" to correct the situation. It would be stating the obvious to say that Jaruzelski's "turnaround" sounds like an echo of Gorbachev's plan for "restructuring" the economy of the USSR. Though Jaruzelski claimed that he was not looking for "scapegoats," it is widely believed that Prime Minister Zbigniew Messmer will be fired and a new government formed. The Polish Parliament is scheduled to meet August 31 to decide whether the government will stand or fall.

At the end of the plenum the Central Committee adopted a resolution, originally presented by Interior Minister Kiszczak, calling for broad-based discussions on ways to end Poland's economic troubles. The talks would include all social and political groups except those who "rejected the legal and constitutional order of Poland." Whether Solidarity it-



self would be included in that formula was made clear when Jerzy Majka, speaking for the Central Committee, said that Walesa could be invited to participate as an individual, but not as a representative of an "illegal organization."

The Polish leadership's willingness to hold such broad-based talks is an indication of the current strike wave's effects. It is becoming clear that the August strikes have been more successful than those of May, and that the coal miners have won concessions from mine management. By August 29, only one mine was still on strike; as mentioned, two strikes were smashed by the police; the remaining seven were settled by compromise. Strikes in the northern cities, Gdansk, Szczecin, and Stalowa Wola, were holding firm.

Poland's economic problems, however, cannot be talked out of existence. The Polish economy is a victim not only of bureaucratic mismanagement but of international high

finance as well. Poland's revenues from foreign trade must go to pay off its massive debt to foreign banks, leaving nothing for capital improvements to industry or for consumer goods. The Polish people are thus paying the price today for decades of bureaucratic mismanagement of the economy.

Only bold revolutionary measures can bring the Polish working class out of its impasse. A new labor leadership, now gaining its first experiences in strike actions in Poland's mines, factories, and shipyards, is emerging. It remains to be seen if it will have the combination of courage and understanding necessary to do what needs to be done to fundamentally alter the present political system and create a society actually run by Poland's working people.

August 29, 1988

## Update:

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### Walesa Convinces Strikers to Return to Work

On September 3 striking steelworkers at Stalowa Wola, miners at Jastrzebie, and dockworkers at Gdansk and Szczecin agreed to go back to work at the request of Solidarity leader Lech Walesa. The economic issues around which the workers had gone on strike have not been settled; however, the government agreed to allow Walesa, as a representative of Solidarity, to participate in roundtable discussions on Poland's economic and political problems if the strikes were called off.

For its part, the government agreed to discuss legalization of Solidarity. This has to be seen as a victory for the strikers, since the government's position previously had been that under no circumstances could such a concession be considered. Many workers were critical of Walesa for asking them to suspend the strike without settling the

workers' grievances, for they understand that the broad discussions which the government projects will probably not result in the kinds of economic improvements which the workers are fighting for.

It is questionable, however, how much longer the strikers could have held out or if they could have prevailed against the Zomos in a military confrontation. One of the key issues in all of the strikes has been the restoration of Solidarity's legal status. If the government concedes that in the negotiations, then the August strike wave will have won a tremendous victory. Walesa seems to be counting on such an outcome, or at least on the fact that the government will be negotiating in good faith. If he has miscalculated, however, his call on the strikers to go back to work will undoubtedly be as-

essed as a serious mistake. Already, a new, younger layer of Polish workers is emerging, which tends to be more confrontational than those who suffered through the imposition of martial law in 1981. Their stock will certainly rise if Walesa is unable to deliver any significant gains through negotiations.

The workers of Solidarity, as well as its official representatives, have put the bureaucrats on notice: Unless there is some redress of the workers' grievances the crippling strikes will be resumed. The August strikes were the most widespread and effective since the imposition of martial law. There has clearly been a shift in the overall relationship of forces in favor of the Polish working class.

September 7, 1988

T.B.





# After Eight Years of Death: Cease-fire in Iran-Iraq War

by Tom Barrett

On August 8, 1988, UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar announced that a cease-fire between Iran and Iraq would take effect on August 20, after which time the two belligerents will hold face-to-face negotiations to end their eight-year war, one of the bloodiest in all human history. The news is undoubtedly being welcomed by the people of both countries, most of whom have lost at least one family member in this war — either in military combat or in bombing and rocket attacks on civilian targets. Working people in other countries should also be relieved that the killing will stop, for this war has, since the beginning, had the potential to turn into a global conflict. In the past year that potential has come close to becoming a reality.

In spite of Iraqi “victory” claims, neither side will have gained anything when the war ends. If any border adjustments are negotiated they will be minor; the respective regimes in Baghdad and Tehran will remain in power, barring any strictly internal political upheavals. In any event, whatever objectives either side may have had in the early years of the fighting have long since been forgotten, as the war has continued primarily on the basis of inertia. The people of both countries have suffered for nothing; this war should never have been fought.

According to the *New York Times*, between 400,000 and one million people have been killed. Between 900,000 and 1.7 million Iranians and Iraqis have been wounded, and more than a million and a half have become refugees. The war has cost — in military expenditures, lost oil revenues, and destruction of cities and industry — over *half a trillion dollars*. Iranians and Iraqis will be feeling the war’s effects for many years to come. Pressure on the Khomeini regime in Iran will undoubtedly increase as the Iranian people justly blame it for eight years of death, deprivation, and political repression.

In contrast to other recent wars, the Iran-Iraq conflict has not presented working people with a clear-cut choice. Vietnam was an obvious case of imperialist aggression against a people attempting to put an end to exploitation and political domination, and progressive people the world over solidarized with the Vietnamese and demanded that the United States get “Out Now!” In many other areas of the world — Nicaragua, El Salvador, Palestine, etc., victims of imperialism are defending or have defended themselves against invasion, exploitation, etc. But both Iran and Iraq have been victims of imperialism (and continue to be); both countries are ruled by petty-bourgeois nationalist regimes which have no intention of transforming their economies from production for profit to production for human need. Both countries’ governments are repressive one-party dictatorships. The imperialist “statesmen” have from the ear-

liest stages made clear their desire that “both sides should lose.”

Though the Iran-Iraq border has been a battleground since antiquity, it is not to Alexander the Great, to the conflict between the Sunni and Shiite branches of Islam, nor to national animosity between Arabs and Persians that one should look to understand the causes of the current war. And one need look back no further than thirty years.

Prior to World War II both countries had been dominated by the British Empire. After the war, as direct colonial rule gave way to neocolonialism, the British allowed Iraq formal independence under the Hashemite King Abdullah (the great uncle of Jordan’s King Hussein). During the war Britain and the United States forced Iran’s Reza Shah to abdicate because of his pro-Nazi sympathies, replacing him with his son, Mohammad Reza, the last shah. The United States took responsibility for saving the Shah’s rule twice: in 1946 when the northwestern provinces of Azarbaijan and Kurdistan were fighting for national independence, and then in 1953, when the C.I.A. directly intervened to depose the nationalist Mossadegh government and reimpose the Shah’s absolute rule. From that time the Shah and the United States worked closely together for their “mutual interests.”

In 1958 a group of Iraqi military officers overthrow the Hashemite monarchy. They belonged to the Arab Socialist Union, better known as the Ba’ath movement, a petty-bourgeois nationalist and anticolonialist political current, one of many political tendencies in the former colonies working for a “third way for the Third World” (rejecting both “communism” and direct imperialist domination in favor of “non-alignment”). The Eisenhower administration dispatched U.S. troops to Lebanon, poised to intervene in Iraq to stop the threat of “Communism.” Though the Ba’athist leaders had no intention of leading a socialist revolution, they did develop a friendly relationship with the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries.

The United States never intervened to overturn the Iraqi government, but it did encourage its friend the Shah to carry out almost constant aggression against Iraq. During the following two decades, the United States built Iran into the most formidable military power in the Middle East. With his powerful navy the Shah was able to control the “Persian” Gulf (and made it a crime to refer to that body of water by its traditional name, the Arabian Gulf), and Iraq was able to ship its oil by water only at the Shah’s pleasure. The Shah also politically dominated the Arab emirates on the gulf’s southern shore, even sending troops to the aid of his friend the sultan of Oman when his dictatorship was threatened by revolution in the province of Dhofar. Cynically, the Shah



provided aid to Kurdish nationalists in Iraq, though he had smashed their movement in Iran in the 1940s. Every day Iran's national newspapers reported artillery skirmishes across the Iran-Iraq border. The Shah's more powerful army was able to seize some Iraqi territory and take control of some strategic waterways.

In 1978 the Shah, who was already in serious trouble, and the Iraqi government came to an accommodation. Iran withdrew its support to the Kurdish guerrillas, and Iraq expelled the Ayatollah Khomeini, who had been broadcasting anti-Shah propaganda from the Shiite holy city of Najaf for fifteen years. The border issues were never resolved, however.

The Iraqi regime had its own reasons for fearing the rise of Khomeini. Saddam Hussein, who had become president, and the military officers associated with him are Sunni Muslims, but the majority of Iraqis are Shiite. Shiite fundamentalists like Khomeini work hard to keep the memory of past wrongs alive, even after over a thousand years. This is why the Iraqi leaders were happy to deport him in 1978 and why they were seriously concerned when he came to power at the head of a mass uprising in 1979. In 1980, after the hostage crisis had brought the United States and Iran to the brink of war, Iraq knew that the United States would not stand in the way of its attempt both to eliminate the Shiite fundamentalist threat and get back the territory it had lost to the Shah's aggression. Saddam Hussein launched his invasion, and the eight-year war began.

Iraq's attack was widely perceived as a U.S.-sponsored attempt to overturn the Iranian revolution and to restore a more accommodating regime in Tehran. There is some truth in this assessment, though things were in reality quite a bit more complex. Iraq certainly had its own axes to grind, and was not simply a surrogate for U.S. imperialist aims.

The Iranian people rallied to push the Iraqi offensive back to the border. By 1983 the Iraqis had come to realize that they could make no significant gains by continuing the fighting, and they asked for peace negotiations. However, by then Khomeini's war aims had changed, and he was able to impose his new perspective on the Iranian people without resistance. No longer was the war one to defend Iranian territory. It had become a "holy war" for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Khomeini called on Iraq's Shiite majority to rise up against the Sunni-dominated government. Noticing what was happening in Iran under Khomeini's guidance, however, the Iraqi masses chose not to respond.

Perceptions have often not matched the reality during the course of the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war. Iranians rose up in revolution in order to overthrow the Shah,

not to establish a Shiite theocracy. By the time of the Iraqi invasion that revolution was already on the road to defeat. The wily ayatollah had been preparing his counterrevolution even as he was formally at the head of the revolution. The results of the counterrevolution are no secret: the Iranian people are worse off economically, and political repression is as bad as it has ever been at any time in Iranian history. Iraqi Shiites are understandably reluctant to put their trust in Khomeini's call to avenge the martyrdom of the Imams Hossein and Hassan over a millennium ago. People will put their lives on the line for political and economic justice in the here and now, and it has become clear to the masses of people on both sides of the Iran-Iraq border that political and economic justice are not included in the content of Khomeini's Islamic revolution. Consequently, there is no progressive side in this conflict as things now stand. The interests of the Iraqi and Iranian masses can only be served by ending it.

The aftermath of the Iranian Airbus tragedy has demonstrated the Iranian people's war-weariness. The government's inability to use that incident to rally people behind the war effort (even though the *Vincennes's* attack was a clear-cut act of aggression) demonstrated to the Khomeini regime that it can no longer continue the war. The willingness to accept the UN resolution calling for a cease-fire was the result.

Who must be held accountable for these eight years of death? There are many culprits. Surely Saddam Hussein, for beginning the war, and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, for continuing it, must each answer to his own people for the deaths of both combatants and civilians. The international arms merchants, who have made obscene profits by keeping both belligerents well supplied, must also share part of the blame. Lastly, imperialism itself—American, British, French, Japanese, West German, it does not matter which—is responsible for the conditions which led to the war, for encouraging each side to continue the orgy of killing, and for the economic deprivations endured by both Iranians and Iraqis, must face the judgment of the workers and poor people who have suffered through this war. Only when the imperialists are put out of power, along with those so-called "leaders" in the colonial and semicolonial countries who have refused to lead their people against the imperialists, can the workers, peasants, and poor people of both Iran and Iraq make sure that never again will a million of their people be killed in vain.

August 15, 1988



## Vote Socialist!

### Warren for President — Mickells for Vice President

Once again it is election time. Two millionaires are appealing for our support. They say, if elected, they will represent *all* the people. That's a lie. It can't be done. Not all the people have the same interests.

The worker and the boss; the farmer and the banker; the tenant and the landlord; the private and the brass hat — are their interests the same? Can "right to life" and "right to choose" coexist in the same administration? The bigots and the victims of racism? Dukakis supposedly opposes contra aid while Bentsen supports it — what does a vote for their ticket mean for Central American policy?

No, no politician can honestly represent all of America for there are two Americas. There is the America of the rich who prosper only through the exploitation of others and there is the America of working people who produce all of society's wealth yet find themselves struggling to support their families.

The Rev Jesse Jackson, at the Democrat's convention, called on the "lion and the lamb to lie down together." But it is well known that when that kind of "unity" occurs in the real world only one of those animals walks away in the end.

There are no fundamental differences between the Democrats and Republicans. The contest between Dukakis and Bush is a shell game financed and orchestrated by the bosses and bankers to head off working people from organizing to fight for our own interests.

One ticket on the ballot that squarely stands for the interests of the workers and farmers against the rich is the Socialist Workers Party ticket of James Warren for President and Kathy Mickells for Vice President. They have raised a real program that can benefit the majority.

Instead of milk-and-water plant closing notifications, we need the plants to be kept open. The SWP campaign says reduce the hours of work, with no cut in pay, to keep people on the job.

Instead of billions for the military they say put the unemployed to work building socially useful public works. Our bridges are falling down. Our schools are crumbling. Our ambulances are idled. Let's put the jobless to work — at decent union wages — to reverse this deterioration.

The socialists are serious about fighting racism and sexism — not just with words but deeds. A vote for the SWP is a vote for defending affirmative action and against racist violence.

A vote for the SWP is a vote against war. No more Vietnams in Central America, the Philippines, the Middle East, or anywhere else.

The SWP is committed to assisting workers on strike. There are no neutrals on the picketline. A vote for the SWP is a vote to support struggles like the fighters from Local P-9 in Austin, Minnesota, the Jay, Maine paperworkers, the Farmworkers, the New York tugboat workers.

The SWP campaign shows that a different kind of politics is possible in this country — one which is not tied to the Democrats and Republicans. Workers need to reclaim the great potential power of their unions not only to fight the employers for better contracts but to launch a new party — a labor party. Such a party, based on the millions of workers organized in unions, would find natural allies among the racially oppressed, the family farmers, the unorganized workers and the unemployed. A labor party could offer a real alternative to the twin parties of the rich.

The socialist candidates don't come around only at election time appealing for votes. Socialists don't say "elect us — we'll solve all your problems!" On the contrary socialists warn not to trust any politicians. Organize independently to fight for your rights on every front! Socialists are active in every progressive struggle 365 days a year — in the unions, fighting for civil rights, opposing the drive toward war, supporting the fight for sexual equality, protecting the environment, joining with family farmers to stop foreclosures.

We urge you to vote in your own interest — vote SWP. We further urge you to join us in the day-to-day fight for a better world.

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## **Johnson vs. Goldwater — How Deep Are the Differences? The Lesser-Evil Yardstick**

by George Breitman

*These two articles were written by George Breitman during the 1964 presidential election campaign between Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater. The first appeared in the Militant newspaper of October 26, 1964, the second in the October 19 issue.*

There's nothing wrong with the theory of the lesser evil. Most of us act in accord with it every day. It would be hard to survive if, in preference to greater evils, we did not choose or accept lesser evils, or what we take to be lesser evils.

That's the rub. The evil that we may think is lesser sometimes turns out to be as bad as or worse than the evil that appears to be greater at the moment of choice. The theory is all right, but it isn't always applied properly. And when it isn't, the result can be as unpleasant or as disastrous as if we had chosen the apparently greater evil. It is not easy to be sure that there really is a lesser evil in any given situation.

To avoid undesired results is not possible all the time, but sometimes it is. I think more mistakes would be prevented if greater attention were paid to determining *how much* of a difference there is between evils confronting us. If the difference is quite small, if it isn't at all significant, why make the choice, why assume the responsibility of accepting either, why not reject both evils? Sometimes a too-ready acceptance of one of the evils can prevent us from searching for and possibly finding an alternative that might not be evil at all.

It should not be forgotten that choice is not limited to Johnson or Goldwater in the 1964 election. We can vote for Clifton DeBerry, the Socialist Workers Party candidate, as an expression of our desire for a socialist society and/or as a protest against prevailing conditions. Or we can refuse to vote at all (an inferior way of protesting, because the intention is not so clear).

Up jumps the Radical Who Is Voting Unhappily But Emphatically For Johnson, and he says: "But there is a difference, a basic difference, a qualitative difference. I know Johnson has many faults and is not an ideal candidate. But he's not a fascist and Goldwater is. Fascism must be defeated at all costs and the only candidate who can beat Goldwater is Johnson."

Peering closer at this Johnsonite Radical I detect something familiar about him. Isn't he the same fellow who was going around peddling Kennedy as the lesser evil in 1960, and Stevenson as the lesser evil in 1956? Only he didn't base it then on the claim that Nixon or Eisenhower were fascists. It's enough to arouse suspicion about his motives. But of course his argument still needs to be answered, aside from his motives.

It rests on the proposition that Goldwater is a fascist. I don't think that's true. I think this is a case of fascist being used as an epithet, which may be harmless at one level, but which can do damage in the long run because the continued use of this term as an epithet results finally in an underestimation of the true menace of fascism when it becomes a clear and present danger—something like what happened when the boy kept crying wolf.

Used scientifically, to designate a particular kind of political movement, the term fascist does not apply to Goldwater. He is a reactionary, but not all reactionaries are fascists. He is supported by fascists, and he accepts their support, but that doesn't make him a fascist—yet.

If it is said that Goldwater is preparing the ground for fascism, then I could agree completely. But so is the conservative Johnson, in his own way. Both of them, in the different ways they try to preserve a corrupt and dying social system, can be said to be preparing the conditions for the growth of a mass fascist movement and for its coming to power when the big capitalists will think that necessary.

While I state that Goldwater is not a fascist, I am not trying here to prove it; I don't have to for the purposes of the present discussion. I can, for the sake of argument, grant the Johnsonite Radical his premise that Goldwater is a fascist, and still show that the fascism of Goldwater does not logically justify support of Johnson.

### **German Lesson**

An indisputable fascist ran for the presidency of Germany in 1932. His name was Hitler. The man he sought to replace was the conservative incumbent, Hindenburg.

All the arguments we hear today from the Johnsonite Radicals were heard then from their German cousins, the Hindenburgite Radicals: Hindenburg had faults, but at least he was no fascist, and his election would mean the defeat of fascism; casting a vote for a radical candidate would be wasting it, harmful, etc.

Hindenburg, supported by the Social Democrats and the union movement they led, and by the main body of German capitalism, won the election. It was, as they said, a famous victory for democracy and the anti-fascist cause.



But less than a year later, lesser-evil Hindenburg appointed greater-evil Hitler chancellor of Germany, and the bloodbath began. In a few months the fascists, utilizing the state apparatus put in their hands by the lesser evil, had crushed all the working class organizations and whatever remained of democracy in Germany.

The lesson of Germany is that fascism cannot be defeated by supporting capitalist candidates, conservative or liberal. It can be defeated only by organizing the masses independently of the capitalists, with hostility to the capitalists, in opposition to the capitalists.

If Goldwater is a fascist, electing Johnson is not the way to defeat fascism. Edward Shaw, vice-presidential candidate of the Socialist Workers Party, was absolutely justified in pointing out, at a symposium in New York last month, that in a period of crisis such as Germany faced in 1933, Johnson might appoint Goldwater as secretary of defense. If German big business turned to Hitler after previously rejecting him, American big business will not hesitate to turn to Goldwater, or to an avowed fascist, when they think they need him and his methods. And Johnson would not stand in the way any more than Hindenburg did.

Differences between Goldwater and Johnson? Of course, but over tactics and tempo, not over principle or objective. Both are basically anti-labor and anti-Negro because both are dedicated defenders of capitalism. Goldwater favors a tough stance, while Johnson thinks softsoap can do the job better. But both want to keep the workers and the Negroes in their place and big business in the saddle. And both will use force against workers and Negroes whenever and wherever they threaten big-business supremacy, just as both will go to war if necessary to preserve big-business interests and profits abroad.

Is Johnson a lesser evil? In some respects yes; in other respects he is a greater evil. But on the whole there is not enough of a difference between Johnson and Goldwater to justify support of Johnson by the opponents of war, racism, economic insecurity, and the other products of capitalism. Because a vote for Johnson, no matter how you dress it up with radical verbiage, is a vote in favor of the system and the administration that are responsible for perpetuating war, racism, and economic insecurity. It is a vote to postpone radical action to do away with war, racism, and economic insecurity. It is a vote to keep the oppressed tagging submissively behind their oppressor.

Why is it, finally, that in 1964 the Johnsonite Radicals are reduced to the grotesque spectacle of supporting a candidate who represents everything that they are opposed to (or that they used to oppose when they became radicals)? Why is it that each Democrat they designate as a lesser evil is more conservative than the previous one (that is, more of an evil)?

It is because their brand of lesser-evil politics prevents their followers from embarking on independent political action. It keeps the workers and farmers and Negroes who listen to them from breaking with capitalist politics and creating a party or parties of their own. It paralyzes the potentially revolutionary forces from taking the initial and indispensable step— independent politics— that can lead to the elimination of all the evils of capitalism. By shutting off the possibility of a movement to the left, it facilitates the steady movement to the right of American politics as a whole.

It could lead, in 1968, to support of Senator Eastland on the ground— naturally— that he is a lesser evil than Robert Welch.

## Negro Leaders and Capitalist Politics The Two-Party Swamp

by George Breitman

Politically, 1964 has been a disaster for the Negro movement. 1963 was the year when it began to declare its independence, but 1964 has shown the incomplete and limited character of that declaration. With honorable but few exceptions, the Negro movement has remained stuck in the swamp of liberal capitalist politics, and there it is stagnating or sinking.

The Socialist Workers Party, in its 1963 convention resolution, pointed out that for practically all tendencies in the Negro movement, politics is the area where they are "weakest and least independent, both in theory and practice." Since the Negro struggle is a political struggle above everything else, its weakness and dependence in this field have had crippling effects on other fields.

For the more conservative Negro leaders, the election campaign was a godsend, especially after the Goldwater

nomination. Now they had their pretext for calling off demonstrations in the streets, which they had never favored in the first place. They embraced it with both arms, and are working 24 hours a day to keep the Negro community in the position of an appendage to the Democratic Party.

In this endeavor, conservatives like Roy Wilkins are getting all-out aid from people who have enjoyed reputations as militants in the past. A. Philip Randolph, who refused to endorse Kennedy in 1960, tells the Southern Christian Leadership Conference that "It's not enough just to elect Lyndon B. Johnson . . . we've got to bury Goldwater!" Bayard Rustin, who still sits on the editorial board of *Liberation* and remains the darling of the Socialist Party, is racing all over the place with "radical" reasons why Negroes should support the same candidate that Faubus is supporting and remain in the same party that Eastland is in.



Even younger and more militant sections of the civil-rights movement have been sucked into the swamp. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's venture into politics in Mississippi has turned into a dismal contest with the racists to demonstrate that Negroes are the "real" Democrats because they would vote for Johnson, if only Johnson would do something about helping them to exercise the right to vote.

But the saddest spectacle is provided by *Liberator*. This magazine has gained respect as a radical and forthright opponent of white supremacy, gradualism, and tokenism. It has been particularly strong in its exposure and condemnation of the middle-class Negro leaders, their liberal ideology and practice, and their dependence on the power structure. Yet *Liberator* has entered the swamp too, a little later than those it has so justly criticized, but with them.

### Number of Articles

The October issue of *Liberator* prints a number of articles on the election of the kind its readers have come to expect. Their gist is that "Between Johnson and Goldwater, black people have no choice." But the official position of the magazine is expressed in its editorials, and its October editorial, "Johnson or Goldwater, a Choice?," reaches a different conclusion.

It begins with the usual attack on the official Negro leaders. "Where will middle-class black Americans be (in November)? Why, right along with their white liberal comrades trying to save America from Goldwater. . . . There is no panic in the ghetto, only in the painted green lawns of suburbia."

Then it charges there is no real difference between the two major parties: "We are held in such contempt by the Democratic Party of Johnson and the Republican Party of

Goldwater that we have not even received from them the usual pre-election promises that things will be better after the election. The issue for black America is not Johnson or Goldwater, but one of survival."

### Last Sentence

But the editorial's last sentence, the one that counts, does not flow from what precedes it. It says, "However, the one possible virtue President Johnson has, he is not Goldwater, and Goldwater must be DEFEATED" (emphasis in original).

So *Liberator*, despite its verbal criticisms of Johnson, despite its shamefaced way of giving in to liberal pressure, ends up in the same pro-Johnson swamp as "the middle-class black Americans" and "their white liberal comrades." There is no panic in the ghetto, but there must be some in the editorial office of *Liberator*.

Earlier in the year it printed an article rejecting Clifton DeBerry, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for president, as an alleged "pawn" of the Marxists. Its present support of Johnson casts light on its real reason for opposing DeBerry. At the last minute *Liberator* couldn't resist showing it is "responsible" too. Responsible to whom?

The 1964 election has been a test for the different tendencies in the Negro movement. Those who can't stand up against the pressure of the liberals today can hardly be expected to stand up against the much harsher pressures to come. The only ones in the Negro movement who have acquitted themselves honorably, and therefore have earned the right to be listened to after the election, are the supporters of Clifton DeBerry's candidacy on a national scale and the campaigners for the Freedom Now Party in Michigan and other states.

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# The Consequences of Historical Ignorance

## The SWP and the P-9 Strike

by Dave Riehle

Sometimes remarks made in passing have an unintended sincerity that inadvertently reveals more than a carefully formulated statement of position. A possible example is what James Warren, the SWP's 1988 presidential candidate, said in the course of speaking to the New York memorial meeting for Fred Halstead, in relation to Halstead's activities in Austin, Minn., during the 1985-86 Hormel strike:

Fred was enthusiastic about the meatpackers' strike, but he was also careful not to demand more of them than could be expected at that point. In the course of their struggle, they were beginning to shed 50 years of miseducation. But there was still a lot they hadn't learned yet.

One might ask, of course, why, if they were so miseducated for 50 years, they were able to conduct their heroic and inspiring strike for so long without faltering. Especially since it is evident that they relied fundamentally on their own insights and understanding.

We can't ask Halstead, of course, which may be fortunate for James Warren, since this quote from the *Militant* (7/1/88) is apparently an expurgated version. A participant in the New York meeting reports that what Warren actually said was that the Hormel workers were "beginning to shed 50 years of 'brain-deadism.'"

I wasn't there, but the words are attested to by a reliable source. This crude and stupid remark sounds very much like the manner in which the SWP has become accustomed to address workers, and, we can assume, each other. During the Rank and File Packinghouse Workers Conference in Austin in May 1987, one SWP member repeatedly referred to bureaucratic union misleadership as "rotgut" unionism. This is all reminiscent of the "talk tough like the workers" inanities that the ultraleft press used to be full of.

Regardless of which version you want to go by, Warren's remarks reek of the suffocating condescension that has come to characterize the SWP's pronouncements on the working class. But the very vehemence of "brain-deadism" indicates something more—unmistakable and irrepressible—*resentment*.

As someone who was able to observe events in Austin at close range, Warren's exasperation comes as no surprise to me. It was an evident source of annoyance to the SWP leaders and their plenipotentiaries in Austin that Local P-9 refused to take their advice and direct its energies to "mixing it up" on the picket lines of other strikes rather than continuing their own struggle against the Hormel Co. The P-9ers rejected the SWP's urgent advice to call off their boycott and recognize their cause as a lost one in March 1987. It seems

possible that Warren's little slur has a more inclusive character than he dared say.

After declaring the Austin strike dead, the SWP's enthusiasm turned to four other packinghouse strikes taking place against Morrell, Iowa Beef, and Cudahy. Because of their endorsement by the UFCW bureaucracy, the SWP hoped these struggles were going to produce what they giddily referred to as "the year of the packinghouse worker." But the strikes all ended in miserable failure, due to the ineptitude and cowardice of the UFCW leadership. It's too bad the SWP leaders didn't listen to the P-9ers, who had "a lot they hadn't learned yet" and had no illusions about the UFCW bureaucrats.

### Real History of P-9

And there is another aspect to Warren's snide remark: it isn't true. The Hormel workers had a rich history but the SWP found little of interest in what P-9 was or had been. Their main concern was to get some packinghouse worker off in a corner after helping themselves to the free soup and sandwiches in the union hall, and then explaining, as though they were talking to naive and simple folk, that, somehow, there was a "connection" between what was going on in Austin, the American labor movement, South Africa, and Central America. They were so earnestly intent on imparting this startling information that most of them never seemed to notice that the workers already were aware of it.

My observation, and perhaps it was Halstead's, was that the "miseducation" of the Austin workers was not so universal as Warren represents. According to Warren's arithmetic, the miseducation began 50 years before the start of the 1985-86 strike, that is, in 1935-36.

I have in front of me Volume 1, No. 1, of the *Unionist*, dated October 24, 1935. The *Unionist* was the official organ of the Hormel workers union, published weekly from that time until 1986, when it was shut down by the combined efforts of the UFCW bureaucracy and the U.S. 8th Circuit Court.

The Hormel workers union was organized in July 1933, as the "Independent Union of All Workers" (I.U.A.W.) and its central leader was Frank Ellis, a member of the IWW. The *Unionist's* masthead carried the IWW symbol, except that "I.U.A.W." was substituted.

The lead headline on the *Unionist* (Vol. 1, No. 1) is: "Peace Meeting Planned." The article explains that the union will observe Armistice Day as a demonstration against war and fascism. Invited to speak was Farmer-Labor Party Congressman Ernest Lundeen, who, as the paper explains, was



“one of the few who voted against the United States entering World War I.”

Further on page one, “The Purpose of the *Unionist*” is outlined:

In line with the history and tradition of this Union this paper will be radical, militant and dynamic. We are in support of all unions and especially industrial unions. We will fight for farmers and workers and will aid representatives of them in times of trouble and strife. We will fight incessantly “Law and Order Leagues,” “Citizen’s Alliances,” “Secret 500’s.” We will promote *workers education, forums, discussion* (my emphasis—D.R.) and other activities. We recognize that we are under a system which perpetuates wage slavery and (we seek) to emancipate the wealth producers. We will defend the right of free press, free speech and lawful assemblage.

All of this cannot be accomplished except by organization, education and fraternity. . . . In union there is strength.

On page 2, the *Unionist* announces that “Max Shachtman will speak on ‘The Danger of War’ at the Firemen’s Hall in Austin Wednesday, October 30.”

Further on the paper reports that Joe Louis and Paul Robeson are supporting a strike of newspapermen on the *Amsterdam News* (New York’s leading Black newspaper).

This six-page mimeographed weekly paper in its inaugural edition devoted almost half its space to reports on war, fascism, the unemployed, farmers, independent political action by labor, struggles of Black workers, and other events that do not seem to indicate a parochial interest in only the day-to-day affairs of the Hormel workers.

Not a bad beginning for “50 years of brain-deadism”!

The volunteer group that put out the first edition of the *Unionist* commemorated the event by signing the first copy. Signers include Joe Vorhees, Joe Ollman, Carl Nilson, Julius Shade, and John Winkels, members of the Trotskyist Austin local of the Socialist Party.

Winkels and Ollman were two of the original five workers from the Hormel hog kill department who pioneered the union in 1933, and brought Frank Ellis into the leadership. Joe Ollman became director of the United Packinghouse Workers of America District 2, and was a part of the SWP fraction that spearheaded the tremendous 1948 strike at the Armour, Swift, and Cudahy plants in South St. Paul along with Jake Cooper. Cooper became a hero to the Hormel workers in 1985-86 for his role in organizing six labor food caravans from Minneapolis/St. Paul.

Julius Shade, a Hormel worker until his death in the 1970s, was the Austin delegate to the founding convention of the SWP in 1938.

John Winkels lived long enough to become a fervent supporter and inspirer of the 1985-86 strike. One of its leaders was his nephew, Pete Winkels, Local P-9’s business agent until he was removed from office by U.S. Federal Court Judge Edward Devitt, along with the rest of the P-9 executive board. I have an indelible image in my memory of Johnny Winkels, 85 years old, slinging cases of canned goods off the back of a truck as we delivered food from Twin Cities unions to P-9.

Carl Nilson, the founding editor of the *Unionist*, was also the organizer of the Socialist Party branch in Austin, and later business agent for the Teamsters Union in Ottumwa, Iowa, until 1941, when he along with the Trotskyist leadership of the Minneapolis Teamsters were forced out by Dan Tobin and the Roosevelt administration.

On September 15, 1936, the Austin local of the Socialist Party issued Vol. 1, No. 1 of their newspaper *The Class Struggle*.

Headlined “Militant Unionism versus Class Collaboration,” the paper begins: “As left-wing socialists we base our political views on the understanding that the interests of the working class are diametrically opposed to the interests of the capitalist class, and that all working people have a bond of common interest.”

This activity by class conscious Hormel workers did not go unchallenged. The Austin *Herald*, a vicious opponent of P-9 in the 1985-86 strike, was equally vigilant 50 years earlier.

An editorial in the *Herald* on September 14, 1937, said: “For the most part the majority of workers in Austin are homeowners and persons aspiring to acquire something for themselves. They resent the philosophy and tactics of a hatchet-wielding group of destructionists bearing with shameful effrontery the label ‘Trotskyist,’ rather than ‘American.’”

“Inventive genius, production ability, frugality, thrift, work; all these human traits mean nothing to a Trotskyist. To him all progress comes via the route of violence and disturbance. Better wages are not earned, they are wrung from the employers at the point of a gun or the edge of a hatchet, according to the Trotsky philosophy, of which there are about eighteen followers who have met regularly in homes and hotels for the dissemination of propaganda fed and distributed by this subversive Minneapolis group.”

In the 1940s, Frank Schultz, president of what was by then Local 9 of the UPWA, had a weekly radio program on station KAUS in Austin. In those talks he addressed a wide range of subjects, in the tradition of Austin unionism. He spoke in 1948 against the reimposition of the draft and against using American troops against the Chinese revolution. Schultz, who said that Joe Ollman had made him a socialist, served as local president until the 1960s, and as an international vice president of the UPWA.

## Labor Solidarity

The Hormel workers’ militant solidarity made the Austin local a potent weapon in the class struggle in southern Minnesota. Intervention of hundreds of Hormel workers in bitter strike struggles often made a decisive difference.

A strike at the Wilson meatpacking plant in nearby Albert Lea, Minn., in 1959 erupted into mass picket lines augmented by hundreds of Local 9 members who walked off the job and caravanned the 20 miles to the plant when Wilson attempted to bring in scabs. After the workers succeeded in closing the plant down, the Minnesota National Guard was called in and martial law declared. In the prolonged stalemate that ensued, Local 9 mobilized its members to send in massive amounts of food.



## Relearning Some Basic Lessons:

After being robbed of a seat on the UAW executive board at the union's convention two years ago, Jerry Tucker organized a rank-and-file movement strong enough to put him in office as director of UAW Region 5, consisting of eight Southwestern states. He defeated the incumbent in a special convention of the Region, held September 2. "We can be a beacon," Tucker said after his victory, "for the rest of the union to look to for how democratic unionism produces results for workers that elite, closed door unionism can't."

The official minutes of a meeting of the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly last August show that one of the delegates, Jerry Beedle of the Carpenters union, "reflected on how the Teamsters organized their strike in the 1930s." Beedle said, "We need to organize in the same fashion today."

Frank Ellis was called out of retirement to write a series of 12 articles for the *Unionist*, explaining the issues in the strike. Some of them were written in the form of imaginary dialogues between Ellis and a worker named "Johnnie." One of them begins:

Frank, I have heard you mention the class struggle several times. We have no class distinctions in the United States. We all have equal opportunity and equal rights. We are living in a democracy.

Johnnie, let me point out to you that we, the working people, have nothing in common with the big money power, because the corporations plan the destiny of the working class. The money power controls the markets; they tell us what we are to pay for the necessities of life, and again they tell us what we are to receive in the way of wages. In other words, Johnnie, the capitalist class are always striving to keep wages down and prices up, so that they can make a profit.

On the other hand, Johnnie, we, the workers, are always striving to get higher wages and to keep prices down, so that we can make a living. One class pulling in one direction and the other class pulling in the other direction. This brings about a direct separation of the people and lays the foundation for the class struggle.

In another article, the dialogue continued:

Frank, I heard your talk the other night at the union meeting in Albert Lea and I did not like it.

Well, Johnnie, you have a perfect right to disagree with me. Perhaps you can prove to me that I am wrong?

Well, Frank, you asked for it, and here is what I say is wrong with your talk. You sounded just like a revolutionist.

Johnnie, you have told me what I sounded like, now tell me what I said that was wrong.

Further on:

Frank, do you believe in revolution?

Well yes, Johnnie, I do believe in a revolution, and I also believe you will have to fight to get the changes in our system I mentioned in my talk.

Right up into the 1970s, Local P-9 employed a full time editor for the *Unionist*, reluctantly foregoing that position only as the local's membership and finances shrank with big job cutbacks at the Hormel plant.

It would be misleading and inaccurate to imply that the Austin union remained an island of militant, class conscious democratic unionism for 50 years, immune to the immense social and political pressures that bore down on the labor movement.

The union leadership degenerated to the point where it began to freely relinquish to the Hormel Co. the gains in wages, working conditions, dignity, and self-respect won over the years.

But when they did, the Hormel workers eventually threw them out and reached into their ranks, and into their past, and brought forward an incorruptible, militant, and democratic new leadership that unflinchingly carried through their struggle to the end, and retains the loyalty and support of the majority of the workers to this day.

### Is Austin, Minnesota, Unique?

Why did this renaissance of working class militancy happen as it did, and when it did, in Austin and not somewhere else? So far, there has been nothing yet to equal the uncompromising independence and tenacity of P-9 in the U.S. labor movement in the 1980s. That was why it was able to inspire the great response and solidarity among workers everywhere that it did. Why did it happen in Austin?

Maybe it's because they got a better than average education over 50 years after all!

If you wanted to take it that way, it could be a source of inspiration and confidence for the future. The Hormel workers had their own special history, but hardly anyone knew about it when the struggle broke out in the open in 1985. Who knows what other rich legacies are doing their preparatory work in the American working class right now?

Local P-9's *particular* history helps explain how the struggle developed in Austin the way it did. Of course, the Hormel Co.'s offensive aroused a new militancy among the workers there, but it takes more than that to understand the sources of the struggle that unfolded. In fact, it takes a dialectical understanding of the *interrelationship* between P-9's history and its immediate experiences to grasp the full meaning of what happened in Austin.

In the pragmatic approach of the current SWP leadership, the history of the Austin workers is a pursuit useful only for obscurantist archivists and bookworms. They're just not interested.

Continued on page 36



# What Working People Can Do About the Child Care Crisis

by Evelyn Sell

The current child care crisis has been building to its present peak over the past twenty years. The economic trends were all pointing in the same direction: more women in the work force; more working mothers with young children; more women as the sole support of families. But a 1981 report from the U.S. Civil Rights Commission noted that “the fact that mothers are working does not mean that families have made satisfactory child-care arrangements.” On the contrary, studies showed that large numbers of children were left alone for varying periods of time. The chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Child and Human Development stated in 1981 that “census data tell us that at least 2 million school-age children between the ages of 7 and 13 are simply left alone without any supervision.”

The situation of these “latchkey children” was dramatically exposed in 1983 when five-year-old Patrick Mason was shot and killed by a police officer in Southern California. The kindergarden student had been left alone because his mother, who earned \$4.91 an hour, could not find affordable child care. A friend called police to check on the family. The officer who entered the dark apartment saw a figure with a gun and fired one fatal shot. It was Patrick holding his toy pistol. In the wake of his death, there was a flood of statistics about the huge number of “latchkey children,” and editorials calling for solutions. Public and media attention was mostly focused on the child care problems of working women—a reflection of the traditional attitude that children were primarily the responsibility of mothers.

Recent shifts in attitudes indicate a growing recognition of the shared responsibilities and needs of both female and male parents. Some views have been modified because the economic situation has made two-paycheck families a necessity. At the beginning of this year, a *Los Angeles Times* editorial pointed out, “Today one-half of all married women with infants younger than one year old are in the work force—most of necessity, not choice. Even so, the average income of two-parent families with children dropped 3.1 percent between 1973 and 1984.” [January 20, 1988] Another *Times* editorial, supporting the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, explained, “Child care is essential to the working poor. As a House committee found recently, 35 percent more two-parent families would live in poverty if the wives were not employed.” [May 11, 1988]

## Child Care on Labor's Agenda

In 1983 labor leaders representing 180,000 Teamster members in Southern California and Nevada announced their intention to seek child care benefits in contract negotia-

tions. At that time, this was a major departure from national labor policy. In 1986 the United Steelworkers won a breakthrough agreement on child care in negotiations with Bethlehem Steel Corporation and Inland Steel Company. The contracts called for a Joint Union-Management Child Care Committee which would “assess the needs of working parents in each of the locations to determine the feasibility of child care services for employees.” Affordable child care was one of the issues featured in the battle to win union recognition for Harvard University’s clerical and technical workers. After a campaign which lasted over ten years, the majority of campus workers voted in favor of union representation in May 1988. By this time, national labor policy regarding child care and related issues had changed significantly—prompted by a long-overdue response to the restructuring of U.S. industry, losses in union membership, the anti-labor offensive of the bosses, and the new composition of the work force.

The effects of this situation and the influence of the 1960s-early 1970s women’s liberation movement could be heard in comments by a delegate to the 1987 national convention of the AFL-CIO. Mike Mateka, from the Bloomington, Indiana, Building Trades Council, said: “These are not female issues. These are human issues. I’m the proud father of a 2-year-old. Child care and family support are key issues for young workers. If we’re going to organize younger workers, we have to work on these issues.”

At the convention, the AFL-CIO adopted a policy statement and a plan for legislative action on “work and family” issues: child care, family and medical leave, pay equity, and services for the elderly. The labor federation also announced its sponsorship of the May 14, 1988, event in Washington D.C. designed to pressure Congress to adopt “work and family” legislation.

The child care issue had been featured in several successful campaigns to unionize unorganized workers, according to officers of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Susan Cowell, vice-president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), explained that her union had set up a child care center in New York City’s Chinatown area. Worksites day care centers had been established by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU). But unionists pointed out that major federal funding was required to deal adequately with child care needs; therefore, congressional legislation was crucial. Working with and supporting the labor movement’s efforts were women’s rights



organizations and child advocacy groups such as the Children's Defense Fund.

### Spectrum of Models Available

The AFL-CIO's formal policy change does not automatically mean that the labor movement has launched an aggressive campaign to win child care benefits for union members. But the official stance does provide a springboard for more vigorous activities to force remedies from the bosses and their political servants at the local, state, and national levels. In developing bargaining table demands, unionists don't have to start from scratch. Corporate child care programs have expanded from 110 ten years ago to 2,500 in 1985—a tiny portion of the 44,000 companies employing over 100 persons but a sufficient number to provide examples of the range of options which unions can consider.

- A 1986 article reported on several examples in the Dallas area. The Zale Corporation operated a day care center just a few steps away from the front doors of its main office. A few miles away, parents employed by Lomas & Nettleton, paid \$65 per week to keep their children in the company-operated preschool. Because of its location within the office building, parents could eat lunch with their children in the company cafeteria, and look out of office windows to see their children in the courtyard playground. Dallas-based Southland Corporation (parent company of 7-11 Stores) had a day care center located in a church for employees in Vancouver, British Columbia, and a referral arrangement with a state child care agency in Florida where Southland subsidized 25 percent of their employees' cost for day care.
- For renovating two centers near worksites, the Procter & Gamble Corporation of Cincinnati got to fill 75 percent of the centers' enrollment. The company also operated a day care referral service for both employee and community use.
- In 1984, major corporations in the Burbank (California) area established a cooperative arrangement with the school district to create a center for employees' preschool children. Contributors to the costs of the center included the National Broadcasting Company, Columbia Pictures, Walt Disney Productions, and Lockheed Corporation. Parents paid a fixed amount according to the age of the child.
- As an incentive to recruit part-time women workers, National Partitions & Interiors in Hialeah, Florida, opened a free day care center in 1983.
- Transamerica Occidental Life Insurance Company established a free, worksite child care referral and resource service which helped employees find facilities.
- Nyloncraft, Inc., set up a 24-hour day care center at their plant in Mishawaka, Indiana, in 1981. Employees' children made up about half of the enrollment; about ten percent were children of bank employees; the rest came from the community. Nyloncraft subsidized employees \$25 weekly for the first child and \$20 weekly for each additional child.

The bank subsidized from \$4 a day to \$20 a week for one child only. Parents of children from the community paid the full rate.

Other cases of corporate support to employee child care needs involve: vouchers which can be redeemed at a center or caregiver chosen by the employee; employer-arranged discounts at selected facilities; a "cafeteria plan" offered to employees who can choose child care as one of their benefits; establishing a family day care home with the company recruiting and paying for the training and licensing of staff; and alternative work patterns (flextime, job sharing, family leave, and parental sick leave).

### Serving the Interests of Corporations

Businesses involved in child care plans are motivated by profit concerns—not altruistic attitudes toward their workers. Studies have shown that child care assistance has resulted in reduced turnover and absenteeism, increased worker productivity and morale, successful recruitment, and tax breaks. Companies gained these advantages with minimal expenditures. Zale Corporation in Dallas and Stride Rite in Roxbury, Massachusetts, covered part of their costs for worksite centers by setting up tax-exempt charitable foundations. The consortium approach allowed businesses like Control Data Corporation of Minneapolis to share costs and responsibilities so that 25 percent of the funds for center operations came from business and 75 percent came from parents and government contributions. The Methodist Hospital of Southern California successfully competed for nursing staff by operating an on-site center which received half of its funding from the hospital and the rest from parents' fees.

Politicians obligingly passed legislation giving special benefits to companies involved in child care efforts. Florida allows employers to deduct 100 percent of the start-up costs for on-site child care centers. Connecticut gives a 50 percent tax credit for firms offering employees child care subsidies, up to 40 percent tax credit for business donations to non-profit children's centers, and up to 30 percent for contributions to profit-making centers. At the local level, Hartford's zoning regulations were amended to give developers six additional square feet of floor area for each square foot of child care space provided. Additional space bonuses are allowed if the indoor area is combined with outside playgrounds.

Additional advantages for business are included in the Child Care Services Improvement Act sponsored by conservative Senator Orrin Hatch (Utah Republican) and supported by some influential business groups such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The bill provides a one-time tax credit to companies that establish day care centers, and an insurance pool to help lower the cost of liability coverage for child care providers. The insurance clause is a break for corporations in general as well as for commercial child care organizations. Child care has become big business for some entrepreneurs. Kinder-Care, Inc., the nation's leading child care chain, netted a profit of \$380 million in the first nine months of 1987. A special division of Kinder-Care promotes corporate awareness of child care needs and has secured lucrative contracts to run centers for Walt Disney World in



Orlando, Florida, and Cigna Corporation in Hartford, Connecticut.

The expansion of profit-making child care chains and the increase in profit-enhancing corporate child care arrangements are just drops in the ocean of needed facilities, however. Most working people can't afford the fees and have no access to such services. This holds true even in areas with a relatively large number of private and public programs. Finding space in a child care center "is worse than getting into Harvard," explained the chairwoman of the Los Angeles Mayor's Advisory Committee on Child Care.

### Meeting Needs of Working People

In developing their demands and strategies to win "work and family" issues, labor can find many allies among feminists, children's rights advocates, and the movements of social protest.

The women's liberation movement has won many victories in its battles to secure affirmative action programs, pay equity, comparable worth, and other job breakthroughs. But, as stated in a 1981 report by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, "Responsibility for child care constitutes one of several significant barriers to women's equal opportunity." The report noted that "our national employment and education policy carries a double message for women. On the one hand, the laws against sex discrimination . . . say that women have a legal right to equality of opportunity. On the other hand, the failure to use those laws to strike down practices that are sex discriminatory because they interfere with raising children places equality of opportunity out of women's reach."

The Commission's survey of federal equal employment regulations found one *suggestion* that federal contractors "encourage child care . . . designed to improve the employment opportunities for minorities and women" . . . but not one provision to *require* child care assistance. In most cases where federal child care programs did exist, women lost all assistance if their incomes went above a fixed limit. One example cited the situation of a single mother who was forced to refuse a promotion with a salary increase because that would put her above the income level for child care assistance—but would not cover her child care expenses! According to the report, this kind of problem is "the stuff of women's lives, shared by women at all levels of educational background, and rarely shared by men. . . . Because of the need for child care, women routinely drop out of school or the labor force or pass up opportunities for advancement; poor women are kept poor; women are disenfranchised from job opportunities and benefits."

A fact sheet published by the National Commission on Working Women (NCWW) is full of statistics showing the continuation and worsening of this situation. Using 1984 figures, the NCWW explained that most working families should expect to spend 10 percent of their income on child care—regardless of age of child or type of facility (in someone's home or in a center). With a median annual income of \$13,213, female heads of households with children under 18 years old could not pay for even the least expensive preschool care. Because of the costs and the lack of facilities, it was conservatively estimated that 7 million children aged

13 and under had to care for themselves at least part of every day.

Faced with such facts, women's rights fighters have been in the forefront of national and community campaigns for child care. In Los Angeles, for example, over 700 marched in the 1984 "Push for Childcare Walkathon" sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, National Organization for Women (NOW), American Association of University Women, the Fatherhood Forum, Planned Parenthood, YWCA, and Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). One of the chief organizers explained that the focus was on employer-provided child care because "Most experts feel there will probably (eventually) be employer-government shared child-care programs."

In 1986 a statewide "Care for Children" campaign, sponsored by the California Children's Council, resulted in simultaneous marches in San Francisco, Oakland, San Diego, Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, and other cities. These demonstrations called for businesses and the legislature to help provide adequate child care.

In urging participation in an April 26, 1987, "Rally for the Children," the Children's Center Committee of United Teachers Los Angeles (merged NEA/AFT) pointed out that the U.S. "is the only industrialized country that lacks a national policy which recognizes the child care needs of working parents."

These limited examples of actions for child care show the potential for organizing a potent combination of labor, feminist organizations, children's advocates, and community groups.

### 'Child Care NOT Warfare!'

Social protest movements represent another powerful ally in a labor campaign for child care. Demonstrations against U.S. intervention in Central America usually feature signs and chants demanding cutbacks in military expenditures in order to fund human needs. Both indirectly and explicitly, demonstrators call for a change in the allocation of U.S. resources which would benefit working people: "Jobs Not Guns," "Fund Schools Not Star Wars," and so on.

Activists in many different social protest movements responded to the Call issued by labor and religious leaders by marching in the April 25, 1987, national Mobilization for Justice and Peace in Central America and South Africa. Many of these same demonstrators can be drawn into support committees for union organizing drives and strikes which include a serious fight for child care provisions as part of a job benefits package.

There is no contradiction between demands for increased federal support for child care and a union's fight to include child care benefits in a contract. The crisis is so deep and wide that practical solutions should be pursued wherever possible. Obviously, child care needs—like health care—must be addressed at the national level to gain long-term substantial programs. But working people don't have to limit themselves to any one avenue. Indeed, fighting on many fronts is currently necessary to secure quality child care for more workers.



## A German Reader Questions F.I.T. Perspectives

Cologne, Germany  
June 8, 1988

Dear Comrades:

I studied the article "The Socialist Workers Party Today: A Balance Sheet of Degeneration" [by Frank Lovell and Paul Le Blanc, in *BIDOM*, June 1988] with much interest. It helped me to understand better the changes of the SWP in the last years. And I think it is correct to fight to rectify its course and not to say: the SWP is completely degenerated, we don't give a damn for its further development. I think it is correct to still characterize the SWP as "a substantial force on the U.S. left." You believe the same. The SWP is still a revolutionary organization. But at the same time its programmatic identity and political line have evolved in a bad way. The danger is serious that it can degenerate to a sect and be lost for the goal of building a revolutionary party in the U.S.A.

But I want to mention two serious problems in your approach.

1) The question of the unity of the revolutionary left. The article states at the beginning: "The organizational unity of revolutionary socialists is a necessary goal in the effort to advance the struggles of the working class. Many have understandably expressed dismay over the fragmentation of the Fourth Internationalist movement in the United States—with the initial split in the Socialist Workers Party brought about through a bureaucratic purge in the 1982-84 period, and subsequently with the inability of those driven out of the SWP to form a common organization."

The explanation given by Frank Lovell and Paul Le Blanc is not convincing. What is the specific identity of the F.I.T., compared with the other revolutionary tendencies outside the SWP in the U.S.A.? The "commitment" to "politically confront the challenge of Barnesism in the SWP and in the FI," just as Trotsky, purged and even persecuted by the Stalinist leadership, kept a commitment to confront the Stalinist challenge in the Communist International, to fight against degeneration and against a course that would destroy the Communist International. And he did so until the fact was clear, that this international was no longer a revolutionary party—not even a revolutionary party with a bad leadership and a bad evolution—but had been destroyed as a revolutionary force. Now you say that the other revolutionaries outside the SWP in the U.S.A. have not the patience and sufficient concern "for serious programmatic clarity" and for a correct approach to try to reform the SWP.

But dear comrades, this is not enough to justify the organizational split between revolutionary Marxists outside the SWP! Look, if your place—and in my eyes this is correct—would be inside the SWP, despite the bad evolution of its leadership and line, if only the SWP would be prepared

to reintegrate you and the other revolutionists expelled, then it is crystal clear that the divergence mentioned by you wouldn't justify not to be in the same organization together with the other FI supporters in the U.S.A.! So it is clear that you have to fight for the reunification of all revolutionists in the U.S.A., without the precondition that your correct approach to the SWP is endorsed by everybody from the beginning.

Frank Lovell and Paul Le Blanc mentioned two tasks in their article: "first, continue to explain and expose Barnesism; second, analyze and explain and submit some answers to the problems of the working class in the U.S. today." These are two tasks, and you cannot implicitly say that the first is more important than the second. The first is important to preserve and educate some hundreds of revolutionists. But it is not seen as a major problem even by the vanguard elements of the working class! So I think it would be your duty to do everything to join with all forces prepared to implement the second task through a revolutionary socialist perspective. Because this task can be better implemented with these joined forces than with your forces alone. How would you explain to a radicalized young worker that it is more important to "explain Barnesism" than to regroup all revolutionists to do something positive in the class struggle? The necessity to confront the SWP with Marxist criticism is something you have to explain inside the organization of regrouped revolutionists in the U.S.A.

2) The interpretation of Trotskyist orthodoxy. In my opinion, Trotskyism is the answer to the degeneration of the Second and Third Internationals. It is justified to build separate revolutionary parties outside the degenerated products of Social Democracy and Stalinism—because it is impossible to carry out revolutionary politics and to build revolutionary parties without this separation. But Trotskyism is in no way the prediction that revolutionary consciousness cannot develop outside the ranks of given supporters of the FI.

There is surely a rational nucleus in the idea of the present SWP leadership: that revolutions succeeded led by forces other than the FI. No section of the FI has led a revolution. Jack Barnes makes a fetish of this, and as you explained in the *Bulletin IDOM* article endorses the bad aspects of Castroism and not its good side. Still, the problem remains.

Like Trotsky in the beginning of the FI, we should clearly accept that there are revolutionists in the world—and also in the U.S.A.—who are not convinced about everything in the Trotskyist tradition, in the tradition of the FI, who are not convinced about Trotskyism as the real revolutionary Marxist tradition. Just as Trotsky was prepared in the end of the thirties to make sincere concessions to such forces, in order to join them in one and the same international, we also must be prepared to join our forces with all sincere revolutionists, even if they do not understand the necessity



to join the FI as it is today, even if they don't understand some elements of the full revolutionary Marxist program. It is inside of the joined organization of all the revolutionists that these remaining divergences must be clarified.

The programmatic preconditions for the regroupment of all revolutionary forces must be worked out by you and the comrades concerned from the other currents in the U.S.A. But it is clear that the important criteria — besides the neces-

sary organizational norms — must be developed not starting from formulas of a given tradition but from the major necessities of national and international class struggle, allowing the united organization to fight on the correct side of the barricade, even if many things must still be clarified to prepare for coming revolutionary challenges.

Revolutionary greetings, Manuel Kellner

## A Reply to Manuel Kellner

by Steve Bloom

We appreciate the feedback from comrades overseas to articles we run in the *Bulletin IDOM*. A discussion of the questions Manuel Kellner raises are extremely important both in the U.S. today, and within the FI as a whole.

It is true that the differences between F.I.T. and Socialist Action, for example, are far less than those that divide both of us politically from the current positions of the SWP. The differences between the expelled opposition groups are *not sufficient to justify the existence of separate political parties*. But the F.I.T. has never claimed to be a political party. We are a tendency, as we explain in the name we have adopted. We would like to be part of a party, one that includes the SWP and all those who were expelled from it. But that possibility is not available. This unusual situation — a political tendency bureaucratically cut off from the party that it ought to be a part of — requires some unusual thinking about organizational forms, in our view.

If all of the expelled were still in the SWP, four different political tendencies would be clearly defined — ourselves, those who follow the present leadership of the SWP, those who now constitute Socialist Action, and those who would be for a Solidarity-like fusion. Given our expulsion from the SWP, how can the existence of these separate tendencies manifest itself in the U.S. today? The ideological current which the F.I.T. represents cannot be denied an equal opportunity with all the others to maintain its independent analysis and perspective. The only way we can do this right now is as a separate public organization. We believe it is principled for us to take this course as long as we keep the context in mind, and don't ever make the mistake of thinking that we represent more than we actually do, or that we would be justified in maintaining our own independent existence when the broader Fourth Internationalist movement is brought back together again in a common party.

There is one essential fact to keep in mind: right now this common party cannot be a fusion of two, or even three, of our movement's present components. Only if the entire movement — all four currents — is reunited can our thinking revert to the traditional approach on the question of separate organizations.

Both Socialist Action and the FI Caucus of Solidarity reject the F.I.T.'s evaluation of the SWP as a revolutionary organization (though an increasingly degenerate one). They

profoundly disagree with the idea that the programmatic and ideological struggle with the Barnes faction is at least one of the key tasks, if not the key task as we believe, of the expelled opposition. Isn't it inevitable, then, that we will have profound disagreements about what kind of organizational forms to adopt?

Our goal is to initiate a discussion about the programmatic questions with all those who constitute the Fourth Internationalist movement in the U.S.A. — especially including those who remain in the SWP. If the F.I.T. were to join with SA, for example, we would be limited in our ability to do that because of the limitations of the perspectives of the majority of that organization. *Their* idea has been that what is necessary is simply a discussion between them and us, excluding the FI Caucus — whom they have written off as having capitulated to social democracy — and ignoring the SWP — which they don't have much interest in. In short, if the F.I.T. were to fuse with SA, we would cease to exist *as a current within the Fourth Internationalist movement in the U.S.* and exist *only as a current within one wing of that movement*. It shouldn't be hard to see why that is unacceptable to us.

We agree that common activity to advance common perspectives in the class struggle should be a key component of the activity of *all* components of the Fourth Internationalist movement in the U.S. today. Our present approach is to try to engage in as many joint projects with the other currents as we can.

On the second question in the letter: We agree that the program of the Fourth International (let alone the *organization* of the FI) is not the be-all and end-all of determining who is, and who is not, a genuine revolutionary in the world today. There is no question that there are revolutionary forces developing in many countries which come from different backgrounds and different traditions. If the Trotskyist movement fails to recognize this, and fails to do everything in its power to unify all such forces, it will have proven no better than Jack Barnes's caricature of us in his infamous "Their Trotsky and Ours" speech.

At the same time we insist that this process of bringing about the unity of revolutionary forces is not simply, or even primarily, an organizational problem. It is above all political. And in that political process the question of program will ul-

Continued on page 36



# The Fourth International: Fifty Years of Struggle

## Interview with Livio Maitan

*The following interview with Livio Maitan of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International was conducted last May in Montreal at the time of the fusion conference of the Alliance for Socialist Action of English Canada and Gauche Socialiste of Quebec — sympathizing sections of the Fourth International in the Canadian state. It was published in the June 1988 issue of Combat Socialiste. Translation for the Bulletin IDOM is by Keith Mann.*

**G.S.: Under what circumstances was the Fourth International founded in 1938?**

Livio: As you say the Fourth International was founded exactly fifty years ago, but the origin of the movement that resulted in the Fourth International goes back fifteen years before that, to about 1923-24. That date represents the moment when, in the Soviet Union, a process of bureaucratic degeneration of the workers' state that arose from the October revolution began to take shape. Trotsky was beginning his fight with the rising bureaucracy, and above all with Stalin who is the foremost representative of this bureaucratic caste. First of all it must be stressed that it was not only the process of bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Union itself that led Trotsky to break with the Soviet leadership and struggle for a new international organization and for new revolutionary parties in various countries. It was a result of a combination of factors involving the internal situation in the Soviet Union and international factors that enabled Stalin to gain control of the Third International. He tended to sacrifice the revolutionary struggles throughout the world in the interests of the bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union and thus impose on the Communist parties a strategy, a political orientation, that contradicted the political needs of the workers' movement in a given country. This was the case particularly in China during the 1925-1927 revolution which ended in disaster, and was also true in 1933 with the catastrophe of the German workers' movement — the strongest workers' movement in capitalist Europe at the time — which was destroyed by Hitler. The German Communist Party bore a crushing responsibility for this because of its combination of political opportunism and ultraleft sectarianism. Those are the major events that pushed Trotsky to take the momentous decision to break with the Third International and to begin the construction of a Fourth International.

**G.S.: At the end of the thirties, Trotsky foresaw a major development for the Fourth International during and after the Second World War. These predictions were not realized. Why?**

Livio: In the thirties, there were not many Communist militants or sectors of the Communist movement who were ready to rally to a struggle against Stalin, especially after the rise to power of Hitler in Germany. The Soviet Union appeared to the international workers' movement during the Second World War as a country that was making a major contribution in the fight against Hitlerite imperialism. So, even when some comrades of the Communist parties had doubts, they were not totally convinced. For example, they

accepted the Moscow trials. They reasoned that this was the USSR, the first workers' state, the fatherland of socialism; it struggles against fascism so we must accept it. They were not ready to break with the Third International and with the Soviet leadership which, in their eyes, appeared as a revolutionary leadership. Those are the root causes of the problems we faced at the time.

When the time came for actually founding the Fourth International, it was basically up to the members of the Left Opposition, those called the Bolshevik-Leninists, whose forces were small. But they were real forces, participating in the mass movement in countries such as Greece, Vietnam, and parts of Latin America. Already in Bolivia at the time there was a well-rooted organization, and in Chile as well. In the United States, the Trotskyist forces played a real role in the great workers' upsurge of the thirties, for example in the important Minneapolis teamsters' strike. These were real forces but from a numerical point of view extremely limited. I would add that the Fourth International was founded on the eve of the Second World War, in fact, a year to the day before the beginning of the world war, and the war shook up a good number of organizations.

**G.S.: What sort of balance sheet would you draw today of the creation of the Fourth International?**

Livio: To continue with the same line of thinking, by the end of the world war the repression had struck a number of our sections very hard, notably in Western Europe, where we suffered very important losses in relationship to our overall numbers. Hundreds of comrades were killed or deported. In certain countries they fell under the Stalinist repression. In Greece, for example, dozens, hundreds of our comrades were victims not only of the imperialist repression from the deployment of English troops in Greece, but also from Stalinist forces. One of the founders of the Trotskyist movement in my own country, Italy, Pietro Tresso, was assassinated by French Stalinists just after having been liberated from prison, although he had joined the underground to participate in the struggle against the Germans. This gives you an idea of the conditions under which we had to work.

So I think that if the Fourth International had not been founded immediately before the war, if there had not been an organized cadre, we could not have assured the continuity of our movement and we would have had to begin all over again, from scratch, after the war, with all of the disadvantages that such a situation would have entailed. From a programmatic point of view, the FI was essential to counteract all the damage that the war did to the ranks of the



communist movement. And from the politico-organizational point of view, it was necessary to maintain a minimum number of cadres so we could relaunch the battle after the war.

**G.S.:** How did the Fourth International develop in the aftermath of the Second World War?

**Livio:** We are now in the midst of preparing a special issue of *Quatrième Internationale* [and also of the *International Marxist Review*—K.M.] in which we try to draw a balance sheet of the different periods of the Fourth International. There will be a special article that will analyze the period from the end of the war until '68-'69, which marks the beginning of a new rise of the workers' movement. At the end of the war there was a very contradictory situation. At first we had very profound crises in all the Western European bourgeois societies. It is true that there were great hopes of rapidly taking power. But we saw a very contradictory development in the key countries of the period, countries where the crisis of bourgeois society was particularly accentuated—like Italy or France. Here it was the Stalinized Communist parties which benefited from the crisis. They enjoyed the great prestige of the Soviet Union, and people believed that they would repeat what the Bolshevik party had done in Russia in 1917. So, there was a growth of the workers' movement, but it was still channeled into the Communist parties; and in other countries by the Social Democratic parties which appeared to be even more concrete instruments for registering workers' gains. The workers' movement was once again polarized around these traditional mass parties. For our part, we found ourselves with a new generation, that to which I belong, which began carrying out political work during the war or immediately afterward, and was able to link up with the preceding generation of Trotskyists—though still with an extremely negative balance of forces in relation to the dominant parties. As is well known, at the beginning of the 1950s there was a new wave of Stalinist repression, especially in the Eastern European countries. At the same time, in the capitalist countries of Western Europe, there was a retreat of the workers' movement and a prolonged boom in the capitalist economy. All this fostered illusions, but those illusions were based on a deception, because even in Western Europe the workers' movement did not manage to make gains. There were already at this time theories holding that capitalism could perpetuate itself, and even illusions especially in Social Democratic sectors that there would no longer be unemployment, that there would be a constant rise in the standard of living, a more and more guaranteed social security for almost everyone. So it was thought that there was the possibility of permanently improving our conditions within the framework of capitalism.

**G.S.:** In the 1960s we saw an upsurge of revolutionary struggles in the three sectors of the world revolution. What role did the Fourth International play?

**Livio:** In the 1950s and 60s we succeeded in accomplishing the task of accumulating the minimum of forces necessary so we could have some impact when the new upsurge began. Obviously, if we could have gathered together more forces beforehand, we could have done much more and even perhaps assured that the upsurge would have had a different end result. We were prepared for this upsurge precisely because we had always rejected the idea that capitalism had stabilized. We thought that there would be a resurgence of the workers' movement, including in the most developed capitalist countries. This is exactly what happened in France in 1968. We were able to integrate ourselves into these movements and I think it was no accident that this was the most favorable period for the Fourth International—the period in which we succeeded in making breakthroughs in a number of countries between '69 and '73. It was at that time that many organizations that are today sections of the Fourth International were formed. Our movement was able to exploit this extraordinary radicalization to grow and win a new generation to the Fourth International.

**G.S.:** What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Fourth International today?

**Livio:** We have not yet succeeded in building a mass international. We believe that more favorable conditions exist today. There are other revolutionary forces with whom we can work toward the goal of building a revolutionary international, even if nobody else has yet been inclined to go in that direction. We believe more than ever that this mass revolutionary international will not result from our efforts alone. It will have diverse revolutionary components.

Our movement has experienced a very unequal development in different sectors of the world, with some organizations already having an important national influence in several countries, including a serious influence at the union level, and even on the electoral plane. This has been the case with the PRT [Revolutionary Workers Party] in Mexico. The French LCR [Revolutionary Communist League] is recognized as a national organization, and when the student struggle took place in 1986, followed by the big upsurge in rail, our comrades played a real leadership role in these movements, roles denounced by the bourgeois press—and rightly so from their point of view. Even where our organizations are extremely small, they are made up in their big majority by people who are active in the mass movement, who are involved in real mass organizations. The charge our opponents have always leveled against the Trotskyist movement—that it is made up of intellectual propagandizers and abstract theoreticians—simply does not correspond to the historical trajectory of our movement and still less to actual reality.



**FOURTH INTERNATIONAL**

**1938**

**1988**

**50**





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7:00 P.M.

## TROTSKYISM IN AMERICA

FILM: *LABOR'S TURNING POINT*

■ **JAKE COOPER** (Socialist Action)  
Participant, 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes  
Defense guard for Leon Trotsky in Coyoacan, Mexico  
Imprisoned under the Smith Act in 1944

■ **FRANK LOVELL** (Fourth Internationalist Tendency) ■  
Founding member, Socialist Workers Party (1938)  
Former Labor Editor, *The Militant*, 1970-1981

SATURDAY,  
OCTOBER 15

10:00 A.M.

## THE SOVIET UNION TODAY: GLASNOST & PERESTROIKA

■ **GERRY FOLEY**  
Editor, *International Viewpoint*  
Former Editor, *Intercontinental Press*

■ **MARILYN VOGT-DOWNEY** ■  
Translator, *Notebooks for the Grandchildren*  
Co-Chairperson, Moscow Trials Campaign Committee

■ **ESTEBAN VOLKOV** (Grandson of Leon Trotsky)  
Curator, Leon Trotsky Museum, Coyoacan

1:30 P.M.

## NATIONAL LIBERATION & SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

■ **SUSAN CALDWELL**  
Gauche Socialiste/Socialist Challenge (Canada)

■ **LLOYD D'AGUILAR** (Caribbean Journalist) ■

■ **MICHAEL FARRELL** Peoples' Democracy (Ireland)  
Participant in the Civil Rights Movement  
Author, *Northern Ireland: The Orange State*

■ **TIQVA PARNASS** ■  
Revolutionary Communist League (Israel)  
Manager, Alternative Information Center  
Doctor of Sociology, Tel Aviv University







4:30 P.M.

## ELECTORAL POLITICS & REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY

■ TOM BARRETT

Fourth Internationalist Tendency  
Co-Editor, *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*

ROSARIO IBARRA ■ (Mexico)

Organizer, Committee for the Defense of Political  
Prisoners, Exiles, Fugitives and Disappeared Persons;  
Organizer, National Front Against Repression;  
1982 and 1988 Presidential Candidate,  
Revolutionary Workers Party

■ CHARLES VAN GELDEREN

International Socialist Group (Britain)  
British Delegate to the Founding Conference  
of the Fourth International (1938)

8:00 P.M. RALLY

## FIFTY YEARS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

■ PAUL Le BLANC

Fourth Internationalist Tendency  
Co-Editor, *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*

ZBIGNIEW KOWALEWSKI ■ (Poland)

Author, *Give Us Back Our Factories:  
Solidarnosc and the Struggle for Workers'  
Self-Management in Poland*

■ CLAUDIO MANGANI

Representative, United Secretariat  
of the Fourth International

SUSAN CALDWELL ■

■ JAKE COOPER

MICHAEL FARRELL ■

■ GERRY FOLEY

TIQVA PARNASS ■

■ ROSARIO IBARRA

CHARLES VAN GELDEREN ■

■ ESTEBAN VOLKOV

## WHAT IS THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL?

Inspired by and under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, the Fourth International was launched in September 1938 at a conference held in France and attended by revolutionaries from four continents: Europe, Asia, Africa and North America. They adopted as their basic programmatic statement "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International," also known as the Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution.

For fifty years the Fourth International has represented the continuity of revolutionary Marxism after the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the Third (Communist) International under Josef Stalin.



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There will be an exhibition of materials relating to this historic period:

- Books and writings by and about Leon Trotsky.
- Tape recordings of Trotsky speaking on the founding conference of the Fourth International.
- Speeches by James P. Cannon and other leaders of the revolutionary movement.
- Cartoons by Laura Gray from *The Militant* newspaper and other materials from the Tamiment Library collection.
- Posters from the Russian Revolution.
- British artist Clare Sheridan's 1920 bust of Trotsky.
- Documents and memorabilia from the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strikes.
- Revolutionary publications and literature from around the world.



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# Program, Organization, Revolution: Lenin and the Bolsheviks, 1905-1917 (part 1)

by Paul Le Blanc

*This is the first installment of a three-part article, based on a talk given in the autumn of 1987. A substantial list of sources will be presented at the end of the third installment.*

The purpose of this presentation is to help fill in some informational gaps on the history of the Russian Bolsheviks and on Lenin's thought, particularly from 1907 to 1914. All too often we see Lenin in fragments—in 1902 he wrote *What Is To Be Done*; in 1903 he led the Bolshevik faction in the split of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP); in 1905 the Bolsheviks acquired experience in the revolutionary upsurge of that year; and in 1917 Lenin's perspective was vindicated when the Bolsheviks came to power. But we need to know much more than this if we want to understand Bolshevism and the meaning of Lenin's thought.

In focusing on the often ignored years of 1907-1914, I want to offer an interpretation which, among other things, explores the interrelationship between political program and organizational principles. I'll also touch on the radicalization process which took place among Russian workers from 1912 to 1914 and how that related to the programmatic and organizational aspects of Leninist Bolshevism. At the same time there will be unavoidable gaps in my own presentation. Some of these gaps can be filled in by consulting the reading list and also my forthcoming book *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*.

I'd like to begin with a few comments on what we might call Leninist *principles*. For Lenin, principles were not confined to the realm of ethics but, in fact, infused his analyses, strategy, tactics, and organizational conceptions. Lenin was both extraordinarily flexible and extraordinarily inflexible. His inflexibility on certain principles, his refusal to compromise on certain programmatic principles, contributed to fierce divisions among Russian Marxists which scandalized majority sectors of the organized left inside and outside of Russia—but it also led to the triumph of Bolshevism. There are lessons to be learned from this experience.

It may be useful to indicate in summary form what I see as essential aspects of "Leninism," that is, of Lenin's perspective:

1. a commitment to bringing together the workers' movement and the struggle for socialism;
2. a commitment to integrating practical reform struggles into a revolutionary strategy in which the working class is hegemonic;
3. an uncompromising retrieval of a critical-minded *revolutionary* Marxism as a guide to action;
4. an uncompromising working class internationalism and anti-imperialism;

5. a commitment to building a cohesive activist organization (democratically centralized) based on a political program which is infused with the previously listed characteristics.

All of this seems simple, commonplace, almost trite. Such generalizations would hardly generate controversy among those considering themselves revolutionary Marxists. But when abstract principles come to be applied in practice, things can get complicated. This can be illustrated if we examine a valuable book with certain shortcomings, Marcel Liebman's *Leninism Under Lenin*. Liebman offers an interpretation of the period we are about to examine, an interpretation which has been influential within our own movement. Liebman advances the idea that there are "two souls" of Leninism—an open and democratic soul during revolutionary periods (1905, 1917) and a sectarian and dictatorial soul in nonrevolutionary periods (for example, in 1907-12, and also after 1917). Discussing Lenin's organization from the years 1907 through 1912, he writes:

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

I think Liebman is wrong. Leninism (at least up to 1918) has only one soul—which is democratic, nonsectarian, revolutionary Marxist. Liebman sees uncompromising fights over programmatic principles as a sign of sectarianism, but this is a misperception. What happened in 1907-12 must be understood if we hope to understand Leninism. Without the internal struggles of those years, it is unlikely that the Bolsheviks would have triumphed in 1917.

According to an old Russian fable, the world is balanced on the backs of three whales. What came to be known as "the three whales of Bolshevism" from 1905 until 1917 were three tirelessly repeated popular slogans: (1) for an eight-hour workday, (2) for confiscation of the landed estates, and (3)



for a democratic republic. Compressed into these slogans was Lenin's conception of a worker-peasant alliance to overthrow the tsarist autocracy. Within this conception was the key programmatic principle of *working class hegemony in the struggle against tsarism*.

This was advanced within the "orthodox" framework, shared by most Russian Marxists until 1917, of two-stage revolution: first the bourgeois-democratic revolution must be triumphant; only later could a proletarian-socialist revolution be initiated. But Lenin gave this "orthodoxy" a radical twist by arguing that the overthrow of tsarism and the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution could only be fully realized if the insurgent worker-peasant alliance, after overthrowing the old regime, went on to establish its own government, which he called "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." Despite Lenin's own desire, at the time, to remain within the "orthodox" framework, his conception contained a logic or dynamic which is consistent with the thrust of Trotsky's quite "unorthodox" theory of permanent revolution (i.e., that the democratic revolution would rapidly spill over into socialist revolution). In any event, a key to Lenin's perspective in the anti-tsarist struggle was the principle of proletarian hegemony.

Up until 1904, the overwhelming majority of Russian Social Democrats seemed to agree on that principle. In the 1880s the "father of Russian Marxism," George Plekhanov, had declared: "I insist upon this important point: the revolutionary movement in Russia will triumph as a *working-class movement* or else it will never triumph!" In the following decade Pavel Axelrod, another of the pioneer Russian Marxists, explained that, "if there is no possibility of giving the Russian proletariat an independent, preeminent role in the fight against the tsarist police autocracy and arbitrary rule, then the Russian Social Democracy has no historical right to exist." Little wonder, then, that the 1898 programmatic document of the RSDLP, at its first congress, dismissed the "weak, cowardly, base" political attitude of the bourgeoisie and declared: "the Russian working class must and will take upon its strong shoulders the task of winning political freedom."<sup>2</sup>

When a reformist-oriented current, known as the Economists, challenged this principle within the RSDLP (arguing that the liberal bourgeoisie should lead the struggle against tsarism and that the workers should concentrate on economic struggles through trade union activity), a majority of the RSDLP vigorously reaffirmed the commitment to working class hegemony in the anti-tsarist struggle.

As we know, at its second congress in 1903 there was a devastating organizational split in the RSDLP. The circumstances have been distorted by anti-Leninist historians but are accurately recounted in many places. (A summary is offered in my article "Luxemburg and Lenin on Revolutionary Organization," *International Marxist Review*, Summer 1987.) It is very important to understand, however, that initially this was *not* a split over programmatic principles, but instead over *organizational* principles. Because of this, we find that for the rest of 1903 and until the autumn of 1904 Lenin sought to heal the breach and *never* suggested that a separate Bolshevik party should be formed.

By the autumn of 1904, however, significant changes had begun to take place. The Russo-Japanese war erupted and went badly for the tsarist military forces, discrediting the reactionary status quo. In the face of this, liberal bourgeois elements initiated a campaign for a democratic reform of Russia's political system. And the positions of the Menshevik leaders then began to change from what they had been when the RSDLP newspaper *Iskra* had been edited by them and Lenin before the split.

One of the prominent Mensheviks, Theodore Dan, later explained: "The basic ideas of the *Iskra* platform were, as we have seen, the primacy of political tasks over the task of leading an economic struggle of the proletariat, and the . . . dominant role of the Social Democracy, its 'hegemony' in the 'all-national' struggle for political liberation. . . . There is no doubt that Bolsheviks carried on this *Iskra* political tradition." The Mensheviks, however, came to believe in "leaving the dominant role in the solution of the 'all-national' task of the revolution — the task of replacing the Tsarist by a revolutionary government — to the non-proletarian, bourgeois social forces that were trying to give the proletariat no more than the role of an influential opposition 'pushing' the bourgeoisie towards political radicalism and compelling it to make substantial socio-economic concessions to the working class. It meant, essentially, liquidating the whole concept of 'hegemony.'"<sup>3</sup>

Lenin polemicized fiercely against this abandonment of the programmatic principle of proletarian hegemony. But more than this, from the end of 1904 until the latter part of 1905 he fought against organizational reintegration with the Mensheviks and for a separate Bolshevik party. He had difficulty even in winning a majority of Bolsheviks to this position, even though they had established their own organizational apparatus and were publishing their own newspaper *Vperyod* (Forward).

"We [must] bring the split into the open," Lenin urged his fellow Bolsheviks as he prepared for a Bolshevik conference in the spring of 1905. "We call the *Forward*-ists to a congress; we want to organize a *Forward*-ist party, and we break immediately *any and all* connections with the disorganizers." Arguing against members of the Bolshevik faction who opposed such a definitive breakup of the RSDLP, Lenin insisted: "Either we shall rally all who are out to fight into a really iron-strong organization and with this small but strong party quash that sprawling monster, the new *Iskra* motley elements, or we shall prove by our conduct that we deserve to go under for being contemptible formalists."<sup>4</sup>

It's worth stepping back for a moment to examine Lenin's attitude toward program more carefully. Here is how he elaborated it *before* the 1903 split:

We Russian Social Democrats must unite and direct all our efforts towards the formation of a single, strong party, which must struggle under the banner of a revolutionary Social-Democratic program, which must maintain the continuity of the movement and systematically support its organization.

It goes without saying that "every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programs," as Marx said. But neither Marx nor any other theoretician or practical worker in the Social Democratic [move-



ment] has ever denied the tremendous importance of a program for the consolidation and consistent activity of a political party.

At the present time the urgent question of our movement is no longer that of developing the former scattered “amateur” activities, but of uniting – of organization. This is a step for which a program is necessary. The program must formulate our basic views; precisely establish our immediate political tasks; give unity to the agitational work, expand and deepen it, thus raising it from fragmentary partial agitation for petty, isolated demands to the status of agitation for the sum total of Social Democratic demands. Today, when Social Democratic activity has aroused a fairly wide circle of socialist intellectuals and class-conscious workers, it is urgently necessary to strengthen connections between them by a program and in this way give all of them a sound basis for further, more extensive activity. 5

We should consider these words of Lenin’s carefully, because they help to answer a question raised by some people on the left today about why we give so much stress to the importance of program. As we can see, Lenin believed that the program is the basis for the revolutionary party, that it:

1. formulates our basic views;
2. establishes our immediate political tasks;
3. points out demands showing the area of our agitational activity;
4. gives unity to our agitational work;
5. provides the basis for cohesion and for the expanding work of socialist activists.

It’s also important to stress, however, that Lenin did not view this as creating a monolithic party. As he explained: “The elaboration of a common program for the Party should not, of course, put an end to all polemics; it will firmly establish these basic views on the character, the aims, and the tasks of our movement which must serve as the banner of a fighting party, a party that remains consolidated and united despite partial differences of opinion among its members on partial questions.” 6

The programmatic principle of working class hegemony for which Lenin was prepared to carry through a definitive split in the RSDLP was, of course, hardly a “partial difference” over a “partial question.” Yet by the end of 1905 Lenin had backed off from his call for a split. This was because momentous events had brought about a dramatic change within the RSDLP. These were the events of the 1905 anti-tsarist upsurge in which an increasingly militant working class had moved to the fore. We can’t go into detail here, though Trotsky’s classic *1905* isn’t a bad place to start.

One of the participants was Solomon Schwartz, a Bolshevik who later became a Menshevik and wrote a useful historical account. As he recounted, 1905

reshuffled all the cards. *Iskra* closed . . . and was replaced by the Menshevik *Nachalo* . . ., published

legally in Petersburg – in coalition with Parvus and Trotsky – by the former editors of *Iskra* (except for Axelrod and Plekhanov, who were still in Switzerland). Parvus’ influence was particularly strong. 7

Another participant, Menshevik Theodore Dan, later recalled that

“Trotskyite” themes . . . began echoing more and more loudly in the utterances and articles of eminent members of the *Iskra* editorial board . . . with the manifest approval of a substantial segment of the Mensheviks, especially of the Menshevik workers. The editorial line of *Nachalo* also began becoming more and more “Trotskyite.” 8

Listen to Lenin’s description of what happened:

The tactics adopted in the period of “whirlwind” did not further estrange the two wings of the Social-Democratic Party, but brought them closer together. . . . Old controversies of the pre-revolutionary period gave way to unanimity on practical questions. . . . There were arguments only over matters of detail in the appraisal of events: for example *Nachalo* regarded the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies as organs of revolutionary local self-government, while *Novaya Zhizn* [a Bolshevik paper] regarded them as embryonic organs of revolutionary state power that united the proletariat with the revolutionary democrats. *Nachalo* inclined towards the dictatorship of the proletariat. *Novaya Zhizn* advocated the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. But have not disagreements of this kind been observed at every stage of development of every socialist party in Europe? 9

Despite the defeat of the 1905 revolution, this programmatic convergence – around the leading role of the working class in the anti-tsarist struggle – resulted in a reunification of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1906. Of course, soon after the workers’ defeat there was a perceptible drift among leading Mensheviks away from the “Trotskyist” positions which they had adopted during the height of the upsurge, but as Lenin’s companion N.K. Krupskaya later recounted, Lenin “still hoped that the new wave of the revolution, of whose rise he had no doubt, would sweep them along with it and reconcile them to the Bolshevik line.” He became a partisan of RSDLP unity. 10

Yet the new revolutionary wave didn’t come. Menshevik leaders soon bemoaned and openly dismissed what one of them, Martynov, called “the fantastic theory of Parvus and Trotsky . . . which enjoyed momentary success among us.” 11 In fact, the new situation eventually generated at least seven distinct currents in the RSDLP, turning that organization into a morass of factional conflict and finally resulting in Lenin and his closest comrades splitting away to form a separate party in 1912. As we will see, however, that split once again revolved around a fundamental divergence of programmatic principles.



# Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

## 23. My Second Arrest (continued)

After the shooting of Nikolaev, a remarkable turn toward morality began in our newspapers and in the entire propaganda system. Until then, the unmasking of social evils had been mainly along a political line: trials of the Mensheviks, the miners' case, the struggle against the opposition of Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev, the repression applied in connection with the liquidation of the kulaks—all this received a political motivation. But suddenly, after the shooting in the Smolny, an enormous growth of moral principles in Stalin's soul was revealed before the whole world. Day after day, endless variations on the theme of Soviet humanism were repeated. The essence of it was formulated in the catchy phrase of those days: "If the enemy does not surrender, he will be crushed." This phrase was attributed to M. Gorky.

In light of this, it was considered axiomatic that those who were being dragged by the collar were the unyielding enemies. Preparing for an enormous action, intended to decisively resolve all inner-party questions, Stalin mobilized the strongest means, more capable than any other of affecting the heart of each person, even one not so politically developed: morality, hatred of foul deeds and treason. Now the task was only to depict his most hated enemies as scoundrels and traitors.

There was no need to provoke anger against the murderer himself. It had to begin to boil within everyone's heart. The moral condemnation of Nikolaev alone was not worth such colossal work as was expended. Stalin needed to receive the moral support of the entire population for an operation a thousand times more important than a verdict against Nikolaev alone. And for this he needed to convince the people that Nikolaev was playing but a minor role in a grandiose conspiracy, headed by Trotsky and his supporters.

There was no concrete proof. An atmosphere of moral indignation is best in such circumstances. Indignation can involve many times more people than can a discussion of platforms. A critique of the "Platform of the 83" was a complicated matter, but a critique of the event in the Smolny was

easy, making an impact on all, young and old. "Death to the murderer!" was the cry of the millioned masses. All that was left was to add one word: "Trotskyist." "Death to the Trotskyist murderer!"

Stalin inserted this word in the first seconds as news of the murder had hardly reached Moscow. There hadn't yet been an investigation of the case; Stalin had only just departed for Leningrad to personally lead the investigation but the Regional Committees already knew that the Trotskyists had had a hand in it. And Yeva—who was not a member of the Regional Committee, but only the secretary of a middle-level party organization—already knew, and deathly afraid, hastily confessed to the Regional Committee who her husband was.

The peculiar feature of Stalin's new-found morality was that it was unprincipled. It condemned only that which he needed to condemn. Take a look: of all the copybook maxims we have endured over the years and decades, none prescribed irreconcilability toward bigotry, servility, obsequiousness, and hypocrisy. It was as though silence about these sins was the same thing as their absence. And in fact it is simply impossible to avoid hypocrisy when you are surrounded by so many taboos, so much silence! When you are advised not to mention dozens of the most obvious things, how can you not become a hypocrite?

And the further events developed, the clearer it became that the morality was added for a special purpose; and in fact the main thing that the people had to be taught was respect for the articles of the Criminal Code. This is because morality is worked out by society and is not dependent on the powers that be; but the criminal laws are drawn up by the state, and the state can add to it one law after another. In proportion as it strives to reinforce its role in the life of society, a state tries to draw up laws for every occasion in the life of its citizens so as to still further strengthen its role. And the moral commandments the state did not need fell away from Stalin's code. Respect for rank, servility to the state, do not

*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.*



get in the way at all, which means that to Stalinism, they do not seem immoral.

The humanism which was used in all ways in lead articles of that time had about as much in common with genuine humanism as the prayers of the monks around the bonfires burning heretics had in common with Christian compassion. Stalin used the newspaper prayer psalms to more decorously arrange the transfer of party matters onto the rails of the Criminal Code, in the same way that the prayers of the monks of the Inquisition served only as a setting for the bonfires.

In the struggle that followed the shooting, all the means he used against those whom he declared to be the "inspirers" of Nikolaev were provocational. The provocation began from the first minute, when the signal "It was the Trotskyists!" was given. The provocation continued when the moral feelings of the people were exploited, and it reached its peak when the trials of 1937-38 were organized. There is every reason to suppose that the shooting itself was a provocational intrigue, but I will not speak about that right now.

Espionage is the most comfortable of all provocational charges, above all because it least lends itself to public verification. A closed trial for spies surprises no one. It is true that Stalin did not use his ace of trump—espionage—immediately. First he threw onto the table his terrorist king. Terror is also well suited for a secret investigation; the terrorists could in fact have been paid by a foreign power.

The people had not yet managed to come to their senses before fourteen alleged terrorists, accused of preparing the murder of Kirov, were shot. Stalin personally led the investigation. Starting December 1, 1934, by a decree of the government, discussed neither by the government nor the Politburo, they began to conduct accelerated investigations in cases of terrorism. They had to be completed within ten days.

A ten-day investigation on such a serious charge as terrorism, where whole groups of people may be implicated, means no investigation. But the people do not know this. They were shown material evidence: Sergei Mironovich's body, hauled through the streets of the capital on a gun carrier. After two years, having played this card well, Stalin pulled from the deck his main trump. He laid on the table of history the ace of espionage, a phony ace, an ace without proof, offering instead the self-slander of those accused. But presented as it was in the atmosphere created and nurtured by the previous card trick, it produced the desired effect. No one tried to verify the card under a good light. Instead of the light of "glasnost," there were the smoky fumes of the censor.

Who is going to stand up for terrorists when they are charged in addition with espionage? Our own Emile Zola?<sup>1</sup> Such a man existed; I shall return to him. But the letter of this Zola of ours you have not yet read, even after thirty years. Where conditions do not exist for a Zola, they are perfect for a Vyshinsky. Thus, after the Right-Trotskyist bloc came Tukhachevsky and Yakir, and then Blyukher, the legendary hero, was shot.<sup>2</sup> And then Eikhe and Postyshev, whom the Trotskyists had allegedly conspired to murder, were actually murdered—but on Stalin's orders.

And how was all of this reflected in the states of mind and the level of morality? How did these judicial proceedings, so

meager in factual material, and the newspaper, literary, and radio broadcast commentaries about them—so abundant, loud, and monotonous—influence the hearts of the people? About the searches, the arrests, and the prisons, the people now know—although far from everything—but how every individual's conscience was ransacked, who will tell them?

When the newspapers, radio, and movies funded by the state have become means unprecedented in human history for molding mass consciousness—when they incessantly go on about the crimes against patriotic duty committed by the enemies of the people; about spies; about physical sabotage and ideological sabotage, all of it slander and calumny—and when at the same time they speak and write very little or not at all about servility and feelings of terror; about despotism and Byzantine methods of rule or about using one's power to take all power; about jesuitical double-dealing and about many other things that were not a direct violation of the Criminal Code but which daily and hourly fertilize the soil for its violation, ultimately going so far as mass murder—these things are the inevitable result of such a way of talking and such a way of keeping quiet. The human conscience will retreat into the background and its place (now elevated above the place it should properly occupy) will be taken by several articles of the Criminal Code, as the fundamental standard of human conduct. An aberration of morality will result.

Let us examine the case of our own Emile Zola.

A writer and diplomat of the Chicherin school, a prominent Bolshevik, a participant in the October days, F.F. Raskolnikov, while our ambassador to Bulgaria, in 1938, when he was urgently summoned to Moscow, did not go there but fled to Paris, and there published in the bourgeois press an open letter to Stalin.<sup>3</sup> Why in the bourgeois press? Because in the Communist press in France there could be no thought of printing the slightest little word against Stalin.

Raskolnikov was confronted with a choice: either to go back to his homeland where he knew well (as everyone did, since he was not the first) that the same death awaited him as had just befallen commanders, marshals, diplomats, and party activists; or to betray his homeland and escape to Paris. He chose the latter, worsening his crime by printing an open letter to Stalin—as Zola had printed his letter to the president of France and as Herten had emigrated to print the truth, which he had had no opportunity to publish in Russia; in just this way, "Iskra" was printed abroad.

Was Raskolnikov a traitor, would you say? According to a clear and unequivocal article of the Criminal Code, he was a traitor. But according to your conscience?

A part of F. Raskolnikov's literary legacy was recently printed in our country. But his open letter to Stalin continues to be officially unavailable and it can now be read only in "samizdat." For today's reader, not very much is new in it: it is about the executions, the fear that reigned in the party, the system of investigation and terror. But in fact, neither was there much in Zola's letter that would be new to today's reader. However, it is published with all his other works. Why is it that Zola's letter can be published but Raskolnikov's cannot? Answer this question.

The fugitive Raskolnikov incurred anathema and died being cursed. But now isn't it necessary to talk about what



he did and to assess it, having unequivocally defined our relationship to our Zola? If he were only saving his life, then one would have to weigh his actions against the presumed damage he would have inflicted on society. But does unmasking tyranny harm a society? What we are talking about is saving the truth for the next generation, the truth which the executioner and his accomplices are always trying to hide and which only victims who by some miracle survived are capable of exposing. It would be particularly interesting for the future generation to find out how people who intend to leave behind them books—i.e., writers, chroniclers, and adherents of truth—would conduct themselves in similar circumstances. There is every basis to think that in Raskolnikov's place they would advance the argument that their conscience does not allow them to be printed in bourgeois newspapers. And the truth? To hell with it.

My presumption is based on the fact that even in our press, in the Soviet press, our official chroniclers, taken together, have told less about the Stalinist terror of those years than Raskolnikov did in ten short pages.

When morality recedes into the background, surrender-

ing first place to articles of the Criminal Code, a person inevitably, without noticing it, becomes a communist hypocrite: he votes for socialism, but aims to foist off onto the inspectors his defective products, which cast a far more serious vote against socialism.

But all the same, the conscience did not get buried. There is something within a human being that protests against murders, and it sooner or later lets you know about it. The reaction of modern-day youth to the mass murders of recent years says a lot. The ashes of Klaas began to pound in their hearts—the ashes of those burned at Osventsim and the bones of those buried in the tundra. It does happen, it's true, that young people busy with their books, dates, football, and other vital things forget for a time about the ashes of Klaas. But only for a time. *Stalinism itself will not let them forget about it*, despite the fact that it is trying with all its strength to erase their memory. Bones of a new Klaas are burning, the body of a new Jan Hus is on fire;<sup>4</sup> and these new fires, shaking humanity's conscience, accustomed, it would seem, to everything, bring tears to the eyes of men and beget courage in the hearts of women.

## 24. 'We Know All About You'

Life is wonderful. Its beauty is most poignantly of all observed from the windows of a prison cell. In the Butyrsk cellblock where I ended up, you could still manage to see the little prison courtyard from the window. But on the lower level, just next to me, reconstruction had begun: they were hanging shades over the bars. The prisoner could now see only a very narrow strip of the sky.

They packed the cell. We slept side by side on plank beds, tightly pressed against one another. There was no room to lie on your back. In order to turn, you had to bother your neighbor. A new arrival was assigned the place closest to the door, next to the stool holding the chamber pot. As the cell's longer-time residents were transferred out, a place was freed and the line moved toward the window, covered over with bars, but open. The rule "Away from the window!" was not yet in effect in those years; and in such a densely populated cell, it would have been inapplicable. A year later, in 1937, my sister ended up in a cell into which they had packed so many people that there was nowhere to sit. The women stood up and under them on the floor lay those who had totally lost their strength.

Therefore, I am right to consider that I was imprisoned under exceptional conditions. Closest of all to the window, to the longed-for air of the prison courtyard, there lived for a whole summer a handsome, bearded man whose investigation lasted almost a year. He was charged with embezzlement, the only social criminal in the whole cell. The rest of us, numbering around seventy, were subject to indictment under antisocial articles. Theft, embezzlement, and murder were social crimes. But reading Lenin's letter was an antisocial crime. Such a distinction had been designed so as to avoid the word "political." There were no political prisoners in our country; they were all criminals, but of two varieties:

variety "a" are those who love Soviet power but who poke their hand into the till, hoping to steal something there; variety "b" are those who do not steal but who poke their nose into somebody else's business, hoping to correct something there.

The social criminal with the handsome beard was a fine baritone. Whole days at a time he repeated the same song to the words of Pushkin: "I sit behind bars in a damp dungeon." He never took his eyes off the window. But what did he see there? A very high brick wall and the prison courtyard without a single blade of grass. People on the other side of the wall were separated from us by a distance not even measurable in meters. A dear girl ran across the street on which the prison walls cast a dark shadow; but she was born in this area and was so used to it that she did not think about the cells behind the wall. Nor did she think about the people who were languishing there. She was used to seeing by the side gate the queues of wives and mothers who had brought packages. I pitied that girl, who had grown up close to a prison.

Dear girl, you have read in the newspaper editorials, articles, and even poems about Soviet humanism, printed just at a time when people are being shot in basements. The editorials serve the same purpose as the noise of the engines: don't you know that at night in the courtyards of the prisons they start up the automobile engines to drown out the groans and gunshots? Do you know that some nights in Moscow they shoot many more people than there are words in the articles about humanism?<sup>5</sup>

When you walk past the prison walls, doesn't soot from the chimney of the prison's boiler room fall on your white dress? During walks around the little prison yard, we often saw in the air the black flakes of burned paper: this is all that



reaches you, dear girl, from behind that high wall.

Like black snow it flutters to the ground. They burn papers no longer needed for the investigation. The papers are gathered into bags, sealed with wax, and thrown into the furnace. Found during a search were outlines of Marx and Engels, yellowed Komsomol mandates of the Ananov and other provincial committees, letters of a woman to her only friend, and a photo of their beautiful author.

You, dear girl, also have an only friend. On your day off, on the sixth day of the six-day week, he will visit you and you will go to Izmailovsky Park. There you know of a quiet little lake. How good it will be with your friend in a boat! Your loved one sits on the bottom of the boat by your feet. He will rest his head on your lap. It would be better for him if he never raises his head.

Dear girl, don't let him raise his head from your lap. Tell him that he should never take it into his head to join any school or university circle of young Leninists or for Marxist self-education or the study of history or other "unauthorized" study collectives. Tell him that as early as May 1936, I met in prison many young men from such circles. These boys had gathered in someone's apartment and read and discussed Marx and Lenin. And they got five years in the camps.

Volodya Ulyanov studied Marx according to his own program, sanctioned by no one, and Lenin was the result — thus said one of these boys to his investigator. The investigator answered:

"There we see! Unsystematic study leads to harmful thoughts such as these. We will correct you with labor and then you will learn to think in the Soviet way."

Everything passes and will be forgotten; and the girl will raise children. Farsighted educators and compilers of programs will now take aim at them. They want her children to grow up to be more obedient than these seventy people piled into the cell like firewood from the chamber pot to the bars on the windows. Obedience is the virtue of a soldier. Frederick, the Prussian king, called "the Great," put it this way: "Soldiers should be more afraid of their officers than they are of the enemy." If you think about it, his reasoning was more correct than that of the boy from the circle of young Leninists. But it is not sufficiently up to date. The person most respected by the young fellow, the future soldier, should be that officer who promised to correct the boy's thinking through labor. Although the officer in 1936 was not yet wearing epaulets, which were introduced five years later, he already knew his educational role very well. Let us under his leadership angrily send into hellholes everyone who seeks the truth in circles of young Leninists! The truth has been revealed in the textbooks. And it is absolute! It does happen that new textbooks are printed but the old ones are then removed so that the young boys will not get the idea of making an unauthorized comparison between the old absolute truth and the new truth that is just as absolute.

I have been free for thirteen years now and want to shut myself up so as to write and keep writing my notebook. And only one old, old dream keeps haunting me after all those years. I dream that the door suddenly opens, as it did that evening so long ago on the thirteenth anniversary of my joining the Russian Communist Party.

Some uninvited person enters. "Allow us to search your place!" He seizes a notebook and without letting anyone have a look at it, he immediately declares it slanderous.<sup>6</sup> And you mustn't have slander, dear girl, since you will become infected with alien ideology, because your judgment is unstable. Those for whom it is not dangerous to read slander are very, very few. And they, the stable ones, consider unstable all the others, that is, you and your friends, and all those of your age group, and not only them, but all the older generation who is not allowed to read slander or become acquainted with Raskolnikov's letter or to know in what year the passport system was instituted in our country.

You are fit for the army. You are fit to work. But you are not able to distinguish truth from slander. A nurse needs to be appointed to look after you; and moreover, a nurse with an officer's rank. She knows what to do with dangerous notebooks.

\* \* \*

My investigator was a presentable, well-dressed fellow, not too old. He warned me with a smile that for me "La commedia è finita" [the comedy is over].<sup>7</sup> That is how he expressed himself, giving me to understand that we were not born yesterday but were cultured people.

In 1936, the investigators still used the formal "you" with us. A year later, becoming better acquainted with the likes of us, they began to use the more familiar form; but we were still obliged to retain as before the respectful form of address. We addressed him: "You, Sir, Mr. Investigator." He addressed us: "You, anti-Soviet son of a bitch."

They produced a sentence for me from a conversation I had actually had with Volodya Serov: "They are adjusting our brains through our stomachs." The investigator established that this signified Trotskyism and support for the murderer of Kirov. Like a proper carp, I swallowed the bait and believed that Volodya had confessed. He showed me Volodya's signature but did not let me see the record, only read it aloud to me. What was really on that paper, lord only knows.

My Sherlock Holmes tirelessly stated: "We know all about you." The main thing they knew was how to interpret every word I said in the presence of others. What was important was not what you said to them but how they understood what you said.

Since I was unfamiliar with the organizational features of the private ear profession, I could not figure out where the investigator had learned about my conversation with Volodya. I had forgotten that recently an old friend of ours from Kharkov — a young poet who was not totally without talent — had been frequently visiting Volodya. On one occasion he let slip where his second job was, but I failed to recognize his inadvertent admission. He spoke with enthusiasm about how he had been lucky enough to hold Stalin's overcoat during the historic moment when he had consecrated with his presence the opening of the Moscow subway, "the best in the world."

After having held Stalin's coat, our acquaintance carried out the leader's will and decided to participate in the burial of Trotskyism as an ideological current. In order to check his



sincerity, they proposed that his first case be to offer as a sacrifice one of his friends. This was Stalin's favorite method for testing his supporters and infusing them with his higher moral principles. Later, other variants were practiced, for example, to offer one's wife as a sacrifice. She would be imprisoned in a camp and Stalin would watch to see who his slave would choose: his wife or his leader. That is how he dealt with Kalinin, Molotov, and Poskrebyshev. Stalin knew the holy writings; he transformed the legend about Abraham's sacrificial offering into a true story in the country of socialism.

The cultured investigator let me have one last look at a picture of Lena Orlovskaya that was doomed to be burned among the papers he no longer needed. At every interrogation, he persistently tried to find out whether our relationship was more than a friendship. Rummaging through a woman's bed gave him obvious satisfaction. He even proposed she be called in for a face-to-face meeting. My blood ran cold. Was it possible that she too had been arrested? But I did not then find out whether she was alive or was being tormented somewhere in the camps.

They did, however, arrange a face-to-face meeting between Volodya and me, after which I felt like pretty much of a scoundrel. They had tricked me just as they had tricked the last guy. The cultured investigator had succeeded in mastering the notorious ways of the counterfeiters of history: talk about yesterday but shove aside the events of the day before yesterday. They were getting their revenge on us for a transgression of seven years ago. But the law is not retroactive. This is recognized in even the most reactionary legal codes. Something more recent needs to be sewed on. They fill fifty pages with recollections about what happened seven years ago, then add one page with that phrase—repeated over again seven times—about the stomach, and the matter is settled. You and Serov, two Trotskyists, conducted counter-revolutionary propaganda, agitating one another. You met and this constitutes a link, and a link between two Trotskyists is anti-Soviet activity. By your activity you inspired Nikolaev. Moreover, a handful of Trotskyists, having penetrated the agricultural sector under the guise of learned agronomists, are damaging it, which explains the temporary difficulties of its unprecedented development.

Diverting the masses' attention, blaming all the failures on someone else, is a timeworn method. And the Trotskyists were not the first to be made to suffer the hangover for someone else's drinking bout. And what options were left for Stalin who, after having fulfilled and overfulfilled Lenin's cooperative plan with the dire administrative methods he used, had brought the agricultural sector to total collapse? What was there left for him to think up when during two months of the "100 percent collectivization" drive, February and March 1930, the peasants cut the throats of 14,000,000 cattle and calves, and livestock production fell below the lowest level known in Russia in the twentieth century? What was there left to dream up in ensuing years when production

in the agricultural sector continued to decline and instead of the 50 percent increase projected by the end of the five-year plan, there ended up being a decline to 81.5 percent of the production of the first year of the plan; which meant that almost half the plan had not been fulfilled.

If apparently different rulers in similar situations select identical means for piling their sins at someone's door, this proves just how much alike they really are.

The first attempts began as far back as the end of the 1920s. Charges of wrecking were frequent in the trials of those years, and people were sentenced to prison. When it was a matter of Stalin's personal enemies, or of supporters of the man he hated most, then one could begin to smell the burning of human flesh.

[Next month: *Butyrsk Humanism*]

## Notes

1. Emile Zola (1840-1902), the French novelist, wrote *L'Accuse* (I Accuse) in defense of Alfred Dreyfus, an army officer who was a victim of anti-Semitism.

2. Andrei Vyshinsky (1883-1954) was a Menshevik from 1902 until 1920. He received international notoriety as the prosecuting attorney in the Moscow trials and then was Soviet foreign minister, 1949-53. Mikhail Tukhachevsky (1893-1937), Iona E. Yakir (1896-1937), and V.K. Blyukher (1889-1938) were among the Red Army generals charged with treason and executed.

3. Grigory V. Chicherin (1872-1936) had been in the czarist diplomatic service until 1904, but resigned out of sympathy with revolutionary agitation. He became a Bolshevik in 1918, and succeeded Trotsky as people's commissar of foreign affairs, 1918-30. Fyedor Raskolnikov (1892-1939) wrote two statements expressing his revulsion at Stalin's tyranny: "Why I Was Declared an Enemy of the People," written July 22, 1939, and an "Open Letter to Stalin," dated August 17, 1939, just weeks before his suspicious death. He was rehabilitated and posthumously readmitted to the party by a decision of the plenum of the Supreme Court of July 19, 1963. However, as the "thaw" following the Twentieth Party Congress was gradually reversed, Raskolnikov was again declared a "renegade" and "Trotskyist." He was again rehabilitated and his actions exposing and condemning Stalin were defended in the Soviet press in June 1987 in an article in a popular Soviet weekly, *Ogonyok*. Although the article included some long excerpts from his letter to Stalin, the entire letter has still not been published in the USSR. See BIDOM, No. 45, October 1987.

4. Osventsim is a city in southern Poland and the site of a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. The bones buried in the tundra, or Arctic plains, were those of political prisoners from the forced labor camps of the Soviet Union. Jan Hus (1369-1415) was a Czech religious reformer who defended Czech national aspirations against various oppressive intruders. A priest and university rector, he earned the enmity of the church hierarchy by his writings exposing the corruption of church officials and the abuses of the clergy. He was ultimately excommunicated, convicted of heresy, and burned at the stake.

5. "In 1937-38, there were days when up to a thousand people were shot in Moscow alone," according to Roy Medvedev, in *Let History Judge*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972, p. 239.

6. In May 1976, Baitalsky's apartment in Moscow was searched by the state security police, the KGB, and much of his library was confiscated. Somehow these notebooks containing his memoirs, to which he was in the process of adding a preface, were not among the materials confiscated.

7. "La commedia è finita" is the last line of Ruggiero Leoncavallo's opera *Pagliacci* (The Clowns, 1892), uttered by the clown just before he commits suicide.



## Reflections on Revolutionary Strategy

*Revolutionary Strategy Today*, by Daniel Bensaid. Montreuil, France: Institute for Research and Education, 1987. 35 pp., \$3.50.

Reviewed by Paul Le Blanc and Tom Twiss  
(in consultation with Beth Boerger  
and Carol McAllister)

How can revolutionary socialists of today bring about the overturn of capitalism? That is the simple yet vital question addressed by Daniel Bensaid in *Revolutionary Strategy Today*. The present review of that work developed out of a study group consisting of two members of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and two members of Solidarity, all of whom are concerned with developing answers to precisely that question.

This is the fourth publication in the valuable "Notebooks for Study and Research" series produced by the International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE). Its author was active in the French student and anti-imperialist movements in the early 1960s and in the radical upsurge of French students and workers in May 1968. Since then he has played a leading role in the League Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), the French section of the Fourth International, and has also taught sociology at the University of Paris. In this Notebook he shows a close familiarity with political realities in both Europe and Latin America. Those less familiar with these realities will have a difficult time assessing some of his judgments or in some cases in even clearly grasping certain points he is making. That is one of the serious weaknesses of this Notebook which—in contrast to the first three in the series—is of uneven quality.

Overall, the introduction and the first section (taking up pages 4 to 11) are of higher quality than what follows. The rest of the Notebook is marred by a lack of clarity which, we feel, can be explained only partially by the failure to provide necessary background information. Rather, there seems to be a larger problem: an uncertainty over what constitutes a proper "revolutionary strategy today."

It should be noted that the Notebooks series consists of three distinct sub-series: studies; lectures; documents and debates. The three previous Notebooks were from the first of these, conceived as "systematic studies of either a particular experience in a given country or a particular theme." The present Notebook, on the other hand, is from the "lectures" sub-series: "edited transcriptions of classes given under the auspices of the IIRE." Undoubtedly, as a set of lectures supplemented by extensive readings and discussion these lectures would work much better. Taken by themselves they are less successful.

And yet there is something of real value here. It's worth giving particular attention to the real strengths of this work. In his introduction, Bensaid makes a point which is so im-

portant that it merits lengthy quotation and serious reflection:

The problem is that one cannot build a revolutionary organization in a developed capitalist country unless one is convinced that revolution is possible in such countries; not just that social explosions triggered by the hammerblows of the economic crisis are likely, even certain on the long run, but that a revolutionary situation leading to victory is possible.

Indeed, without the belief that the working class can take power and the determination to work patiently towards that end, backsliding towards building something else is inevitable. In the best of cases, this something else will be a resistance organization useful for day-to-day problems. More likely though, renouncing the final goal will lead either to pseudo-realistic adaptations in the day-to-day struggle itself or to an organization focused on the distant future, posing as the best fighter against potential bureaucratic degenerations for lack of anything to propose for the present.

When this sort of thing begins to happen, it becomes essential to reassert the strategic guidelines on which one is building a revolutionary organization. Without this plumbline, each and every tactical decision will tear the organization asunder; and it will become more and more difficult to tell what is decisive from what is secondary.

### Revolutionary Program

The importance of program—"strategic guidelines"—has rarely been underscored more clearly and forcefully. Bensaid follows this up, in the first section, with a discussion of programmatic thought and disputes in the Second (Labor and Socialist) International of 1889-1914. He first deals with the gradualist-reformist notions of Eduard Bernstein (who favored "a timeless socialism," to be achieved by eventually and fairly painlessly reforming capitalism out of existence) and the so-called "orthodox" Marxism of Karl Kautsky (who represented a "passive radicalism" that involved waiting for the revolution to come about through the inexorable workings of objective economic realities). These were the two primary theorists of the old Social Democracy's right-wing and center currents. Bensaid then turns to the revolutionary wing, represented by Rosa Luxemburg, Anton Pannekoek, and V.I. Lenin.

At the time, Kautsky was seen as the foremost defender of revolutionary "orthodoxy" against Bernstein's antirevolutionary revisions of Marxism. Bensaid points out, however, that it was Rosa Luxemburg's concept of the *mass strike* (translated here as "the general strike") which posed "the beginning of the answer to the strategic question" of how a



working class revolution could triumph. The standard notion in the Second International before 1914 was that the workers would come to power simply through the patient, disciplined building of a powerful labor movement which helps to educate and organize the working class for socialism through a variety of forms (an independent electoral apparatus, trade unions, cooperatives, women's organizations, youth groups, social and cultural societies, and other components of a multi-faceted workers' movement). But Luxemburg added that, in addition, there would be militant and almost spontaneous mass actions such as those which swept much of Europe in 1905, animating many sectors of the working class that had not been involved in the Social Democratic organizations. This upsurge had startled and unsettled many of the organizational stalwarts of the old Social Democracy, but Luxemburg "felt involving new sectors of the class in struggle was not a danger but a source of regeneration of the movement. . . . She understood quite well that unleashing the energy of the masses allowed for a radical and sudden change in the relationship of forces and for posing questions in new terms." The Dutch Marxist Anton Pannekoek took this further, arguing that the mass strike must ultimately culminate in the smashing of the capitalist state, followed by establishing new forms of proletarian political power. "Kautsky was outraged, called the proposition an absolute scandal, an outburst of primitive anarchism; Pannekoek answered that not he, but Marx, had invented this monstrous idea."

### Lenin's Synthesis

According to Bensaid, Lenin added an essential element to this line of thought. (We might add that, in a sense, he developed a dynamic synthesis of Kautsky, Luxemburg, and Pannekoek.) Rejecting "ultra-left voluntarism," he insisted that the state could not be smashed under *all* conditions, pointing out that simply a permanent posing of "the question of power" and generalized "declaring war on the state" would lead to sectarian irrelevance or even to the annihilation of revolutionary forces. Lenin developed the idea of the *revolutionary crisis* as a strategic key: there are only "particular and relatively exceptional circumstances in which the state becomes vulnerable and destructible." This must be seen, Bensaid argues, as "an overall crisis of social relations" combined with what he calls "a national crisis," in which "the state as a system of rule is shaken." He indicates what he means by using an interesting though complicated diagram.

Bensaid explains:

If you keep in mind the overall pattern of long waves of the economy in the 19th and 20th centuries, you will see that with every major reversal of the trend there was a genuine crisis of the state system of the central capitalist states, sometimes even a shift of the imperialist epicenter: with 1848 came the extension of the revolutionary wave throughout the European continent; with 1870, the Franco-Prussian war and the Paris Commune; with 1914, the European war, the Russian revolution, the rise of US hegemony and the reshaping of the entire central European state system; with 1937, World War Two and a new reshaping of Central

Europe, then the partition of Germany. Without being mechanistic, one should note that each major turn induced a radical revamping of the state system in Europe.

Only when there is such a crisis is it possible to carry out a proletarian revolution, the preparation for which must guide Marxist political work during periods of relative tranquility as well as during times of upheaval. With this strategic perspective, he insists, the conception of the *revolutionary party* which Lenin developed becomes essential, for "once you have said strategy, you must say decision and initiative, and therefore plan, strongholds and relationship of forces." None of this falls into place automatically or spontaneously. A party is necessary to orient masses of working people and their allies amidst immensely complex and sometimes rapidly moving events, particularly as a revolutionary crisis develops. "At that point," Bensaid writes, "what makes it possible for the party to decide and act, is not only the accumulation of forces and educational work, but the strength of the party's links with the mass movement, the political and moral authority it has gained beyond its own membership; this is what creates understanding and willingness to follow its decisions." As he makes clear, the goal and the strategy for attaining that goal (i.e., the program) determines the nature of the organization and the manner in which it functions. Such things become decisive with the development of a revolutionary crisis, but they come into being through a process which must take place long before the coming of such a crisis.

### Western European Experience

All of this can provide considerable food for thought among revolutionary activists. But how do these general reflections on the contributions of earlier Marxists apply to present-day realities? In addressing that burning question — which is of paramount importance to militants of the Fourth International — Bensaid's lectures become exceedingly unclear.

Exploring the relevance of classical contributions to our current situation, Bensaid compares the situation in pre-1917 Russia with that of contemporary Western Europe (and in many respects, the United States). Drawing upon the insights of Karl Radek, Paul Levi, Antonio Gramsci, Ernest Mandel, Leon Trotsky, and the early Comintern, Bensaid notes two major differences between the situations. First, in the West the state enjoys far greater legitimacy by virtue of its democratic institutions and, even more, its welfare functions. Second, its working class movement is far more developed and organized than that of prerevolutionary Russia. The importance of these observations is incontestable. Yet their relevance is temporarily lost when Bensaid jumps to what strikes us as an ambiguous discussion of how these insights led Andres Nin (leader of the left-socialist POUM) to mistaken tactical conclusions in Spain in 1936.

Bensaid returns to the significance of the Western state later in the Notebook where he argues that the working class must reconquer the legitimacy usurped by the state and take upon itself the organization of crucial social functions. Here a number of problems arise. Though Bensaid notes the risk



that such efforts will degenerate into social work, he offers no guidelines on how to avoid this trap. He calls upon the labor movement to begin to organize social security and education on its own, independently of the state. It is hard for us to gauge the response this would receive in Europe, but in the American context today it simply sounds bizarre. In fact, at a time of drastic cutbacks in social services, it would seem to make sense for socialists to *defend* some of the government programs which are being sacrificed on the altar of conservative budget-cutting and continued military spending. The call for the working class to take care of its own social services might even be seen as similar to conservative proposals for "privatization" and "voluntary organizations" to deal with society's problems.

The author's final observation on the state is intriguing: "the interpenetration of the state and society cuts both ways. On the one hand, it helps to make the state more complex and legitimate, but on the other, it makes it more vulnerable." Unfortunately, Bensaid does not elaborate.

The main conclusion the author draws from the relatively high degree of political organization of the Western working class, involving mass reformist organizations, is the tactical importance of the united front. Here he correctly stresses the necessity of clearly defining the *limited* (but militantly class-struggle) goal of the front. Also, he emphasizes the value of a united front in creating the conditions for the working class to break with reformist leaderships. But at this point Bensaid digresses into an extended discussion of the French Union of the Left, which will be obscure for most American readers. He also introduces what seems to us a misleading analogy with pre-Hitler Germany. "When division is raging," he tells us, unity "can become rather than a simple means to the end, the first goal to be achieved," the need for Socialist-Communist unity to defeat German Nazism in the early 1930s and French conservatism between 1977-81 being his illustrations. The situations, however, are qualitatively different. In Germany unity was literally a matter of life or death for the workers' movement. The immediate goal was not simply some kind of "unity on the left" as an end in itself, but rather organized defense and armed struggle against rising fascism. If such proletarian unity had been successful in smashing the Nazi threat—as Trotsky noted at the time—the question of working class power and socialist revolution would have been posed immediately. The danger and opportunity in France shouldn't be confused with this.

### Latin American Experience

The section of "major strategic hypotheses" is also problematic. Drawing particularly on Latin American experiences, Bensaid distinguishes between two strategic patterns which have been applied in past revolutionary situations: "protracted people's war" and "insurrectional general strike." The counterposition of these strategies as ideal types is legitimate, but it might have been useful to note the ways in which they have been combined in various historical situations. The Russian Revolution/Civil War, for example, can be viewed as a combination of insurrection and people's war. The author is largely successful in demonstrat-

ing that the strategic orientation of an organization determines its day-to-day tactics. Yet a contradiction arises in his illustration of this. Bensaid suggests that the "prolonged people's war" strategy would be far more apt to foster an inclination among revolutionaries for broad social alliances than would be the case with the insurrectional strategy. His discussion of Nicaragua, however, shows the reverse: the Sandinista faction promoting insurrection was more inclined to seek alliances with sectors of the bourgeoisie than the faction advocating people's war. In this case the alliance tactic of each faction seems to have been inspired by its perception of the immediacy of the revolutionary crisis, not by its strategic orientation. Finally, though the underlying thesis of the work is the necessary relationship between ultimate goal and day-to-day activity, there is a failure to connect either of these strategies to our current work in advanced capitalist countries.

### A Criticism of Mandel

This relates to a critical point which Bensaid raises regarding views advanced by Ernest Mandel. "The revolution he foresaw in his writings of the 1960s and early 1970s was characterized by what we could call the 'overripeness' of the subjective and objective conditions." According to this perspective, "the social and cultural strength of the proletariat made the preconditions for a change in the relationship between reformist and revolutionary currents inside the labor movement less demanding." The implications of this allowed for extremely optimistic practical conclusions: "The more the class developed its spontaneous ability to self-organize, control and manage, the less the revolutionary party would have to take on, and the greater the likelihood that its proposals and initiatives, made at the right moment, even by a very small minority, would correspond to the aspirations of the masses." As it turned out, however, the small groups of revolutionary Marxists proved unable to break significant sections of the Communist and Socialist working class away from the reformist leaderships. Mandel's perspective, Bensaid argues, had tended "to downplay the complexities of revolutionary strategy in developed capitalist countries." This seems a plausible criticism, yet Bensaid himself fails to offer any clear alternative approach for revolutionaries in Western Europe or North America. This omission—which is striking in a work entitled *Revolutionary Strategy Today*—reflects the yet-to-be completed task of developing a practical strategic orientation for socialist activists in the coming period, applying the programmatic heritage of revolutionary Marxism to the complex new realities of our own time.

### Concluding Notes

Finally, there are two smaller criticisms: 1) the main sections of this Notebook are misnumbered, and 2) Bensaid notes the upcoming "tenth" anniversary of Che Guevara's death when he means to say the twentieth. Such errors, although minor, are distracting and should be corrected in future editions.



We should conclude this review by repeating that we read Bensaïd's Notebook as part of a study group. Although this work contains serious flaws, we found our thinking stimulated by even the weakest sections. To a large degree that is precisely because we read it as participants in a study group

focusing on problems of revolutionary strategy in the U.S. We would highly recommend that approach for studying this and other Notebooks in the series.

## An Appreciation of Gorbachev

*The Gorbachev Phenomenon, A Historical Interpretation*, by Moshe Lewin. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988. 176 pp., \$16.95.

Reviewed by Frank Lovell

Great things indeed are happening in the Soviet Union these days. And their importance becomes magnified if we see them in their true light, as a reflection, a distorted reflection in the top circles of the privileged bureaucracy of a profound movement from below, a movement of the oppressed Soviet workers, a revolutionary movement for the overthrow of the privileged bureaucracy and the restoration of Soviet democracy.

—James P. Cannon, on Khrushchev's Report to the Twentieth Congress, 1956

Professor Lewin's latest book is a startling contrast to the uninformed reports and analyses of current events in the Soviet Union appearing almost daily in the capitalist press of this country. He says, in a brief preface, that he tries to present "the history of the present." In so doing he provides keys to a better understanding of some commonly propounded questions about the meaning of the Gorbachev reforms: Has the Soviet economy broken down? Will capitalist property relations be restored? Did Lenin invent the monolithic Communist Party? Was the Stalinist dictatorship a necessary outgrowth of the 1917 revolution against the medieval czarist monarchy? Will Gorbachev overcome the heritage of oppression? How, when, why did the Soviet bureaucracy arise and seize power? Is the Soviet intelligentsia, to whom Gorbachev appeals for support, part of the bureaucracy? Can the bureaucracy reform itself and in the process transform Soviet society? Is "democracy," as practiced in the U.S., a likely prospect in the Soviet Union? And on and on.

Lewin begins his analysis with a reminder that "the USSR is more complex, richer and much more of a challenge to students (than is generally perceived), hiding still more than one trick up its sleeve from the unsuspecting and the ill-advised." He proceeds on the assumption that "the Soviet historical process has been, and continues to be, full of twists and turns, changes of form and substance." In his historical survey one of the basic changes within the USSR has been the transformation "from village to megacity." It was different here than elsewhere in the Western world.

### The Country-City Dilemma

Mass migrations from country to city occurred in Europe with the breakup of the old feudal order and the rise of

capitalism. But there the process was uneven and proceeded at different tempos according to changing times, and extended over a period of two centuries (from 1648 in England, the time of the bourgeois revolution under Cromwell, to the 1848 revolutions on the continent), and continues worldwide today under the vastly altered conditions of capitalist decay.

In the Soviet Union the transformation from a predominantly peasant economy and culture to an industrialized urban society was squeezed into the brief span of two decades—the result of military intervention by the capitalist powers immediately following the 1917 revolution (until 1920) and poor economic planning by the burgeoning Soviet bureaucracy in the years of the New Economic Policy followed by forced collectivization in agriculture (from 1921 until the beginning of World War II, 1939).

During these formative years of turmoil and suffering the present structure of Soviet society and government took shape. This development followed a rugged zigzag course which traversed the devastation of civil war, the famine that followed, the futile attempts to revive industry under "war communism," the turn to a market economy with free rein to private enterprise in the countryside, the assault on the *kulaks* (rich peasants) and the new agrarian policy of "forced collectivization" combined with rapid industrialization, and finally the Moscow show trials and mass purges of the late 1930s.

"The resulting chaos, especially in the early 1930s, much of it creative, much unexpected and damaging, is an important historical factor," says Lewin. "The system was supposedly planned and administered, and much was, in fact, tightly controlled. But although the government tried to dominate the work and movement of people, there was also at play an enormous spontaneity and drift. An unprecedented, quite spontaneous influx into the cities of about 27 million people (in a decade), to mention only those who not merely visited but stayed, brought a new awesome wave of 'ruralization' to the cities, the working class, and parts of the bureaucracy."

### Social and Cultural Clashes

It is rare today in this country to find analyses of this kind in literature on the Soviet Union. Before the Second World War Trotsky provided similar insights and his books were available here in English. He described in detail the frustrations of Soviet workers and peasants in the early years. His 1923 writings and speeches on this and related subjects of a broader social character (including "predominance of the country over the town, of agriculture over industry. . ." com-



prise the twenty-first volume of Trotsky's *Sochinenia* (Collected Works) under the title *Culture in the Transitional Epoch*. Published in 1927, this was one of the last of his books issued by the official publishing house in Moscow, and this, with all his other writings, was soon suppressed by the Stalinist regime. It is still available in large part in English under the title *Problems of Everyday Life*. The subsequent repression of the working class by the bureaucracy is the subject of Trotsky's 1936 book, *The Revolution Betrayed*. This was written before the Moscow trials, and published in English in 1937.

In Lewin's review of these pre-World War II years no attempt is made to trace the stages of Stalin's usurpation of power. But he notes that good literature on the subject is available, "although we are still uninformed about many of its aspects." Trotsky's biography of Stalin, along with his other writings on the origin and character of the Soviet bureaucracy, must be studied to understand this aspect of Soviet history. And when the government archives are opened more can be learned.

The purpose of this volume, as the title indicates, is to examine domestic politics in the Soviet Union today, the Gorbachev phenomenon in particular. Lewin's thesis is that "spontaneous events that counter the wishes and expectations of a dictatorial government are not a lesser part of history than the deeds and misdeeds of the government and the state." He gives examples, from the Stalin period, of workers' self-defense, which consisted of indifference to work rules, absenteeism, migration, and other dodges. On the collective farms peasants slaughtered their cattle rather than turn them over to the collective, and migrated to the cities or to construction sites where there were labor shortages. Within the bureaucracy self-protection networks and official corruption were rampant, crippling the coordination of planned production in the different branches of industry. Among various social groups of students, soldiers, and peasants a subculture developed which scorned the official edicts governing human relations and respect for authority. Even in prisons and labor camps, networks of friends and relatives managed to circumvent official regulations. Lewin says, "whatever field, function, or action we study, we discover that the government's battle for its programs, plans, and objectives always encounters social reaction, drift, spontaneity, and the powerful force of inertia."

This sounds familiar. Even though it describes conditions under the Stalinist dictatorship 50 years ago, it seems almost exactly the same situation that Gorbachev complains of and seeks to reform. But there is a big difference: 1988 is not 1938. Profound changes occurred in the intervening half century, throughout the world. World War II changed almost everything on this planet, and not least of all in the Soviet Union. German bombers and tanks wrecked much of industry. But even greater damage was dealt to the social fabric of the country, to the people of the most populated areas. The 20 million casualties suffered is only one measure of the war's devastation. Most of the old social relations were destroyed as well. Nearly everything had to be rebuilt, including the administrative apparatus of industry and government. And through all this what survived was the

bureaucracy and the dictatorial regime, but here, too, there were changes little noted at the time.

Lewin reminds us that it wasn't only Hitler who misjudged the Soviet power. All Western leaders and military experts expected Russia to collapse quickly before the German onslaught. And when Stalin died in 1953 these same "experts" expected another Stalin. They were incapable of understanding and explaining Khrushchev. And they are bewildered by Gorbachev, blinded by abstract theories such as "oligarchical petrification" which for them covers everything that can happen in the Soviet Union.

## The Soviet Past

Most of the problems in the Soviet Union before World War II were the direct result of the very low level of production inherited from the semifeudal economy of the czars. When war came in 1939, 20 years after the Soviets took power, there remained a much lower per capita production of goods than in the advanced capitalist countries. And the standard of living of the Soviet masses remained below the capitalist level in industrialized Europe and the U.S. The distribution of products in this impoverished country was certainly more equitable than in capitalist countries, but under Stalin the top 20 percent of the population enjoyed as much wealth as the remaining 80 percent. The barbarism of generations past fed on this poverty and brutalized the system of inequality. Thus was confirmed an early intuition of Marx (cited by Trotsky in *The Revolution Betrayed*): with a low technical basis "only want will be generalized, and with want the struggle for necessities begins again, and all the old crap must revive." Stalin's murder machine was a revival of that cruel aspect of the czarist past.

According to Lewin the Stalinist purges blocked the emergence of professionals and intellectuals who would be drawn from the elite top 20 percent of Soviet society. "The damage to the nation's political and professional and upper layers was enormous," he says. "Countless up-and-coming professionals were murdered, and the asphyxiating atmosphere of the Stalinist counterrevolution stifled the flow of advanced and sophisticated ideas."

It must be recognized, although Lewin does not make this point, that the war was a catharsis to the system in that it tested the abilities of everyone in authority from army generals to the lowest commissar in some improvised production plant, and under those conditions many drones were replaced by alert workers. Even so the system that Khrushchev took over when Stalin died was in disarray, desperately in need of reorganization. Khrushchev understood the urgency better than anyone else in the bureaucratic hierarchy. At that juncture, Lewin says, "a blind wall stood between the rulers and the ruled."

## Khrushchev's Accomplishment

Here is Lewin's summation of what Khrushchev accomplished: "Khrushchev's efforts to open up and reform the system met with some success. But his initiatives were often frustrated by the growing complexity of problems, by the immense scale of social change, and by the limitations of



a political system that provided for the handling of basic needs but did not promote broader strategies for more substantive change. Still, the sum of small improvements — and a few spectacular ones — was far from negligible. The battered and much maligned bureaucracy had become more stable and potent, and it succeeded in imposing on the system a more acceptable and, from the bureaucracy's point of view, a far more secure and more professional method of ruling. More attention to the laws, better control of the police, elimination of the Stalinist concentration camps, the implementation of group or 'collective' leadership: the list of improvements is impressive. For the first time, a consolidated ruling apparatus exercised control over the whole of the state machinery, and the stabilization and security thereby offered to functionaries resulted in many of the improvements that the citizens of the USSR experienced up through the late sixties."

The basic productive system did not change under Khrushchev. It remained highly centralized, controlled from the top through government ministries in Moscow that supervised all major industries everywhere in the country. What had evolved as this system emerged in the 1930s period of industrialization was separate ministries operating on "the principle of verticalism," i.e., each consisted of a hierarchical pyramid in which all subordinate districts communicated only with the office above it in the same ministry. There was no coordination at the various levels (except at the top) between neighboring enterprises and institutions that belonged to different ministries. Lewin cites several examples of what comes from such "planning." Take manufacturing: "Factories located in one city often belong to different ministries, and their activities are therefore not coordinated. The result is that such cities are effectively split into 'disconnected and poorly managed microcities,' which journalists call 'manufacturing villages,' while 'scholarly literature dubs them departmental blurs.'" This clumsy bureaucratic structure persists to the present day, and is one of the relics of Soviet history that the Gorbachev reforms seek to discard.

What Khrushchev succeeded in doing in his day was only to regulate and to some extent rationalize the Stalinist system. This sufficed to restore order within the bureaucratic caste and instill a new sense of self-confidence, thus allowing the ruling bureaucracy to make the necessary adjustments to the demands of postwar expansion and development. The crisis was surmounted, temporarily. And with this came complacency. The bureaucracy settled back into the old routine, but with a haunting sense of insecurity. This was offset by successes in the development of a modern arms industry, some diplomatic advances toward a better understanding with the imperialist powers, and the hope that the newly transformed Soviet working class would accept the promises of a better life ahead. This is the meaning of the "Brezhnev era," the stagnation of the 1970s.

### Beneath Stagnation

Behind the bureaucratic facade Soviet society was undergoing profound transformation. Lewin refers to the reliable reports of Martin Walker, the longtime Moscow correspondent of the *Guardian* newspaper in Britain, for a revealing

analysis of this transformation. Walker concluded that, "The country went through a social revolution while Brezhnev slept." (See *Bulletin IDOM* No. 49, Feb. 1988, for a review of Walker's book *The Waking Giant*.) One measure of the expanding and shifting Soviet population is provided by Lewin in data on the growth of the number of Soviet cities in the years 1959-1980. In 1959 there were only three cities of a million or more, and in 1980 there were 23 cities of this size. And these were not the only large cities. Those with populations of one-quarter million to one-half million grew from 34 to 65 in the same 20-year period. Those with 100,000 to 250,000 also nearly doubled, from 88 to 163. This, of course, is a measure of the urbanization of the Soviet Union. But this growth and shift in population in the post-World War II period is different from the migrations to the cities in the 1920s and 1930s. In those early years illiterate and superstitious peasants were flocking to the cities, bringing with them the backward cultural heritage of the feudal past. But in the years since the war, and especially since the late 1950s, the population shifts marked by the growth of old cities and the creation of new ones consist mostly of an educated and sophisticated industrial working class. Data available to Lewin from Soviet sociological studies show that for three generations of all male workers — those born around 1910, their sons of the 1930s generation, and their grandsons born in the 1950s — the shifts in place and type of work are dramatic. By the time each succeeding generation entered the work force the percentage employed in unskilled physical labor had decreased from 50 percent (1930) to 29 percent (1950) to 17 percent (1970). Regarding type of work: the percentage of workers in agriculture has declined from 40 percent, to 22 percent, to 13 percent; the percentage in industry has risen from 38 percent to 48 percent to over 50 percent. The conclusion: ". . . this rate (of change) is high enough to create tensions among the generations. The young quickly develop different styles of life, form new approaches to life and work, and often reject, we can safely add, the methods and culture of their predecessors."

Lewin is primarily interested in these sweeping changes in all fields of activity since Khrushchev, but especially in education and the social sciences. Despite "lack of encouragement" (a euphemism) the studies of sociology and political science, which have a different connotation in Soviet universities than here, have gradually developed over the past quarter century a large body of knowledge about Soviet society. These studies were frowned upon by the authorities because they "looked for problems," and until as late as 1985 with the coming of glasnost most of what they discovered was suppressed. The second part of Lewin's book, which he has titled "The New Course," deals with the insights of Soviet sociology and with the problems of government in the complex Soviet society.

### Soviet Sociology

One of the most prominent sociologists in the Soviet Union today is Tatiana Zaslavsaia, member of the Academy of Sciences and an outspoken social critic. She maintains that the task of social studies is to discover the causes of social problems and none of these problems can be solved —



whatever their causes—without free and open discussion which educates and encourages participation in the solutions by the popular masses. This general idea has now been endorsed in theory—and to a limited extent in practice at the recent extraordinary Soviet Communist Party Conference last June in Moscow—by the heads of government.

In the final sections of his book—“The Economic Hurdle: Planning and Markets” and “Conclusions”—Lewin raises some familiar questions, but in a different way than they are usually asked. Will the proposed market economy and new wages system lead to private ownership of the means of production? In this form the basic question, the restoration of capitalism, is only implied. And the answer is ambiguous. The old productive apparatus was not working well, was unable to satisfy the needs of the new advanced society. This impasse dictated some drastic reforms. The idea of market economy is not new and not alien to present practices. Factory managers long ago, even in Stalin’s time, learned how to juggle salaries and bonuses and wages and prices, how to hoard spare labor and other resources, how to conceal reserves, how to conspire with other managers to buy and sell millions of rubles worth of excess produce and equipment. These are all common practices within the system, most of them illicit and self-serving and corrupt. They are not the main problems, not the basic reason the system was failing. Lewin believes it was failing because of the way it was structured. And the solution is to change the structure, a process that will be aided with the introduction of an open market exchange (in contrast to the existing hidden system). The result will expand the parameters of the productive system and transform the economic environment. Under the new conditions the present plant managers or their replacements will learn how to work to improve the quality and increase the quantity of Soviet products. And what is to prevent these factory managers from becoming factory owners? Lewin says, “The state, if it is resolute enough.” But that is the problem, not the solution. Plant managers are a factor in the control of the state and through their connections with other elements in the bureaucracy some of them in the past have moved into positions of power. What then can prevent this new political regroupment within the bureaucracy from seizing control of the state?

### Future Prospects

One of the current jokes in the Soviet Union is that nothing is more uncertain than the past. Student examinations on Soviet history were canceled because the answers are not yet known. But the future is no less uncertain, and here history has yet to record the answers.

In his conclusion Lewin says the evolution of Soviet society and the development of its economy based on planned production has, from the beginning, oscillated between “only two prototypes—‘war communism’ and NEP (market exchange)—from which to choose.” This book and earlier ones by the same author seek to demonstrate that now there “is no dearth of programs and remedies for change, and there are no insurmountable barriers to it.” According to Lewin the outcome depends on *political will*. He believes that the necessary political will is there. But in one very fundamental respect this begs the question. Does the Soviet bureaucracy possess the political will to transform itself? Or will the modern industrial Soviet working class succeed in destroying the political control and privileges of the bureaucracy, and reestablish an egalitarian Soviet power? That is the social contradiction that must be resolved.

We can expect to hear more from Lewin about this. He comes to his subject with proven credentials. He is unquestionably one of the most conscientious students of Soviet history in this country. He has written extensively. One of his earlier books, *Lenin’s Last Struggle*, first published in French in 1967, remains a seminal work in the study and understanding of the Soviet bureaucracy and the rise of Stalinism. Later works include *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates: From Bukharin to the Modern Reformers* (1984), and *The Making of the Soviet System* (1985). He is professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

Professor Lewin seems to be talking mainly to scholars and policy makers in the U.S. He says, “To ignore thirty-five years of development since Stalin’s death, to obtusely repeat, as some still do, that ‘nothing ever changes over there’ is a bit of foolishness that neither scholars nor policy makers can afford.” Others who are interested in world politics can also learn from his work in explaining these changes.

One decisive aspect of Soviet history which is omitted from this latest work is the never-ceasing struggle between the imperialist powers (dominated by the U.S. today) and the Soviet Union. In the early days of the revolution Lenin and Trotsky based Soviet strategy (both domestic and foreign) on their expectation of successful working class revolutions in the industrially advanced countries of Europe, Germany especially. They organized the Communist International in 1919 to build independent working class political parties and to help workers in all countries overthrow capitalist exploitation and oppression. Soviet workers once again will undoubtedly have occasion in the near future to remind themselves (or to be reminded) of their working class allies throughout the world.



### Impressions of the USSR

I thought readers of the *Bulletin IDOM* would be interested in some impressions and observations of a participant in the Dnieper River Peace Cruise in the Soviet Union which coincided with the Reagan summit visit and the period just prior to the 19th party conference.

We traveled on the river from Odessa to Kiev as guests of the Ukrainian Peace Committee. Then, after an overnight train trip to Moscow, we were guests of the Soviet Peace Committee.

There were many opportunities to talk to people in low and high places: university professors, students, collective farmers, people in the streets and in their homes.

The most striking observation was to find the wide divergence of thinking among Soviet citizens. The whole country has become one big debating society. No question was taboo and their whole past is being reevaluated. Students at the university told us that all history examinations have been canceled because none of the textbooks were considered proper.

Stalin's crimes are being exposed and rehabilitation of his victims (Bukharin, etc.) has taken place. A study of Trotsky and his followers is being made with a good possibility of their rehabilitation also.

Prevailing opinion places the cause of the USSR's economic slowdown (the target of perestroika) on the overdependence on top-heavy planning with little or no flexibility or activation of the lower levels. In discussions with different people we received estimates of the size of the bureaucracy ranging from 15 million to 25 million persons.

There was much discussion of disarmament. The USSR has been keeping pace with U.S. arms production and development. With an economy whose total production is one-half the U.S., it can be seen that the drain of the military on the country's resources is much more significant for them. Even in the U.S. we are talking about the need to transfer resources from the military to social uses.

Of course there were many other questions: on the quality of health care and the deterioration of statistics on infant mortality and life expectancy; on drugs and alcoholism; on AIDS and homosexuality; on environmental protection after being shaken up by Chernobyl, and more.

Abe Bloom  
Wheaton, Maryland

### Reprint *Revolution Betrayed*

What Marx and Engels did with the *Communist Manifesto*, portraying the economic and social evolution of society, what Lenin did with *Imperialism*, portraying capitalism in its decadence, Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed* has done for a scientific, Marxist explanation of the evolution of workers' power in the USSR when revolutions failed to take place in the more advanced industrial countries.

*The Revolution Betrayed*, written in 1936, shows the causes and operation of the "thermidor" under Stalinism. The evolution of a degenerated workers' state, which the USSR became, still continues under Gorbachev and now extends to the deformed workers' states in Eastern Europe and China.

Unfortunately, while *The Revolution Betrayed* is a textbook of Marxist analysis, it has failed to receive the recognition it deserves as a guide to understanding and action. Unlike the *Manifesto* and *Imperialism*, which have gone into print in millions of copies, Trotsky's works have yet to receive the recognition they deserve. If possible the *Bulletin IDOM* should do everything it can to reprint *The Revolution Betrayed*, even in excerpts, because it explains what's happening in Russia, China, and Eastern Europe today, as well as showing the necessary road for change

Joe Carroll  
Newark, New Jersey

### Human Rights in Cuba and Nicaragua

I am disturbed about a newly released film, *Nobody Listens*. It is a documentary done by Cuban ex-patriots, about human rights violations by the Castro government.

Over the years I have developed an immunity to charges by Cuban emigres who speak against Castro — mostly because, like the ones I encountered in Miami and southern Texas, they are spoiled, privileged, and arrogant bourgeois types.

Likewise I discount considerably any negative news which is reported from Nicaragua — especially if it seems to come from sectors unsympathetic to the Sandinistas.

However, at times I feel that there are inconsistencies which cannot simply be ignored. It seems that the Castro government and the FSLN have committed at least some of the human rights violations which critics accuse them of. Tomas Borge himself spoke to representatives from Nicaragua's East Coast while I was visiting Nicaragua and acknowledged that the government had made serious mistakes.

What is the answer for Marxists in the USA? While discounting a considerable portion of what the counterrevolutionary elements present as "facts," we cannot go to the extreme of simply asserting that all charges of human rights violations are out-and-out fabrications, that the FSLN and the Cuban government haven't made mistakes in this area. They have, and leaders of the FSLN, at least, have acknowledged this fact.

Jack Bresee  
Fordland, Missouri

### Jesse Jackson and a Labor Party

I liked your June 1988 editorial on the Jackson campaign very much. It was balanced, it was sensitive, and it



said what had to be said in a way that opens up discussion with other radicals. Your ability to write that kind of editorial shows you have retained the fundamental orientation of revolutionaries to reach out to new people, despite your decision to limit your current activity to the members of what appears to be a sect.

I would like to draw your attention to an error in formulation or analysis. I hope you think it's worth correcting.

You speculate that a government of Jackson Democrats will conduct itself like the British Labor Party, and refuse to go beyond halfway measures. This is like the notorious comparison between apples and oranges.

The British Labor Party, for all its halfway measures, was the property of the British labor movement. For all its halfway measures, it reflected the limited understanding of the British working class, not just the limited concessions capitalists were prepared to make. That's why revolutionaries, especially those who respected Lenin's *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, worked within the Labor Party. It was a natural place to continue the political education carried out within unions, which, after all, also start off with halfway measures.

In short, within a labor party, halfway measures only deserve half the attention of socialists. The class character of labor parties — that is, their positive thrust — forms the other, more dynamic, half.

There should be no comparison between the proper orientation toward reformism in a labor party and reformism in a capitalist party. One requires patient education; the other requires sharp exposure.

You might be interested to know that Canadian Trotskyists used to operate with that understanding. We always promoted the New Democratic Party, even though its policies weren't much better than Jackson's, even though its record in government wasn't much better than Jackson's would be. We promoted the NDP because it represented a break from capitalist parties, the first step to political independence. Within that party, we fought for a transitional program leading to socialism.

In view of the fact that Canadian workers are so similar to American workers, often members of the same international unions, I would think that you would do well to popularize and promote that achievement of Canadian workers as a way to introduce labor politics to your potential allies. From what I know of American workers, they might understand that experience better than they would understand and appreciate the programmatic limitations of reformism.

You might also be interested to know that the dumping of the historic position of Marx and Lenin on working in labor parties was the first indication of the degeneration of the SWP under Barnes's leadership. Before his political direction in the United States and broad world scene was clear, he and his supporters in the Canadian League for Socialist Action adopted a sectarian position to the NDP, as well as on a host of other questions. Canada was the guinea pig for this leadership's orientation, its penchant for sharp jags in line as well as idolatry, before they had the gall to show their stuff in the SWP, where the then-stronger cadre might have rejected it out of hand.

Which leads to my final point. You characterize Barnesism as an adaptation to Stalinism that grew out of the despair of student-trained revolutionists with the slow pace of radicalism among American workers. That's a halfhearted way of describing the roots of sectarianism, and inevitably cultism, that has come to dominate the SWP. That, to me, is the essential characteristic of the SWP today. Your assessment of the SWP indicates that that process has almost been completed.

I wish you the best in your efforts to reverse that process. Although I am too far away to make a tactical judgment as to whether you, Socialist Action, or Solidarity are making the best use of your time and resources, you all seem to be doing valuable work in trying to rebuild the basic traditions of Trotskyism.

Wayne Roberts  
Toronto, Ontario



### Hormel, Continued from page 11

If they were they might notice a general lesson inherent in the particular history of the Hormel workers. Contrary to Warren's implication, the American workers over the period he refers to have not been inert, sleepwalking objects of the historical process but rather participants in the class struggle, which has not been suspended for the past five decades.

To suggest that the source of the downturn in the American class struggle over the past decades and the prolonged isolation of revolutionary socialists from mass influence in the labor movement was that the workers were asleep, or worse, "brain-dead," necessarily leads you to look outside the working class for something to wake them up, even if it's only an alarm clock. That is the source of some of the frenzied exhortations of those who have lost confidence in the profound historic capacity of the workers for struggle, self-sacrifice, and self-organization. So even when an Austin happens you draw the wrong lessons—partly because you didn't learn its real, living history. The SWP came very close in 1987 to being apologists for the UFCW leadership in the party's clumsy attempts to rush in where it thought the action was. That was certainly the conclusion the P-9ers

### Exchange, Continued from page 16

timately be decisive. We enter into discussions and common political activity with other revolutionaries convinced that we have something to contribute. If we begin to doubt our own ideas, as the SWP leadership has simply because someone else has "made the revolution," then the entire process of programmatic clarification necessary to build a unified movement will be compromised.

Despite the fact that the Cubans, Nicaraguans, and Grenadans made revolutions, there remain serious shortcomings to their ideological perspectives. In the case of Grenada, it is no exaggeration to say that these distortions were decisive in the ultimate overthrow of the Bishop government. This is not to indict Bishop, the Sandinistas, or even Fidel Castro. It is simply a statement of fact which derives from the specific historical circumstances in which the struggles of these currents evolved—notably the dominance of Stalinist and Social Democratic ideology within the workers' movement for the past half century and more.

How are we, in a process of discussion with them, to sort through what in their experience represents a positive and fresh approach to specific aspects of the class struggle, and what represents a vestigial hangover reflecting the shortcomings of their own history and experience? How do we discover what aspects of our own analysis might be sectarian aberrations stemming from our isolation over the past decades, and what ideas are vital contributions representing the genuine continuity of the Bolshevik movement? Whether the Trotskyist tradition or some other current is right or wrong on any particular point, the only way to build a united revolutionary vanguard and prepare for future class battles is for each component of that process to present strongly and honestly its own ideas, to face up to whatever contradictions they may contain, and through that process actively con-

tributed to the creation of a higher synthesis which represents the best from each current.

reached at the Rank and File Packinghouse Workers Conference, especially, it must be said, as they listened with increasing amazement to James Warren tell them it was time to give up their struggle, after they had generously granted him speaking rights.

Pete Winkels told a story at the conference about Frank Ellis, on his deathbed in the hospital in 1976, demanding that his sons carry him out because the nurses were going on strike at midnight.

"I'm not dying on the wrong side of a picket line," Frank said.

When you start to lose confidence in the working class, it's hard to know where it's going to stop. Maybe you'll start looking for substitutes and end up on the wrong side of a picket line.

The Austin workers have a great history that refused to die and when the time came they turned to it and changed their organization. The SWP has a great history, and I'm sure there were some there at Halstead's memorial meeting who gagged on Warren's petty-bourgeois contempt for the Hormel workers and their history. Maybe they'll change their organization, too.

We stand firm on our ideological perspectives—until we are persuaded by events or overwhelming argument that our ideas are flawed. Then, and only then, will we change them.

We expect that others engaged in the discussion process will do likewise. Both of these poles—argument from strong conviction, and willingness to recognize whatever contradictions may exist between those convictions and concrete reality and to make adjustments—are necessary for a genuine Leninist process of political clarification to take place.

We are convinced that if Fourth Internationalists go into a fusion with others questioning their own history and traditions, unable or unwilling to explain the programmatic basis of the FI, then it is unlikely that anything positive will result. The program of Trotskyism is certainly not everything, but it just as certainly is *something*—and no one else can contribute that something, which is essential in the overall process under discussion.

In the final analysis, of course, these generalities do not, and cannot, decide anything about any specific national situation. They can only be an overall guideline. The correct tactics in any specific country must always be based on the specific, concrete facts of the situation. In the U.S.A., today, the F.I.T. simply disagrees with those—who now constitute the FI Caucus of Solidarity—who believe that a fusion process is the next step in building a revolutionary organization here. We also profoundly disagree with the methodology with which the FI Caucus is pursuing its fusion, placing too low a priority on the process of programmatic clarification within the fused group. We hope that time and experience can lay the basis for a fruitful discussion (and potentially even a common assessment) of the Solidarity project.



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