

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

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Anniversary of the Fourth International**

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Who We Are

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

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

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

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

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The 1988 Election Campaign

A Year of Missed Opportunities

by Tom Barrett

At this writing a little less than a week remains of the 1988 presidential election campaign. Following the pattern of previous campaigns, the two capitalist candidates have failed to generate much enthusiasm — either positive or negative — among voters, especially among working class voters. Though working people, family farmers, people of color, and women are clearly worse off than they were when the Reagan-Bush administration took office eight years ago, the Democrats have again failed to convince many people that they have any positive alternative to offer. Consequently, it appears that Vice President George Bush will defeat Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis and become the forty-first president of the United States. Of course, the conventional wisdom was that the Oakland Athletics would easily defeat the Los Angeles Dodgers in the World Series, too, and that proved not to be the way things worked out. If Dukakis is able to upset Bush, it will have about as much impact on the future course of history as the Dodgers' World Series victory.

Regardless of the outcome, however, working people of all races and both sexes will lose this election. They will lose not only in the sense that both Bush and Dukakis represent the interests of the oppressor class (actually, of the four capitalist candidates, Dukakis is the only one who could be said to be a "representative" of the ruling class — his running mate, Lloyd Bentsen, and both Bush and his running mate, Danforth Quayle, actually come from the ruling class itself), but also because of the tremendous opportunities which have been missed due to poor leadership — in organized labor, in the Black and Hispanic communities, in the feminist movement, and in the socialist movement. All of these should have done better.

Better Off Than Eight Years Ago?

For working people, the Reagan-Bush years have brought about a serious lowering of our standard of living. Pay increases have been universally small, and when workers have taken strike action they have more often than not been defeated. In some cases, the Reagan administration itself took the lead in union-busting — as in the case of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). There has also been a steady decrease in union-organized industrial jobs. While executives float to earth on "golden parachutes," many of the employees who used to work in the now-closed plants are turning hamburgers, doing odd home-improvement jobs, or simply attempting to live on their inadequate unemployment insurance. Meanwhile, the prices of housing and health care, two of the basic necessities of life

for everyone, have approximately tripled since 1981. Two incomes have become a virtual necessity for the average working class family, and even with those two incomes many families are living paycheck to paycheck, unable to save and unprepared for any unforeseen expense.

Whatever Ronald Reagan's private views on race might be, he is perceived as anti-Black, probably by a majority of Americans. It is an unfortunate fact that racism was the motivation of many whites when they voted for him. The Reagan administration's racial policies — gutting affirmative action, doing nothing while public schools deteriorate and drug gangs rule the streets in Black and Hispanic communities, combined with "law-and-order" rhetoric — have given the racists, both civilians and police, the signal to go on the offensive. The past eight years have seen a serious increase in racial violence directed against Blacks.

In like manner, Reagan has emboldened the antiwoman "right-to-life" forces. At the time of this writing "Operation Rescue" gangs are attempting to block the entrances of abortion and birth control clinics, terrorizing women who certainly don't need any more problems than they already have. The anti-abortion terrorists believe, with some justification, that they have the blessing of this "law-and-order" president.

In spite of every attempt by Mikhail Gorbachev and Deng Xiaoping to help make the world safe for imperialist exploitation, the threat of war is greater now than it was when Jimmy Carter left office — even though Carter brought us to the brink of war over the Iran hostage crisis. The Sandinistas have won impressive victories against the U.S.-backed contras, but Reagan has not given up on overturning the Nicaraguan revolution. South Africa and its UNITA ally have likewise failed to impose their will on Angola, and the apartheid regime may have to relinquish its rule over Namibia. That would be a victory for the oppressed everywhere. However, the threat of war in Africa remains serious, as the white South African settlers show no intention of allowing the Black majority equal political, civil, and trade union rights.

The Palestinian *intifada* (uprising) has been a positive example to the entire world, but the Reagan administration is, as usual, on the wrong side. The Israeli settlers' repressive violence, combined with the continuing civil war in Lebanon, makes the possibility of a new outbreak of all-out war in the Middle East quite real and direct. In spite of Soviet willingness to negotiate nuclear arms reduction, the Reagan administration continues to expand the nuclear arsenal and spend billions upon billions of dollars for war preparations. Reagan is willing to spend astronomical sums for weapons, even if they don't work! The administration's marriage to its

“Strategic Defense Initiative” (Star Wars) is a serious threat to peace, even if the thing is totally impractical.

The world is not a better place than it was eight years ago, at least not for the working class and oppressed people. This is widely understood, even by those who plan to vote for Bush. The problem is that it is equally widely understood that Dukakis and the Democrats have no solutions to any of these problems.

Dukakis and Bentsen—No Alternative

What the Democratic ticket has offered to the American people is a list of campaign promises that sound just like—campaign promises. Michael Dukakis and Lloyd Bentsen have addressed some of the issues which affect working people, but only to acknowledge them as issues. It may be said that this is better than what the Republicans have done, which is to claim that everything is wonderful and getting better, but the Democrats have given no evidence that the problems facing working people would be alleviated in any way if they were in the White House.

Dukakis, for example, derides George Bush for maintaining a relationship with Panamanian national guard chief General Manuel Noriega, both when Bush was CIA director and Noriega was on the CIA payroll, and when Bush was vice president. But Dukakis never explains this relationship. Why does the CIA work with drug-trafficking thugs like Noriega? Does he really expect Americans to believe that the Yale-educated gentleman, George Bush, really enjoys that unsavory character’s company? Didn’t Noriega give something in return to the CIA, something which a Dukakis administration would equally desire?

Dukakis promises “good jobs at good wages.” Does that mean that he is opening an employment service at the White House? For one thing, he has not proposed a massive federal public works program. Working class Americans are rightly suspicious of this promise—every politician promises jobs. When did a politician ever get elected by promising continued unemployment?

Dukakis criticizes the Reagan-Bush Central America policy by asserting that it has “increased Soviet and Cuban influence” in Nicaragua. Those who oppose U.S. intervention in Central America should take notice of Dukakis’s remarks. First of all, what he says is a lie: the Sandinistas are controlled by no outside forces. The Sandinista leaders are responsible to the Nicaraguan workers and peasants and to no one else. Secondly, implicit in Dukakis’s statement is that this so-called “Soviet and Cuban influence” is a threat to U.S. “national security,” and we can all understand the logic of that position.

The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon

The discontent that American working people feel over their deteriorating standard of living has been reflected in 1988 through significant support for Jesse Jackson in the Democratic primary elections. In contrast to 1984, Jackson received a great many votes from white workers—both active and retired—and farmers. Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, and Native Americans as well turned out for Jackson. Left-lean-

ing labor officials, both fakers like Machinist president William Winpisinger and genuine mass leaders like Austin, Minnesota, Packinghouse leader Jim Guyette, actively campaigned for Jackson. With only a few exceptions, all of the organizations of the radical left supported him as well. The Fourth Internationalist Tendency, whose views are reflected in these pages, was one of those exceptions.

Jackson’s support is in many ways understandable. His abilities as a public speaker are unquestionable. After all, he is a Baptist preacher from South Carolina, and Southern churches are well known for producing fiery, spellbinding orators. He tells his audiences that it is unfair that they are poor, that they suffer race and sex discrimination, that the government spends money on weapons rather than human needs, and of course he is absolutely right. His audiences respond to him as a candidate who is on their side.

The truth, however, is that Jackson has done nothing but criticize “economic violence.” He has no explanation for its cause—except to blame Ronald Reagan—and no idea of a solution—except to elect a Democrat, preferably himself, but Michael Dukakis will do. Jackson may claim to be against militarism, but he refused to demand U.S. withdrawal from the Persian Gulf when Reagan brought the country to the brink of war, and he promises to “mediate” the conflict between revolutionary and counterrevolutionary forces in both Nicaragua and El Salvador, rather than allowing the people’s aspirations to be expressed in revolution. He, like Dukakis, concedes the need for a “strong defense,” rather than telling the truth: that every nickel spent for “defense” is actually for the purposes of aggression against those who want to exert some independence from the United States.

Dukakis’s Appeal to the Right

In the face of people’s obvious discontent with the conditions of their lives and with the people in power, Dukakis chose to appeal to conservative attitudes and prejudices, rather than attempt to capitalize on working people’s justified resentments (though at this writing, less than a week before the election, he seems to have seen the error of his ways). Once his nomination was assured, he chose as his running mate Texas senator Lloyd Bentsen, a Democrat who has voted consistently for Reagan’s economic programs, has regularly supported aid to the Nicaraguan contras and right-wing tyrannies everywhere, and who even called for use of the atomic bomb during the Korean War. In a conscious and calculated affront to Jesse Jackson, Dukakis allowed Jackson to find out about the nomination through the news media, after he had personally informed other leading Democrats about his selection.

In the weeks which followed he stressed his personal competence and integrity, rather than the Reagan administration’s gross insensitivity to working people’s needs and aspirations. He downplayed his liberal views in an appeal to the so-called “Reagan Democrats.” That played right into George Bush’s hands.

At the Republican convention Bush was able to go on the offensive, using the most demagogic rhetoric to paint Dukakis as a flag-burner, criminal-coddler, and water-polluter. Dukakis failed to exploit any of Bush’s serious

Surprise! Bush Wins

Bush carried forty-one states; Dukakis won only nine plus the District of Columbia. The voter turnout was the lowest in forty years, as both candidates failed to convince nearly half of those eligible to vote that they were "on your side."

Whatever Bush may claim, his was not a victory for his and Reagan's reactionary ideology and programs. The Democrats *increased* their majorities in both houses of Congress and gained a governorship as well. In Ohio, for example, Bush carried the presidential election, but voters reelected Howard Metzenbaum, one of the most liberal members of the Senate. Bush carried both Maryland and New Jersey, but both states reelected senators (Paul Sarbanes and Frank Lautenberg, respectively) whose views are identical to Dukakis's. Exit polling indicated that

Bush's experience in government and personal qualifications to be president were more decisive than his stand on the issues. In addition, of those who decided in the last week of the campaign, three-quarters voted for Dukakis.

Dukakis won a majority of Black and Hispanic votes as well as those of trade union families. However, it is among these groups that disgust with both capitalist candidates provoked so many people to stay home from the polls. Dukakis's majority of union votes was slim, proving that union members are no longer following their officials' lead in the voting booths.

At this writing, vote totals for the Socialist Workers Party and other candidates of working class political tendencies are not available. It is certainly a sad state of affairs when the most visible left-wing presidential

campaign is that of the New Alliance Party, a psychoanalytic cult. In the months ahead socialists must begin doing some hard thinking about their electoral strategies. The *Chicago Sun-Times* has reported that Jesse Jackson announced that he would begin his 1992 campaign for the presidency on Wednesday, November 9. Socialists must not allow Jackson or any other capitalist candidate a clear field in the next election. A visible, aggressive, and articulate socialist alternative is a necessity, unless there is significant motion within the trade unions towards organizing a labor party.

How the goals of the working class can be advanced through the electoral process must be the subject of serious thought and discussion among socialists in the immediate future.

shortcomings with the American people and allowed Bush to set the agenda for the campaign. Dukakis didn't take advantage of the Iran-contra scandal, despite Edward Kennedy's "Where was George?" speech; he didn't appeal to the growing resentment over the so-called "tax cut," which has turned out to be a tax increase for most working class families; he didn't even exploit the Dan Quayle controversy to his best advantage.

There really is an important issue in Quayle's military record, and it should not be allowed to pass without comment. I can testify from personal experience that when the draft law was changed to institute a birthday lottery and eliminate student deferments, many men whose lottery numbers were low (and whose draft priority was therefore high) applied to join the National Guard as a way of getting out of Vietnam service. Any male who was a student during the 1968-73 period is well aware of that. There is absolutely no question that Quayle joined the Indiana National Guard, using his family's influence to bypass the waiting list, to avoid going to Vietnam. It can't be proven in a court of law, of course, but Quayle's denials fool no one.

What is the issue? Surely, no one can be blamed for not wanting to fight in Vietnam. However, as a student Quayle was a vociferous supporter of the war, and he defends his support of the war to this day. He was all in favor of it — as long as someone else was doing the dying. The working class Vietnam veterans, who are disproportionately Black and Hispanic, have every right to resent this son of privilege who was willing to let them fight and die for him. If he had acted on his beliefs and volunteered for regular service one might

disagree with his choice, but at least one would respect his integrity. As it is, Quayle's course of action shows him to have not the slightest shred of personal honor.

Labor's Opportunity Missed

At no time in recent memory have so many working people understood that the issues which are important to them are not being addressed by either candidate. Though the Democratic and Republican parties have never represented the working people's interests, there have been occasions when many thought that they did. Roosevelt, Truman, and, to a lesser extent, Kennedy and Johnson, were able to convince working class voters that they would serve their interests better than their opponents. The eternal Yalie George Bush has made no attempt to hide his class background or interests, and Michael Dukakis has abjectly failed to capitalize on it.

The trade union officials, however, have attempted to do Dukakis's work for him. Even as Dukakis ignores workers' concerns, nearly all union newspapers are full of appeals to vote Democratic. Even Lloyd Bentsen's clear antilabor voting record is ignored in this shameful charade. Dukakis's poor standing in the opinion polls shows how little the labor leaders' message fools their own members.

Never before has the need for a labor party been so clear or the opportunity to begin building one been so good. If the union leadership had furiously walked out of the Democratic Party this year, their members would have applauded. With the union officials' authority, money, and resources behind

it, a new political party, based on and representing the interests of organized labor, could rather quickly become a serious force in U.S. politics. The tired old argument of "be realistic—third parties can't win" could be put to rest as it became clear that without labor support the Democratic Party could not win either. Even if a new labor party were unable to elect a president or members of Congress immediately, it could shift the axis of debate away from the silly discussion of the Pledge of Allegiance and the "thousand points of light" to stopping government-aided union-busting, opposing the wasteful military budget and interventionist policies abroad, the need for socialized medicine, bringing housing costs under control, and a tax program that takes from the rich in order to serve social needs, instead of stealing from the poor.

The formation of a labor party could breathe new life into a labor movement in this country, which is badly in need of it. It could inspire union members to become active in their locals. It could inspire solidarity with those who are on strike or locked out. It could be a big weapon against those government officials who call out the police or national guard to escort scabs and break up picket lines. It could be an important forum for discussion of all the issues facing workers in their plants and communities. Just as the formation of the CIO industrial unions was "labor's giant step" in the 1930s, the formation of a labor party is the next giant step which labor needs to take.

As the Canadian experience with the New Democratic Party has shown, a labor party can accomplish many positive things for working people, even if it is not in and of itself the final answer to their problems. The idea that working people have a right to be represented by a political party of their own is the first step to the idea that working people have a right to actually run the government. When the working class takes state power in its own name it can then begin to restructure society to provide for human needs, rather than for the profits of a tiny handful.

The Socialist Non-Alternative

In past elections, the Socialist Workers Party provided an alternative to the twin capitalist parties, which, even if it stood only a remote chance of winning office, was able to raise issues which might not otherwise be raised. It was able to help build direct-action struggles, such as the antiwar, Black liberation, and feminist movements. It used its campaign in support of strikes and progressive movements in the trade unions, such as Steelworkers Fight Back in the 1970s. In the absence of a mass labor party it presented working people an alternative to the Democrats and Republicans. People could vote for the Socialist Workers Party candidates and feel good about it, knowing they had voted for someone who truly represented them, rather than an "evil," whether lesser or greater. And the SWP introduced itself and its newspaper the *Militant* to hundreds of radicalizing young workers and students, many of whom joined the Young Socialist Alliance or the party itself.

In 1968 antiwar leader Fred Halstead and Black nationalist Paul Boutelle were able to capitalize on the tremendous upsurge in radicalization, especially after the

disaster of the Democratic convention in Chicago. In 1972, Linda Jenness and Andrew Pulley exposed the fraud of George McGovern's "peace" campaign and used the election to build opposition to President Richard Nixon's policy of war and domestic repression. In that same year Joanna Misnik, running against Bella Abzug for Congress on the West Side of Manhattan, was recognized by voters and the media as a candidate to be taken as seriously as the Democratic, Republican, and Liberal candidates. In 1976, Peter Camejo and Willie Mae Reid presented a masterpiece of a socialist platform called "A Bill of Rights for Working People" in contrast to the inane platitudes put forward by Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford. In the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, they used their campaign to expose the "COINTELPRO" spying on Black, antiwar, and socialist activists over a twenty-year period. As a result of that campaign, the SWP reached its largest level of membership since the post-World War II strike wave.

The SWP's 1988 campaign of James Warren and Kathleen Mickells stands in sorry contrast to its 1968, 1972, and 1976 campaigns. It is even a step backward from the less aggressive 1980 and 1984 campaigns. The Camejo-Reid campaign was launched in 1974, enabling it to take advantage of the "COINTELPRO" revelations in 1975, at which time Camejo's photo appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*. The Warren-Mickells campaign was not launched until May of 1988, by which time most of the primary elections were passed. As a consequence, the SWP was unable to present itself as an alternative to Jesse Jackson, who was in the process of corraling more radicalizing people into the Democratic Party than any candidate since McGovern.

In 1972 the SWP exposed McGovern at every turn, distributing thousands of copies of a pamphlet called "Everything You Wanted to Know About George McGovern." His supporters were debated on campuses and in public forums throughout the country. In 1988, the SWP made absolutely no attempt to convince anyone at all that Jesse Jackson's "Rainbow Coalition" was nothing more than a one-way ticket into the Democratic Party morass and an absolutely futile strategy for bringing about social change. In 1972 and 1976 the SWP was able to obtain ballot status in over thirty states. In 1988, it will be on the ballot in only fifteen.

The SWP has been unable to distinguish itself from any of the other "minor party" candidates in this election. The New Alliance Party, which will be on the ballot in all fifty states, has run a much more visible and aggressive campaign than the SWP. This is a party which openly admits that its campaign is one of pressure on the Democratic Party to move it to the left. It supported Jesse Jackson before the convention, and it has no connection whatsoever with the working class. Its sordid history was the subject of a recent series in the *Guardian*, and everyone considering voting for its candidate, Lenora Fulani, should read those two articles before they do so.

The Workers World Party also endorsed Jesse Jackson in the primaries, and its platform is not as good as the SWP's. The effort of the Workers League, which is supporting the government in its frame-up effort against union activist Mark

(Continued on page 33)

Fourth International 50th Anniversary Celebration Held in New York

by David Williams

On October 14-15 about 150 people gathered in New York City for a two-day socialist educational conference to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Fourth International. The event was held at Hunter College and sponsored by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity, *International Viewpoint* magazine, and the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. It featured Fourth Internationalist leaders from the United States and several foreign countries as guest speakers. As might be expected, the majority of those in attendance came from the East Coast; however, some participants came from as far away as Texas, California, and West Germany.

The celebration opened Friday night, October 14, with a presentation on Trotskyism in America, featuring Jake Cooper, Frank Lovell, Dave Riehle, and Alan Wald. Also included in the program was a showing of "Labor's Turning Point," a film about the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes which were led by Trotskyists in that city.

The first speaker was Jake Cooper, a member of Socialist Action, who in 1941 was the youngest defendant in the Minneapolis Smith Act trial. As a teenager he participated in the Teamster strikes, and he spoke to the fiftieth anniversary gathering about the importance of conscious revolutionary socialist leadership and the role that it played in winning the strikes and making Minneapolis a union town. Union solidarity and support for the strike from the unemployed, the farmers, and office workers made a critical difference to the strikes' outcome. They were not something which happened spontaneously, he pointed out, but came about because of the educating, agitating, and organizing carried out by the Trotskyists of the Communist League of America.

Alan Wald, a professor of English literature at the University of Michigan and a leader of Solidarity, spoke on what he called the "ambiguous legacy" of the Trotskyist intellectuals—their positive role in defending the revolutionary Marxist program during the 1930s and the headlong retreat of many of them into Cold War liberalism in the 1940s and 1950s and to neoconservatism in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Frank Lovell, a founder of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism's* first editor, spoke on "nine giant steps forward and one giant step backward" in the development of the American revolutionary socialist movement, beginning with the decisive break with Stalinism in 1928, and ending with the Socialist Workers Party leadership's abandonment of Trotskyism in the early 1980s. He also defended SWP founder James P. Cannon against charges that he was "anti-intellectual" and pointed out the decisive importance of the alliance between the

working class and radical intellectuals in every revolutionary struggle.

Dave Riehle, a leader of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency who works on the Burlington Northern Railroad, spoke on the role of Trotskyists in the initial organizing of the local union in Austin, Minnesota, today known as United Food and Commercial Workers Local P-9. That union's 1985-87 strike against George A. Hormel Company was an inspiration to workers everywhere. Riehle criticized the notion held by many radicals that only a catastrophe like the Great Depression will "shake workers out of their apathy" and make them receptive to radical ideas. Instead, he argued, there are many things that socialists can and must be doing now in the labor movement, and that the transitional program is the best guide to involving workers in action at their present level of consciousness and, in the process, bringing them to a higher level.

Saturday was a full day of panel presentations before the evening rally. It began with a discussion of the reforms which the Communist Party leadership is introducing in the Soviet Union. Participating in the panel were Marilyn Vogt-Downey, a leader in New York of the campaign to exonerate the victims of the 1936-38 Moscow trials and the translator of Mikhail Baitalsky's *Notebooks for the Grandchildren* (currently being published in installments in this journal); Gerry Foley, the editor of *International Viewpoint*; and Esteban "Seva" Volkov, Leon Trotsky's grandson and the curator of the Leon Trotsky museum in Coyoacan, Mexico. Vogt-Downey spoke about the serious problems in Soviet society, and the equally serious problems caused by the bureaucracy's perestroika policies. She also discussed the opportunities opened up by the easing of restrictions on political, social, scientific, and historical discussion.

Gerry Foley addressed these issues as well, with particular emphasis on the struggle of non-Russian nationalities within the Soviet Union for self-determination. He said that the present events in the Soviet Union prove what Trotskyists have said for years: that Stalinism has no future, that it must break down and be replaced by something else, though what that "something else" will be is not predetermined. Volkov also addressed the bureaucracy's bankruptcy, explaining that it is a parasite on Soviet society, which has up to now been unable to fight it off.

After a showing of the film "The Case of the Legless Veteran," an account of Jim Kutcher's fight for reinstatement in his Veterans Administration job in the 1950s, the conference turned its attention to struggles for national liberation carried on by peoples dominated by imperialism. Susan Caldwell, of the Canadian Trotskyist organization

Socialist Challenge/Gauche Socialiste, spoke on the Québécois fight for independence from the Canadian state and the issues which Québécois national aspirations have raised in the Canadian labor movement. John McAnulty then discussed the continuing uprising against the brutal British occupation in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland. McAnulty was a founder of the organization People's Democracy, and he also explained how his and his comrades' political experiences convinced them to join the Fourth International.

Lloyd D'Aguilar, a Jamaican living in the United States, spoke on Black nationalism in the western hemisphere, especially in the United States. He focused on the relationship between the Black struggle and the revolutionary socialist movement in the period immediately following the Russian Revolution and, later, during the period when Trotsky was leading the fight to regroup revolutionary socialists in the Fourth International. D'Aguilar made clear his admiration for Trotsky's analysis of the question of Black nationalism and self-determination in the United States, and also emphasized the unfortunate fact that many who would like to think of themselves as followers of this great Marxist thinker have proven incapable of applying a similar methodological approach.

Mahmoud Hawari, a Galilean Arab and a member of the Israeli Revolutionary Communist League, spoke on the Palestinian *intifada* (uprising), which is inspiring oppressed people all over the world. He also discussed his organization's work within the Israeli state against the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and against the oppression of Arabs within the Zionist state's pre-1967 borders. The Israeli government has recognized the danger which RCL's work poses to Zionism and has brought down the weight of police repression on it. Hawari explained that defense efforts were needed on behalf of Michael Warsawsky, an RCL leader facing trial for his role as director of the Alternative Information Center, in which Arabs and Jews collaborate to tell the world the truth about Zionist rule.

Later in the afternoon, a panel of speakers focused on explaining various kinds of electoral strategies which are appropriate in different political situations, illustrating them with discussions of specific countries. Charles van Gelderen, an editor of the British socialist magazine *Socialist Outlook*, spoke on revolutionary work in the British Labor Party. Van Gelderen, who was born in South Africa and has been a lifelong partisan of the Black South African liberation movement also addressed revolutionary policy in recent South African elections at the local and national level.

Tom Barrett, a leader of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and frequent contributor to the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, spoke on electoral strategy in the United States. He told why no positive results can be achieved by working within the Democratic Party and why the working class must instead intervene in the elections with a party of its own. He explained why the Fourth Internationalist Tendency called on workers to vote for SWP candidates James Warren and Kathleen Mickells in the 1988 election. Readers are referred to Barrett's analysis of the labor and socialist movement's

missed opportunities in the 1988 elections, which appears elsewhere in this issue.

One of the high points of the conference was the address to the electoral strategy workshop by Rosario Ibarra, presidential candidate of the Mexican Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT). Her campaign was one of the most important activities of the past year for the entire Fourth International. She explained the reasons why the PRT had decided not to join the electoral coalition supporting Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the bourgeois liberal candidate challenging Carlos Salinas de Gortari, candidate of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and President Miguel de la Madrid's hand-picked successor. She told about her involvement in politics, beginning with her son's "disappearance" at the hands of the Mexican police and her present activity organizing protest against the election fraud, demanding that Cárdenas be inaugurated as president since he won a majority of the real votes in the presidential election.

Important theoretical and practical questions were raised during discussion periods in all four panel discussions. Though some people hid behind hard, inflexible positions and did no more than string slogans together, a number of conference participants did bring thorny political debates to everyone's attention. For example, a representative of the Freedom Socialist Party presented her views in opposition to Black self-determination, honestly acknowledging that on this question the FSP program diverges from Trotsky's ideas as well as those of conference speaker Lloyd D'Aguilar. D'Aguilar's response and the ensuing discussion enabled people in the audience to gain a better understanding of the Black struggle and the issues involved in it.

The conference concluded with a Saturday evening rally in celebration of the Fourth International's fiftieth anniversary. A number of the speakers from the earlier workshops spoke again at the rally. In addition, Claudio Mangani, representing the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, addressed the rally, as did Paul Le Blanc, Fourth Internationalist Tendency leader, and Zbigniew Kowalewski, author of *Give Us Back Our Factories: Solidarity and the Struggle for Workers' Self-Management in Poland*. Mangani's speech, which concluded the evening, was truly inspiring, explaining that Stalin's victory over Trotsky in the Soviet Union has turned out to have been hollow, and that the real losers have been the Soviet working people and, indeed, working people the world over. He explained that as the historic truth is emerging from the glasnost process Trotsky's ideas are gaining new respect throughout the world. As working people are losing faith in their traditional leaders, new opportunities are opening up for the Fourth International.

At the urging of Mary Scully, an FIT leader, the audience contributed and pledged over \$2,000 to the Fiftieth Anniversary Committee, which organized the event. Chairwoman Carol McAllister read messages to the gathering from comrades and supporters in many countries who were unable to attend, and the meeting concluded with the singing of *The Internationale*.

(Continued on page 13)

Fiftieth Anniversary of the Fourth International: New York City Celebration, October 14 & 15

In the following pages we are printing edited texts of a few of the talks presented at the October 15 rally, "Fifty Years of the Fourth International." The reader should note that these texts have not been reviewed by the speakers.

The Fourth International and the Fight for Socialism in the World Today

by Paul Le Blanc

Fifty years ago a handful of revolutionary socialists established the Fourth International. Its purpose was to end all forms of human oppression and degradation, to create a cooperative commonwealth in which the free development of each person is the condition for the free development of all. But fascism, Stalinism, imperialism, and war were then engulfing the world. So it was a brave project to which these comrades were committing themselves, and many of them were destroyed in the high tide of authoritarianism and violence.

The Marxist program of liberation, to which they were dedicated, was itself the culmination of two things—on the one hand the rich intellectual labor of those engaged in the passionate and scientific study of society, on the other hand the accumulation of lessons learned through the struggles of working people and the oppressed. This body of theory reflects the energies and creative efforts, in many cases the tears and blood, of our brothers and sisters in the workers' movement who went before us. This program of the Fourth International remains alive only if we refuse to worship it as a holy relic but instead connect it with the realities and struggles of our own lives, of our own time.

In advanced capitalist countries such as our own, in the so-called underdeveloped countries exploited by foreign corporations and imperialist interventions, in postcapitalist countries with nationalized, planned economies that are weighed down by bureaucratic rule—in all three sectors of the world, the Fourth International offers what has come to be known as the transitional program. It holds that revolutionaries in each country must be involved in the immediate economic and democratic struggles of working people, of women, of oppressed national and ethnic and racial groups, of students and youth. It holds that the struggles for immediate and winnable demands, to better the condition of people in the here-and-now, are absolutely necessary. But it recognizes that certain basic problems will only be solved when the resources of the economy are socially owned and democratically controlled for the purpose of meeting human needs. That's what socialism is. It can only be won by overcoming the powerful resistance of capitalists, imperialists, dictators, and bureaucrats—those who want to stay on top and keep the rest of us "in our place." But that's

precisely what must be changed. Therefore, intertwined with these immediate demands, there must be *transitional demands* which make sense to masses of people in the present (and which people may be prepared to fight for) but which cannot be realized under the present system.

For example, *everyone* has a right to a good job, to a good and full education, to decent housing and good health care. And since working people keep the country running, the country should be run in the interests of, and under the control of, working people—the majority. Out of such reasonable ideas as these, and out of the lived experience of people in specific situations, transitional demands must be fashioned. When masses of people are prepared to fight for such demands, a socialist revolution can happen.

Such revolutions don't happen automatically. They take place only if people work very hard and very consciously to make them happen. The Fourth International exists to help build and strengthen organizations of such people throughout the world. This revolutionary internationalism is not simply a worthy ideal. It is a practical necessity. The insights and defeats and victories gained by labor and liberation struggles in one country will profoundly influence what is understood and what can be accomplished in other countries. The Fourth International offers such distinctive perspectives as these:

- The theory of permanent revolution, linking together democratic and socialist revolutions in an internationalist framework.
- The revolutionary insight that humanity faces a choice between socialism or barbarism.
- The insistence that democracy must be at the heart of the working class and revolutionary movements and at the heart of the socialist goal.
- The understanding of the need for political revolutions in postcapitalist states that will replace bureaucratic dictatorship with proletarian democracy.
- The knowledge that the tactic of the united front must be utilized to draw people together against the assaults of capitalism and reaction, as well as to test the capacities of contending left-wing currents.
- The transitional program for socialist revolution.

Other revolutionary currents may adhere to some of these points, and that's very good. But the Fourth International makes unique contributions by basing itself on the *totality* of these perspectives.

We of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency believe that Fourth Internationalists of today will be an essential element in the core of the revolutionary movement that must be built in our own country. We favor the unity of *all* Fourth Internationalists in the United States. We must also reach out to all revolutionary-minded socialists and sincere activists, seeking to work together in efforts on which we agree, while frankly discussing our differences and learning from each other. We especially reach out to all who think that the

program of the Fourth International makes sense, urging such people to join with us to cleanse the world of oppression and violence. Through such commitments, our own knowledge, our own experience—our very lives—become part of the heritage and program of the Fourth International, and beyond the FI—from Karl Marx and Frederick Engels to Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky, and many people whose names we don't even know—merging with those who went before, embracing those who live now, flowing forward to those who will struggle tomorrow.

Long Live the World Party of Socialist Revolution!

Long Live the Fourth International!

The Historical Balance Sheet of the Fourth International

by Claudio Mangani

(representing the United Secretariat of the Fourth International)

I will take up three points. The first is just to recall the historical balance sheet.

For many years, in my own political experience in the working class movement, people attacked the Trotskyist movement, the revolutionary Marxist movement, with slanders and not by discussing real differences. But even in the Stalinist period, in the worst Stalinist period, there were some people in the Communist Party (for instance in the CP of my own country, Italy) who didn't argue against us with these methods.

Their approach was as follows: "What you say, you Trotskyists, may be correct in principle, in the abstract. Many things that Stalin is doing we don't like very much. But in this given historical framework it is the only realistic solution."

This was convincing for many rank-and-file members of the CP. After all, comrades, the question is a real one. How do we explain that only a few years after the big victory of the October revolution, the establishment of the Third International, Stalin succeeded in smashing the communist movement? How do you explain this? You cannot simply say that Stalin was bad, that he had repressive measures. That cannot be the only explanation we offer. It is only *one part* of it.

The bulk of the communist activists, the communist fighters in the world at that time, believed that Soviet Russia was the country of socialism. "O.K.," they answered us, "we cannot finally build socialism in one country. It is better to build socialism in various countries. But what should we do? The revolution has been defeated in other countries. What should we do?" This was the line of reasoning. Stalin seemed to them to be the only realistic solution.

Well, we now have a historical experience. What kind of realism was this? What did they build in the USSR of Stalin's time? Did they build socialism (not a very fine socialism but at least some kind of socialism in one country)? Not at all.

They built a society which has nothing to do with socialism. This is the reality. This is the historical balance sheet. And now even the leaders of the Soviet Union are compelled by the situation to admit this reality, the reality of Stalinism, to admit what Stalin actually did in the 1930s.

And on the international field, comrades, the balance sheet has been drawn even earlier. One of the speakers already mentioned the defeat of the German proletariat by Hitler. This was one of the main factors that pushed Trotsky and the Left Opposition to build another international, a new international. And this defeat, comrades, was not merely an episode—because if you think for a moment about what is happening even today in Germany, you have to draw the following conclusion: from the point of view of the revolutionary consciousness of the German proletariat it has not yet recovered from this defeat, 55 years after the moment in which Hitler took power.

This is the historical balance sheet of Stalinism—to mention only two aspects very rapidly.

People told us: "You, the revolutionary movement, you were defeated in the '30s by Stalin." Yes, we were defeated by Stalin. This is true—at that moment, at that specific juncture we were defeated. But let us ask more precisely who it is who was defeated? Only us? No, comrades, what is far more important is that it was not only Trotsky, not only the small currents around Trotsky in the '30s that were defeated, but the Soviet masses. They paid the most tragic price for this defeat. And in Germany, as I just mentioned, who was defeated? Only the Trotskyists? No, the German proletariat was defeated.

And what kind of victory did Stalin get? Now the discussion is almost finished from the point of view of the historical balance sheet—I say "almost" because I want to be cautious. But just think over this commonsensical question: Who now vindicates this victory of Stalin—the so-called vic-

tory of Stalin in the late '20s and early '30s? Nobody. Absolutely nobody. You will not find anyone except a small group of veteran Stalinists, hopeless people. Not even the Soviet bureaucracy, not even Gorbachev, vindicates this victory of Stalin today.

And so we say, although we are still a very small international, and although we still have very big problems in many countries in trying to build the revolutionary movement (it is sufficient to think over what happened yesterday and today here, the discussion which has taken place here at this New York fiftieth anniversary celebration, to understand what kinds of tasks we have before us in the United States, how difficult the situation still is for the revolutionary movement in the United States), the historical balance sheet is very clear. From the programmatic point of view the fight of Leon Trotsky has been vindicated. I believe that his analysis of Soviet Russia was a masterful analysis and a necessary tool even today.

I could continue on along this line, but I want to stress another element before going to my second point. Why was it that Trotsky and his comrades could see clearly what they saw from the very beginning? Maybe it was because Leon Trotsky—to repeat an expression of the great Russian novelist Vasily Grossman—was a man of ruthless intelligence. (Of course I think it is obvious that Trotsky was a very intelligent man, and he was ruthless in the sense that he always tried to see what the actual dynamic of the social reality was.) Trotsky and the Left Opposition could see what the other people were unable to see for a very simple reason: because they looked at things from the point of view of the interests of the working class. It's as simple as that, comrades. That is what the other people could not do.

And our movement was able to do this not in the abstract, not studying in a library, but participating in the real fight. We can say that the revolutionary movement we are trying to develop today was born, after all, in the first concentration camp in the Soviet Union. That was its real source.

The second point I want to deal with is the problem of internationalists today. At the present moment it is very difficult to fight for the International, and even more to fight to build an international movement.

This morning you discussed perestroika, what is happening in the Soviet Union. I don't want to go over the analysis of the internal development in the Soviet Union. But I think we have to stress one point concerning the foreign policy of Gorbachev—and much more than the foreign policy, the entire conception that they have. Gorbachev in his book on perestroika expressed the outlook of peaceful coexistence, which implies cooperation with imperialism. He said that history will judge; history will decide. Each country has to decide which is the best system, the best ideology.

Behind all this thinking is the idea that capitalism has a future, a very long one. This idea is expressed clearly by Yuri Afanasyev, one of the main supporters of Gorbachev. He said explicitly in an article that the prospect of peaceful coexistence is a very long one. This means, in reality, that you accept the perspective of a lasting capitalist society and are therefore not preparing the working class on a world scale for a fight against imperialism.

Not only in the United States, where for historical reasons the working class has not yet reached the stage of independent political organization, but even in Western Europe today there is a very big retreat of international revolutionary consciousness on a mass basis. When we draw the balance sheet of the fight of the working class in Europe in the last ten years—even in countries like France, Italy, and Spain where there were very big struggles—we might say that the bourgeoisie has achieved some victories. But these have not been very important, not decisive, not smashing defeats for the working class in any country.

Still, if you know what the ideological level is of the majority of the working class movement in these countries you can measure the big retreat, the enormous retreat. The majority of the people are convinced that there is no way out of capitalist society. So you can see how difficult it is to have a real internationalist perspective and to fight to build an international movement.

If we take another sector of the world—I will choose Latin America as the example with which we are most familiar—the situation is far better, because the Cuban revolution succeeded and more recently the Nicaraguan revolution succeeded. There are profound revolutionary struggles going on in El Salvador and other Latin American countries. And people there are anti-imperialist, have a much more active anti-capitalist sentiment today than in Western Europe, let alone in North America. There is no doubt about this.

But if you understand that the problem is not merely to have vague, though genuine, anti-imperialist feelings, but to build an international organization, then you have the same problem even in Latin America. We think that Fidel Castro is a revolutionist, that the Nicaraguan leadership is made up of revolutionists. But for the time being they don't want to build a revolutionary international. This is a fact. We can have discussions with comrades who say that Cuba is the big example. Of course, from many viewpoints it is a big example. But the real problem for us is, from the point of view of building an international, with whom can we do so now?

So here we come to the question of what is our task today, comrades. Since the very beginning it is not true what some dogmatists, some sectarians in our ranks, and our enemies have said: that we believe the only revolutionaries are the Trotskyists. Trotsky, since the very beginning of our movement, said that the revolutionary mass international will be composed of various revolutionary tendencies, and not only of people from the Trotskyist movement. And even more today it is crystal clear that there are revolutionary movements outside of the Fourth International.

The problem is that not all of these revolutionary movements are ready to accept the idea of building an international today. It is not only that they don't have a global conception of the world revolution, the dynamic of world revolution, which we enjoy as a result of our experience—as other comrades have already stressed. But these people, for the time being at least, explicitly reject the idea of building an international.

Therefore, comrades, we have to ask the question: Do we think that a mass revolutionary international is necessary for the world revolution or not? We do believe it, yes comrades.

You believe it, yes. And then, comrades, we have to continue the fight. We have to continue the fight.

The Fourth International has many contradictions and many weaknesses. We committed many mistakes, big mistakes, terrible mistakes. But still we are the only ones. We are continuing to build an international movement.

I said at the beginning of my speech that people talk about how we were defeated. I amplified that by explaining that we were not the only ones who were defeated. But in any case the real problem is not this. The real problem, comrades, is that the big historical fight which was opened at the moment of the First World War by the Russian Revolution is still

going on. And who will be defeated in the end? That is still an open question; it is not determined in advance. It depends on us — whether we will contribute decisively to the victory or not. This is the real problem.

For this reason we can say two things: First, in spite of all the mistakes we made, in spite of all the contradictions of our movement, in spite of all the weaknesses past and present of our movement, our fight was, generally speaking, in the correct direction. And second, that we will continue to fight in the future—until our victory—in that same correct direction. ●

Revolutionaries Forge Indissoluble Links Through Struggle

by Rosario Ibarra

The struggle for the freedom of my son, the struggle for the liberation of my country, is the same as the struggle for the emancipation of the working class—that is, my son and many others went to prison for fighting for a decent life, for a house, for a future, for the dignity of the people of Mexico.

Twenty years ago almost to the day the Mexican government cut off all possibility of dialogue by the massacre of students in the *Plaza de las Tres Culturas*. Following those terrible days, many *compañeros* joined together in groups that fought arms in hand against this government. After the government had taken many of these people to secret prisons and military bases, after it had killed hundreds of them, new groups arose to continue the struggle openly. One of those groups was the PRT, Mexican section of the Fourth International.

Many of you know that the origins of the PRT go back to those days in 1968. Years later, when the PRT saw the organization of the mothers of disappeared persons fighting, they joined us in this struggle. We got to know each other not through social functions, but by participating together in the struggle: in the struggles in the factories, in the struggles in the countryside. And we continue to fight together because we know what we want, and it's the same thing for which our sons suffered in prison and lost their lives.

In the course of this struggle we've formed indissoluble links—links that are strengthened every day—in Mexico,

and not only in Mexico but beyond Mexico, because there's a great similarity in the struggles of peoples in every country. For example, I was talking recently to a seamstress, a garment worker in Mexico, and she told me how she suffered. How many garment workers are there like her in the United States who suffer the same things? And mothers in the United States whose sons are sent to fight in unjust wars?

Our gains, our victories—for example such important victories as saving the lives of our sons, our daughters, and our *compañeros*—are victories which must be kept in the treasure house of the revolution. What is very important for us is the advance in consciousness that our people are making. They are learning that there's really only one division between people—the division between the exploited and the exploiter. That's what they're learning today, that's the apprenticeship they are going through.

That's why I am here. Because you are in the struggle here and with those in struggle everywhere. We are fighting with our brothers in Nicaragua; we are fighting with our brothers in El Salvador; we are fighting with those in struggle in all parts of the world.

Thank you for inviting me. I bring warm greetings from the Mothers of the Disappeared in Mexico.

Viva the Fourth International!

Viva the Socialist Revolution!

They Could Not Kill the Ideas of Leon Trotsky

by Jake Cooper

I walk a little slower today than I did 20 or 30 years ago, but if you reach into my mind and if you know what I'm thinking you know that the spirit and the struggle for a new society hasn't lessened any. The ideas are still there, and I am happy

to say that we're here to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Fourth International. I want to say that I'm a member of the national committee of Socialist Action, and it is indeed a pleasure to be here.

Ideas are very stubborn things. And one of the things that the capitalist class has learned, if they've learned nothing else, is that they cannot subvert the ideas of Trotskyism. We know that the Russian bureaucrats killed Trotsky. But they could not kill the ideas that Trotsky stood for. And all you have to do, by the way, is to pick up a newspaper anywhere in the United States, and suddenly the man that they said they could kill, and the ideas that they said they could kill, are alive. They exist in the hearts and minds of workers who are struggling for a better world.

I just want to say that I'm proud to be with the speakers here. I'm proud to be with you. And amongst the reasons I am proud to be with you is that you people, and other people like you, are in the forefront of the struggle for a new society. It's the greatest struggle you could become involved in—the idea of saving the world from its tremendous problems. No struggle is greater than the struggle for a socialist world.

There are two words that are extremely important in this struggle. One is "solidarity" and the other is "economics." When Stalin broke with the idea of building socialism in the world, and Trotsky fought him on the question of building socialism in only one state, one of the things that Trotsky was talking about was this word "solidarity." What he was basically saying was that once you decided to build socialism in one country you had broken with the concept of solidarity with the working class in the world. That was an extremely important proposition. Trotsky took the flag of the Fourth International and planted it, and he said that this flag stands for the solidarity of the workers of the world.

We are here to continue the struggle of the Fourth International and the struggle for solidarity of the workers. Fighting in the interests of the workers, to improve their conditions, no matter where they are. ●

Trotsky's Historical Defense of Marxism

by Esteban Volkov

In the middle of the last century two great revolutionary thinkers, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, laid the foundation for Marxism, or scientific communism. They initiated the most colossal and ambitious enterprise that humanity has ever seen—the eradication of injustice, violence, and inequality on this earth, the opening of a new chapter in history, of a new society where humanity for the first time will become the owner and the creator of its own destiny, and where the inexhaustible flow of energy, resources, and knowledge which has been created by our civilization should serve to eradicate hunger, misery, and suffering—and not for a gradual or instantaneous extermination of human life through a nuclear holocaust.

From the Paris Commune of 1871 until the Russian Revolution of October 1917 led by the Bolshevik party with Lenin and Trotsky at its head, followed by the Chinese revolution headed by Mao Tse-tung, and still later by the revolutions which took place in the colonial world, Marxism lost many battles. But at the same time it gained significant victories. Marxism has been accumulating great experience and knowledge, which step-by-step are guiding humanity to the arrival of a real socialistic society on earth.

From the very beginning of scientific communism Karl Marx and Frederick Engels had to carry on an uninterrupted struggle against the continuous assault from utopians, anarchists, and reformists of all kinds—in order to keep alive always its revolutionary dynamic for the unconditional service of the working classes and exploited masses, and in order to maintain the unalterable principles and ideological fundamentals of Marxism. This fight was resumed later by Lenin and Trotsky against the reformism, blunders, and betrayals aimed against Marxism and the working class by the social democracy—for the purpose of conserving the essence and

cutting edge of Marxist theory in order to lead the Russian October revolution to victory.

Marxist methodology, through historical events and the continuous fight of the oppressed masses, has been adding page after page to the revolutionary manual of the working classes. But extensive pages and large chapters remain to be clarified on the basis of present and future events. One of the great challenges that faces contemporary Marxism is the crucial role that needs to be played by vanguard revolutionary parties, which will guide and express the political consciousness of the proletariat and the other exploited masses, acting as the chief of staff of the revolutionary struggle.

But revolutionary Marxist parties, like any living organism, face their own internal contradictions. The process of change which can lead in a favorable direction of rejuvenation, new vigor, and renewed impulse, can unfortunately also go in the opposite direction at times—leading to atrophy and bureaucratization, treason, and an abandonment of their historical mission. Like a river flowing over changing sand beds, party after party from the First, Second, and Third internationals—and even some parties from the Fourth International—have abandoned the difficult and stormy revolutionary fight dictated by a Marxist course for the more comfortable and placid ways of reformism and day-to-day opportunism, almost always accompanied by politics of class collaboration or symbiosis with bureaucracies in power.

Only absolute attention to the interests and battles of the working class, with rooted democratic methods and sound knowledge and understanding of Marxism, can enable vanguard revolutionary parties to avoid such deviations from their historical mission. The most extreme and obvious negative example in history has been the total metamorphosis suffered by the Russian Communist Party.

The Russian revolutionary vanguard, guide and beacon for the victory of the October revolution, became a giant, obedient bureaucratic apparatus, a pillar of the Stalinist counterrevolution, and also the source of the most barbaric and bloodiest tyranny that has been recorded by contemporary history. It became Stalin's partner in building the largest and most monstrous criminal organization known in history, which tortured and executed millions and millions of totally innocent and valuable Russian citizens. At the same time it constructed the most unbelievable machinery of massive historical falsification and of fabrication and diffusion of lies ever known to this day.

The Stalinist counterrevolution turned into a tremendous restraint on and barrier to revolutionary struggles on this planet. Leon Trotsky, twice president of the Petrograd Soviet and a key figure in the triumph of the October revolution, was one of the first to detect the rise of Stalinist Bonapartism. In 1923, with the founding of the Left Opposition, he began a deadly fight against what was to become the worst betrayal of Marxism-Leninism and the ideals of socialism.

This fight was later pursued by Trotsky and the Trotskyist parties which, in 1938, organized the Fourth International and, after the assassination of Trotsky by Stalin in August 1940, continued vigorously and inexhaustibly the struggle until today — denouncing all the crimes, all the betrayals, and all the falsifications committed against the Russian Revolution and the principles and fundamentals of Marxism.

Leon Trotsky, Leon Sedov, his relatives and comrades of the Fourth International — many of whom have fallen in the fight — after 50 years of its foundation today have the historical honor and privilege to have been the first, the most indomitable and heroic of warriors against one of the bloodiest and most bestial tyrannies known in history; and also for having maintained the revolutionary essence of Marxism against mystification, falsification, and betrayals during the Stalinist regime.

What remains for those who have survived the longest and darkest night of this century — the Stalinist era — is to demand in the loudest voice that full light be shed on Russian history, and that the window be opened widely so that the fresh air of truth can penetrate all the spaces of Russian life. The cancer of Stalinism should be extirpated forever. Justice demands that Leon Trotsky be restored to his rightful place in the history of the Soviet Union and that his writings be freely published. The Russian people have the right to know their past and the founders of their nation.

Unfortunately, the voice of Stalin still has a loud echo. Many of his living fossils or neo-Stalinists continue like scratched records repeating the old and worn-out calumnies and slanders of the past against loyal and honest Marxists. This brings to mind a passage in Cervantes's book, *Don Quixote*, in which Sancho Panza says, "Sir, the dogs are barking," and Don Quixote replies, "Oh brave Sancho, that's a sign that we are moving." ●

The Dialectical Method of the Fourth International

by Alan Wald

Of course I'm very pleased to be here tonight, to make a few remarks about the importance of the Fourth International on behalf of those members of the socialist organization Solidarity who feel in sympathy with and in support of the Fourth International. Of course I can't claim to speak for the views of everybody in our socialist current on every aspect of this complex legacy, but I think we all agree that our political, cultural, and personal lives have been profoundly enriched by our active association with, and our study of, the Fourth International.

And I think that one of the features of the FI most attractive to us is its ability, as a political institution with rather limited resources, to blend in a dialectical manner elements that others may regard as contradictory. Most obviously there is, on the one hand, the real continuity of the Fourth International, and on the other its impressive ability to relate to new and unexpected events in a creative manner.

While other organizations have either remained isolated in a church of revolutionary mythology drawn from experiences that will never reproduce themselves, or else have turned their back on the lessons of the past in search of quick fixes, the FI allows us to feel a part of the most inspiring traditions of the international class struggle, while at the same

time we can be at one with contemporary movements that initially may seem to be quite different because they do not conform to so-called "classical models."

Another dialectical blend embodied in the method of the Fourth International is the famous one of theory and practice. The theoretical work of the Fourth International is imbedded in those principles of classical Marxism that have endured and passed the test of time. But this theoretical work is constantly modified in light of changing conditions, new experiences, and accumulated knowledge refracted through the interaction of relatively diverse political perspectives collaborating within its common framework.

A third dialectical blend is in the practical work of the Fourth International. On the one hand the FI strives for organizational coherence around a strategic program for the advance of class consciousness; on the other it aims at sincere collaboration with those who share common short-term objectives but may have different long-term ones.

Turning now to some more personal concerns, I want to emphasize the importance of the way in which the Fourth International has enriched the cultural life of the left over the past five decades. Here I am referring, obviously, not only to the classics of Trotsky and others that the Fourth Interna-

tional has promoted and discussed. I am also referring to specific texts and even a specific methodology in intellectual work that the Fourth International has developed and that has been taken up and in some cases enriched by individuals that are not part of the Fourth International and may even have important political differences with it.

In terms of method, I have already referred to the blending of theory and practice in advancing political strategy, but this method has its counterpart in the interaction of empirical research and conceptualization. While I had some intuitive appreciation of this method in the 1960s when I first encountered writings of the Fourth International, the full power and potential of that approach did not strike me until 1972, when I read Ernest Mandel's discussion of the sixfold articulation of Marx's dialectical method which is in the chapter on "Laws of Motion and History of Capital" in his important book, *Late Capitalism*.

Most recently I find this method has been applied and advanced with considerable success in Perry Anderson's 1980 book, *Arguments in English Marxism*. I see it at work also in Michel Lowy's *Uneven and Combined Development* and Mike Davis's *Prisoners of the American Dream*. In addition, this method functions impressively within documents of our own movement such as the extraordinary 1980 document on "Socialist Democracy and Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

But I think that we have much more to do to build creatively upon the theoretical and cultural achievements here in the U.S. We have in our own national legacy many examples of pioneering and impressive contributions such as James P. Cannon's clarifying writings on Stalinism and anti-Stalinism, and his creative approach to the dilemma posed by World

War II. We have Art Preis's monumental *Labor's Giant Step*, Joe Hansen's illuminating writings on Cuba, and a very important book by George Novack, *Democracy and Revolution*. And most of all, in my view, we have the example of the creative rethinking of the national question found in the writings of George Breitman. To my mind Breitman's contribution has never been properly assessed and recognized, and by recognition I do not mean merely reprinting and celebrating George's work, but the application of Breitman's method and, if necessary, the adjustment or correction of his method in light of the contemporary situation.

Today we are in a highly complex situation, where advances and changes in objective conditions are in danger of outdistancing our theorizations. Revolutions that were anticipated, such as in Portugal, were never consummated, while unexpected revolutions, such as in Nicaragua, have come to surprisingly impressive fruition. Issues of gender and race continue without abatement to be central to the left in the U.S., as do ecological, technological, and cultural questions for which I think we have been insufficiently prepared. And most importantly, the far left remains incapable of consolidating a coherent socialist organization that can effectively address the real living needs of significant numbers of young workers, people of color, radical students, feminists, cultural workers, and others.

But if we apply ourselves with sufficient seriousness and commitment, I believe that the traditions of the Fourth International in interaction with other traditions may provide a framework, and a distinct contribution to, bridging that gap. ●

Fiftieth Anniversary (Continued from page 6)

Some of the presentations to the fiftieth anniversary rally are published in the following pages. Others will also appear in future issues of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. In addition, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency is planning to publish a book commemorating the fiftieth anniversary, which will include all of the presentations given at the New

York event, plus supplementary materials including George Breitman's *The Rocky Road to the Fourth International*.

The fiftieth anniversary celebration was the most ambitious project Trotskyists have carried out in New York since their expulsion from the SWP. Without a doubt it made an important contribution to the further growth and development of the revolutionary Marxist movement in the United States. ●

Socialist Challenge/Gauche Socialiste

Statement of Principles

Delegates from Québec and English-Canada participated in a convention uniting Gauche Socialiste and the Alliance for Socialist Action in Montréal May 20-23, 1988. The convention founded a new sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in the Canadian State, which adopted the name Socialist Challenge/Gauche Socialiste. (See "Pan-Canadian Trotskyist Organization Formed" in Bulletin IDOM No. 54.) One of the most important achievements of the fusion congress was the adoption of a Statement of Principles. Every serious organization has an obligation to present not only analyses of conjuncture or immediate political problems, but also the general conceptions which guide it. This is all the more important in the case of a fusion of two organizations, in order to verify that there is indeed principled agreement. The "Statement of Principles" as amended by the convention was adopted unanimously.

Socialism or Barbarism

1. Poverty, exploitation, oppression, and war are rooted in international capitalism (imperialism). The system, now in its deepest economic crisis since the 1930s, jeopardizes the very survival of humanity by environmental pollution and an escalating nuclear arms race.

2. We stand for the elimination of capitalism and its institutions. We fight for the establishment of collective ownership and democratic control of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and the introduction of rational and democratic economic planning under workers' control. Our aim is production for human use, not private profit.

3. "The working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes." The capitalist class will employ its police, courts, civil bureaucracy, and armed forces to subvert and attack the egalitarian and democratic social transformation sought by the dispossessed. An elected workers' government, armed solely with volumes of socialist legislation, would be insufficient to defend the rights and assert the interests of the disinherited. Nothing less than the complete breakup of the capitalist state, and its replacement by democratically elected institutions of the mobilized working class and its allies, in workplaces and communities, is required to secure the rights of the majority and safeguard the rights of oppressed minorities.

4. The socialist democracy we strive for would see elected officials paid no more than a skilled worker's wage, and subject to immediate recall by their constituents. It would be a multiparty system that would safeguard the rights and organizational independence of all groupings and tendencies that function within the socialist constitutional framework.

5. The working class, the only objectively revolutionary class in present society, will be able to lead the socialist revolution to victory only by fighting for the interests of the immense majority in society, and avoiding subordination to, or dependence upon, any other class.

6. The oppression and alienation of the majority in our society is based on the international capitalist and patriarchal system. The fundamental pillars of this system are patriarchal and capitalist control of production and reproduction.

7. The working class has the potential to unite all those groups oppressed under this system, and establish in its place workers' power, women's liberation, and socialist democracy. This requires the integration of the lessons of the socialist and feminist movements into the daily struggles of working people.

8. The incessant and immediate attacks on women place them in the forefront of the class struggle. The demands of the women's liberation movement are questions of the entire working class, and must be central to the theory and practice of revolutionary socialists.

For an Internationalist Socialist Perspective

9. Socialism, that is, the abolition of class society and scarcity, requires a development of the productive forces, and a rational organization of labor and natural resources possible only on a world scale. Socialism in *one* country is a sham and an impossibility.

10. But in order that socialism be constructed on a world scale, the working class can and must take power within existing state boundaries, and seek to extend the revolution through political and material solidarity with workers' struggles abroad. Proletarian internationalism is founded on this reality.

11. Within an internationalist framework, we identify three specific sectors of the world revolution, and extend solidarity to each accordingly:

11.1 In the advanced capitalist countries, the socialist revolution seeks to expropriate and disarm the imperialist bourgeoisie and establish workers' power.

11.2 In the colonial and semicolonial countries, only the working class, supported by the mass of the poor peasantry, can accomplish the tasks identified with the bourgeois revolutions of the last century (namely, land reform, industrialization, national independence, full democratic rights including universal suffrage and civil liberties). This combination of democratic and socialist tasks demands a revolution that will grow over capitalist bounds — permanent revolution.

11.3 In the bureaucratized workers' states (including the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China) socialists fight for political revolution to overthrow the privileged, tyrannical

ruling castes that have usurped power only to wield it in the name of, and actually against, the working class.

12. We defend the nationalized, planned economies against any attempt to reestablish capitalism, as we defend the workers' states against imperialist economic sanctions and military attack. But political revolution is required to eliminate bureaucratic privilege and corruption, to establish workers' control over the economy and state, and to realize genuine socialist democracy. Such a development would go a long way towards undoing the damage to the image of socialism done by Stalinism, the product of the isolation of past workers' revolutions.

For Québec Independence and the Right to Self-Determination of Oppressed Peoples in Canada

13. The people of Québec suffer a national oppression maintained and reinforced on the political level by the federal state. The Canadian imperialist bourgeoisie needs a strong central state to defend its interests at all levels in order to be competitive on the level of international capitalism, to participate in the arms race, to maintain its domination over the oppressed nations and national minorities within Canadian territory, and to reinforce its exploitation of the working class.

14. All the plans that have claimed to give Québec its rightful place within Canadian Confederation have instead resulted in a larger and more brutal negation of Québec's national rights, fundamentally its right to determine its own future. The total rupture with the Canadian State by the political independence of Québec is the only concrete perspective to end, once and for all, the historic subordination of Québec within Confederation.

15. Québec's struggle for national liberation is posed in the current period by the struggle for independence. However, the formal political independence of Québec, while progressive in itself, is not sufficient to eliminate national oppression. This would demand that the Québec economy be taken from the control of the Canadian and U.S. imperialist bourgeoisie, a task which could never be realized by a bourgeois leadership devoted to the defense of private property, but only by the force of the working and popular classes with a socialist perspective.

16. The independentist aspirations of the Québécois popular masses express a will to take charge of all of society, which can not be achieved by a simple rearranging of the bourgeois state apparatus, but only by the radical transformation of state power at all levels. The struggle for the real national liberation of Québec cannot be separated from the struggle for a socialist Québec and only the workers and popular movements can carry this struggle to completion, based on their own program and counting only on their own forces.

17. The struggle for Québec's right to self-determination in English Canada and the struggle for national independence in Québec is unified in the revolutionary strategy for the overthrow of the Canadian State. It is on this strategic political basis that Québécois and Canadian revolutionaries join in order to build a unified revolutionary organization within the Canadian State.

18. We defend unconditionally the right to self-determination for Québec, and the concrete expression of that right, the struggle for political independence. We oppose the bourgeois nationalist Parti Québécois, and support the struggle to create a Québécois mass workers' party that would fight for a workers' government.

19. Recognizing the clearly imperialist character of the Canadian economy, state, and ruling class, we reject all forms of Canadian nationalism as thoroughly reactionary.

20. Robbed of a continent long ago, native people remain trapped in poverty and despair. We support native demands for social and economic justice, settlement of land claims, and native self-government on the reserves and in the far north where they constitute a majority under siege by resource corporations.

For Women's Liberation

21. Without the participation and leadership of women, there will be no socialist revolution. Without women's liberation, there will be no socialism.

22. Only in a socialized economy is it possible to eradicate the capitalist sexual division of labor, cornerstone of women's oppression, by transferring the social and economic functions borne by the individual family to society as a whole.

23. Among our struggles we battle for equal pay for equal work for women; preferential hiring for women, especially in nontraditional jobs; free 24-hour child care facilities; free abortion on demand; and an end to sexual stereotyping in the media.

24. In our struggle against pornography and violence aimed at women, we oppose reliance on the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state (e.g., more police, censorship laws) and advocate militant, direct mass action.

25. We participate in building the independent women's movement, and join with it in combating all forms of legal and ideological discrimination against women and homosexuals—gays and lesbians. We support the right of women to organize as women within mixed-gender groups and parties. Women's liberation will not be achieved under socialism nor advanced today without a mass autonomous movement.

26. The political organization which we wish to build must itself provide the necessary mechanisms to insure the equal and full participation of women within its activities, which would include non-mixed caucuses. Each level (branch, national committee, C.C., etc.) may decide to take other measures deemed necessary for the full integration of women into the functioning of the organization.

For the Autonomy of the Struggle of Gays and Lesbians

27. We struggle against the particular oppression suffered by homosexual people—gays and lesbians. Every person has the right to fully enjoy their sexuality and to participate in all spheres of society, free from discrimination based on age or sexual orientation. This is why we support the struggles of gays and lesbians against all the forms of repression that they

endure. We support their right to organize themselves autonomously in order to demand their rights.

Full Rights for Youth

28. Present society is utterly hostile to youth. Treated like possessions, children within the family have no rights. Students and young workers are oppressed by the authoritarianism of the school and workplace. Youth fortunate enough to obtain employment are concentrated in the most menial, transitory, and poorly paid jobs. Harassed by police and harangued by right-wing moralists, it is hardly surprising that alienation, violence, and rebellion are recurrent themes among youth.

29. We welcome the rebellion of youth against age chauvinism and the inequalities and brutality of class society. We promote the independent political organization of youth in solidarity with the socialist and workers' movements.

30. We demand free and universal access to secular and nonconfessional education at all levels, and the democratization of educational institutions. We also demand sexual liberation and liberation from the oppression of the family. We support the struggle of youth for a guaranteed decent income and meaningful jobs with a provision for preferential hiring for youth.

Down with Racism

31. People of color and immigrants across the Canadian State are victims of personal and institutionalized discrimination. We support the struggle to put an end to racist attacks by the police and in the media, the struggle for employment equity, for affirmative action in employment and education, for language training in the workplace, and for an education policy which reflects the concerns of the different ethnic communities.

Against Nuclear Power, for an Ecological Society

32. Against nuclear weapons and nuclear power. Close the nuclear plants. For ecologically sound sources of power under workers' control. As capitalism converts our rivers into sewers and our lakes into pools of deadly acid, we demand that the corporate polluters be expropriated — that the profits of capital be conscripted to repair the damage done to our land, air, and water. From VDTs to dangerous food additives to cancer-causing pesticides, workers' health has been subordinated to private profit — a relationship we are pledged to reverse. Workers' control of production and the workplace is the only possible way to deal with these dangers.

33. But the gravest danger to the survival of humanity comes from the nuclear arms race. The mega-death industry is an outgrowth of the capitalist profit system and its desperate hostility to progressive social change anywhere. The threat of nuclear holocaust will not be eliminated short of the complete disarmament of the imperialist warmakers, that is, by successful workers' revolution and the eradication of the world capitalist system.

34. Today we fight for immediate unilateral nuclear disarmament, and the removal from Canada of all nuclear weapons and delivery systems, and an end to their manufacture here. Further we demand Canada's withdrawal from NATO, NORAD, and all other imperialist military alliances.

35. At the same time, we express our solidarity with the currents of opposition to the arms race which have appeared in the bureaucratized workers' states. The demand for public and democratic control over defense and foreign policy would not only encourage the antiwar movement in the West, but strike a harder blow at imperialism than any number of additional Soviet missiles.

36. The major responsibility for the nuclear arms race rests with U.S. imperialism, which was the first to develop nuclear weapons and the only one to use the nuclear bomb up till now, and which has always rejected all proposals for general nuclear disarmament made by the USSR. We recognize the full right to self-defense of the Soviet state in face of the threat of U.S. imperialism's nuclear arsenal. But we reject the military policy of the Moscow bureaucracy, which has always responded to any increase in imperialism's nuclear weapons with a symmetrical increase in its own weapons in a utopian search for military parity. This approach imposes a heavy burden on the Soviet economy to the detriment of the living standard of the masses of workers of the country, and worse, it acts against the development of the mass anti-militarist movements in the capitalist countries. By contrast, a revolutionary policy is based on the mobilization of the masses of workers in the capitalist countries against imperialist militarism.

For the Extension of Democratic Rights

37. While we oppose the freedom of the capitalist minority to use their property to lie, cheat, exploit, and oppress, we fight for a qualitative expansion of democratic rights for the great majority of society.

38. We stand for workers' unfettered right to organize and strike, and oppose any form of wage controls. We demand the organization of unorganized workers and the democratization of the trade unions. We defend freedom of religion and association, and demand meeting facilities and media access for all points of view in the workers' movement.

39. We struggle against the superexploitation of immigrant workers, and demand full trade union and civil rights for immigrant workers as part of our battle for a world without borders.

40. We support the legitimate demands of the Francophone minorities outside of Québec for the right to education in their own language and to their own schools, and for free access to governmental and judiciary services in their own language.

41. We combat all forms of sexism and racism, and any discrimination on the basis of age, or mental and physical disability. All these are props of capitalist rule, used to divide the working class and to multiply profits for the bosses. We promote and participate in the self-organization of the oppressed to fight these evils and lay the basis for mass revolutionary unity.

42. We place particular emphasis on our day-to-day political activity in the workplace, trade union, and community organizations, both to gain a broader hearing for our program and to advance the concrete struggle of our class. We do not shy away from taking positions of responsibility in these organizations, always doing so on the basis of our socialist ideas and militant example. Without active involvement at all levels, a "mass orientation" becomes an empty slogan.

43. Unions are the principal organizations for the defense of the working class in the Canadian State. We unconditionally support the unions in the struggles against the bosses and the state, in spite of the bureaucratization that affects most unions at this time and in spite of the class-collaborationist practices of their leaderships. We agitate for an expansion and consolidation of workers' democracy within the unions, for their unity in action against the bosses and the state, for a class-struggle approach which is based on mass mobilizations and not on class collaboration.

44. For the revolution to succeed it will require the active participation of the overwhelming majority of the population. The armed actions of a revolutionary minority cannot substitute for this. However, in rejecting the illusions and actions of misguided revolutionaries who commit errors of this type, we do not take the side of the capitalist police and courts in the supposed interests of political purity and legal security. As far as we are concerned, within the movements of the working class and the oppressed "an injury to one is an injury to all." Solidarity with all victims of capitalist injustice.

For Independent Political Action by the Québécois and Canadian Working Classes

45. Socialists urge their class brothers and sisters to break with all the capitalist parties and fight for political solutions to their problems as a class. We demand that working class organizations fight for socialist solutions and a government loyal to the interests of the working class.

46. In English Canada, the New Democratic Party is the only mass party based on the organized labor movement. From the standpoint of program, it is a capitalist party; but this program is in violent contradiction with the genuine interests of the party's working class membership and electoral base. Socialists fight inside and outside the NDP to win workers to a full socialist program.

47. In Québec, no mass workers' party exists—the task is to build one. As the only mass organizations of the working class with sufficient weight, the trade unions should take up this question with a perspective of alliance with other social movements: youth, women, etc.

Build a Socialist Organization in the Canadian State — Build the Fourth International

48. Victory of the socialist revolution requires a conscious leadership, based on a genuinely revolutionary program. This vital combination of program and cadres will not develop spontaneously.

49. For this reason, we work to build a revolutionary, mass working class party in the political tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky, and the Fourth International, including the contributions of Luxemburg, Kollontai, Zetkin, and more recent socialist feminists.

50. Today we are bringing together the forces for a united pan-Canadian revolutionary socialist organization that will be characterized by the fullest democracy in debate and the firmest unity in action—that is the meaning of democratic centralism.

51. As internationalists, we recognize that the socialist revolution develops and must be extended and consolidated on a world scale. We are encouraged by the emergence of new, revolutionary leaderships in the struggle against imperialism, particularly in Central America. As these forces evolve towards revolutionary Marxism, we strive for principled political unity with them and a qualitative broadening of the worldwide movement for socialism that is independent of Stalinism and social democracy.

52. While we work on particular issues with socialists who have made their peace with capitalism and imperialism—social democrats—or those who romanticize authoritarian bureaucracies in the Soviet Union or China, nevertheless we have a fundamentally different idea of what we are fighting for. We do not look for organizational unity with these forces.

53. We are partisans and builders of the only organization today attempting to construct a worldwide revolutionary socialist party based on the political acquisitions of the past 100 years of working class struggle—the Fourth International. Through its program and activities, the Fourth International unites revolutionary socialists in over 45 countries.

54. While the Fourth International has an indispensable role to play in the formation of a revolutionary organization in Canada, we claim no special mandate as the vanguard party. We must learn with others through our collective experience in struggles against exploitation and oppression.

55. We do not consider ourselves *the* party of the working class. To do so would not only be self-proclamation and substitutionism—it would reveal an acute political naivete. The party of the working and popular classes is the party which is recognized as such by these same classes. It is clear that socialist consciousness cannot develop without a mass anti-capitalist, socialist practice. It is therefore to this task that we must immediately devote ourselves, in an open and non-sectarian spirit. ●

Toronto Anti-Intervention Conference Planned

by Barry Weisleder

A conference to reunite the movement against repression, injustice, and war in Central America will take place in Toronto, Ontario, on November 25-26. This cautious but tangible step forward for solidarity and anti-intervention activists follows two years of decline, disorientation, and fragmentation of the movement in this region.

The initiative for the conference came from the Toronto Anti-Intervention Coalition (TAIC) and individual activists from the Latin American Women's Collective, the Toronto Guatemala Solidarity Committee, and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. Members of Canadian Action for Nicaragua, the El Salvador Information Office, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and students at the University of Toronto are also involved in the project.

When TAIC was founded four years ago it functioned as a genuine and effective coalition, with up to 100 affiliated organizations. It organized educational, cultural, and protest activities on a year-round basis, including three annual demonstrations with between 1,500 and 700 participants.

Controversies over its mass action orientation, the need to criticize Canadian government and corporate complicity with U.S. intervention, and whether to adopt the policies of Central American liberation movements took a toll on coalition activists. But the biggest factor was the overall decline in participation that affected all components of the solidarity movement.

This reached its lowest point just following the signing of the Esquipulas 2 agreement by the five Central American presidents in 1987. Only Nicaragua has complied with the terms of the treaty designed to democratize and demilitarize the region. And although Nicaragua won valuable economic and military breathing space as a result of the diplomatic initiative, Central America remains locked in the jaws of repression and injustice, contrary to the hopes of solidarity and anti-intervention activists who thought Esquipulas might be the harbinger of peace and some improvement in living conditions.

We are only now beginning to recover from the demobilization of the movement in Canada. A demonstration of some 200 Central American and Canadians on September 17 in Toronto to mark Central America

Just before we go to press with this issue of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, on November 12, a conference of 125 took place in Cleveland, called by the Central America Coalition of Northeast Ohio (CACNO) to discuss the subject, "Where does the movement to end U.S. intervention in Central America go from here?"

We will carry a report in our next issue.

Independence Day was a positive but limited sign of the recovery. So were the anti-intervention rallies held in Toronto on April 30 and in Edmonton in May, and the large protest in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver and other cities on March 23 following the U.S. troop buildup in Honduras. But the need for greater regional, and eventually cross-country, organization is evident.

The November 25-26 conference aims at bringing together organizations and individuals to reconstruct a viable, representative coalition that can educate and organize public opposition to imperialist intervention in Central America, the root cause of the region's woes.

The gathering will have both an educational and policy/planning character. The opening event, Friday evening, will feature a special guest speaker from Central America, plus Guatemalan theater and music. Saturday's sessions will begin with an informative panel presentation on "Intervention and the Prospects for Peace in Central America," followed by workshops on each of the countries and special topics of interest.

The afternoon will be devoted to a discussion of perspectives for the solidarity and anti-intervention movement in Canada. This will include discussion of a paper drafted by the Organizing Committee which addresses questions of analysis, basis of unity, and structure for a new coalition. The paper will be available in Spanish and English in advance of the conference and can be obtained, along with the conference agenda and other information, by calling 416-535-8779. ●

The Rise and Fall of Maoism

by Lin Yifeng

The following article first appeared in the January/February 1988 issue of October Review, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong.

It is almost undisputed that Mao Zedong occupies a place in contemporary Chinese political history and exerts an influence unparalleled by anyone else in contemporary China. It is also generally known that Mao professed himself to be a Marxist and the Communist Party of China (CPC) has always proclaimed Maoism (or Mao Zedong Thought) as Marxism applied to China's specific circumstances.

Nonetheless, following the gradual exposure of Mao's mistakes, many partisans became critics of Maoism, and some go so far as to denounce Marxism-Leninism, saying that Mao's mistakes are largely to be blamed on his belief in Marxism-Leninism.

Is this the real picture?

This article attempts to compare and contrast Lenin's basic positions on revolution in backward countries with those of Mao, to look at the different roles of Maoism in various periods from the rise of the resistance war against Japan to the death of Mao, and to identify the characteristics of Maoism.

Mao's Basic Positions on Revolution in Backward Countries Deviated from Leninism from the Start

The socialist movement in China spread directly from the Soviet Union. Like many CPC comrades at that time who were inspired by the victory of the October revolution, Mao turned from admiration of Western democratism to partisanship toward Marxism-Leninism and commitment to the socialist movement.

However, historical facts prove that Mao did not understand the experience of Marxism in Russia. He did not understand Lenin's analysis of the basic problems of the Russian revolution, and, in particular, he did not understand the lessons of the October revolution.

Lenin's positions can be summarized as follows:

1. At first, Lenin, Plekhanov, and others pointed out that backward Russia did not possess the economic foundation for achieving socialism. They denounced the populists for their vague and harmful illusion that socialism could be at once realized under Russia's very backward conditions.

2. Lenin and others pointed out that the immediate tasks of the Russian revolution were to overthrow the tsar and to carry out land reform. The nature of such tasks could only be considered those of the bourgeois democratic revolution. In other words, they were not the tasks of the proletarian socialist revolution.

3. However, Lenin had common positions with Plekhanov and others (who were later to become the Mensheviks) only

on the above two questions. On the crux of the question of the Russian revolution fundamental differences arose between Lenin and Plekhanov. The nature of the problem was: In Russia, which class—the bourgeoisie or the proletariat—could act as leader of the revolution?

The answer of the Mensheviks was: The leader of such a bourgeois revolution could only be the bourgeoisie; the Russian revolution would inevitably be divided into two stages, first the stage of democratic revolution led by the bourgeoisie and then, when capitalism was fully developed and the country had the economic foundation for realizing socialism, socialist revolution could proceed.

Lenin, on the other hand, thought that this Menshevik proposition went against the principles of Marxism, in which the actual development of a society is determined by the concrete conditions that form it, especially by its actual class relations, and not by a preconceived schema. When Lenin made a close study of Russia's actual class relations, he came to the conclusion that the Russian bourgeoisie had thoroughly degenerated—it collaborated with the landowners and feared major reforms; it could not act as leader of the revolution, but on the contrary was an obstacle to the advance of the revolution. Precisely because the bourgeoisie collaborated with the landowners and stood in acute opposition to the proletariat, the workers and peasants could and should form an alliance, with the workers leading the peasants, to carry out the revolution and establish a "democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants" on its victory.

The 1905 Russian revolution confirmed Lenin's judgment, because in the course of this revolution the workers and peasants jointly formed soviets in opposition to the tsar, the landowners, and the bourgeoisie.

Yet, to what extent did the October revolution confirm Lenin's formulations?

It is fair to say that Lenin had correctly dealt with the problem up to a point, and found the correct answer within the framework of his own exposition. When the workers and peasants indeed formed an alliance and seized power, however, two new questions would arise: First, would the bourgeoisie be included among the enemies of the "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants," and second, would this society develop toward capitalism or socialism?

Lenin's formulation obviously did not answer these two questions.

On the theoretical level, pursuing Lenin's analysis, one can further infer that when the proletariat leads the peasants in

seizing power, it will and it must expropriate the property of the bourgeoisie and advance society toward socialist development. For if the bourgeoisie can succeed in alleviating social conflict, it is precluded that the workers and peasants will join together to seize power. On the other hand, when the actual class struggle propels the class consciousness of the proletariat to the point of seizing power, it will not limit itself to simply carrying out a democratic revolution. The conclusion which flows from this can provide more comprehensive answers to a series of related questions such as the nature, motive force, and orientation of the revolution than those provided by Lenin before 1917. Trotsky did provide this theoretical framework. The 1949 Chinese revolution served as another confirmation. This will be discussed later.

Why did Lenin not make a further theoretical inference so that his answer would be comprehensive? One view is that Lenin strictly limited his exposition to the scope of known conditions and avoided a purely theoretical inference before there was sufficient concrete experience of the actual class struggle related to the question. The victory of the October revolution and its later development solved the question.

4. After the victory of the October revolution, the Bolsheviks did not at once expropriate all the property of the bourgeoisie. But as Trotsky had predicted, the proletariat (including its vanguard, the Bolshevik party) leading the revolution did not confine itself simply to solving democratic tasks. The class struggle by this time had developed to a life-and-death battle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. If the state did not generally control the means of production and expropriate the property of the bourgeoisie, then the infant Soviet regime could not be maintained; and the workers and peasants faced starvation. Thus, a democratic revolution led by the proletariat developed directly into a socialist revolution to build a system of state ownership.

After the establishment of state ownership, Lenin many times announced to the whole world that the victory of the proletarian revolution in Russia showed that "the capitalist chain broke first at its weakest link." In *Theses on the National and Colonial Questions*, Lenin placed the revolutionary movements of these countries in the context of the world proletarian revolutionary movement; he appealed to the proletariat of the world, and especially to the proletariat of the backward countries, to draw upon the experience and lessons of the October revolution. From this can be seen that after the October revolution, Lenin found hitherto unsolved questions already solved, and also considered that the experience of the October revolution was applicable to other backward countries.

However, when we look at the CPC after its formation, the directives of the Comintern to the CPC concerning fundamental questions on the Chinese revolution totally violated Lenin's positions.

In fact, the directives to the CPC given by the Comintern, which was controlled by the Soviet Central Committee led by Stalin, were that the "national revolution" should be promoted by the building of a "coalition of four classes" (the national bourgeoisie, the proletariat, the peasants, and the intellectuals) to be led by the Nationalist Party (Kuomin-

tang) (KMT). It defined China at that time as a semifeudal, semicolonial country. Therefore, the immediate tasks of the Chinese revolution were to clear away the feudal remnants and the imperialist forces; the revolution at that stage was bourgeois and therefore it should be led by the bourgeoisie.

Can we say that the Chinese bourgeoisie was more progressive than the Russian bourgeoisie, and that it would promote the revolution? The answer is *no*.

The reality was the contrary. In fact, the Chinese bourgeoisie, many of them landowners as well, were either subordinate to or in deep collaboration with imperialism, and imperialism by that time economically dominated the whole of China through finance capital and other activities. Hence, if one recognizes that China had the status of a semicolon, one could practically define it at that time as an underdeveloped capitalist country dominated by imperialism. The Stalinists deliberately circumscribed the crux of the question by avoiding a definition of the Chinese economy as dominated by capitalism; they merely asserted that capitalism in China was underdeveloped.

Thus, we can judge that what the Comintern offered and the CPC received was the worst repetition in China of the Menshevik's so-called "revolution by stages." The CPC's application of the Comintern's positions can be viewed as the beginning of the CPC's deviation from Marxism-Leninism.

As for Mao himself, since his role in the CPC leadership at that time was not significant, his acceptance of the wrong positions of the Comintern was not particularly significant either, except as it related to his later positions. Still, it can be pointed out that in the *Xiangjiang Review*, of which he was chief editor, Mao wrote and stressed that the "merchants" (in fact the bourgeoisie) were revolutionary. This indicates that from the start he had consciously accepted positions deviating from Leninism. Hence, either from his adherence to Stalin's positions at this time or from his later positions, Mao departed from Leninism on the basic questions of revolution in backward countries.

The Rise and Decline of the CPC in the 1920s

After the First World War, China's international status changed for the worse. The imperialist aggression against China intensified. Domestically, there was civil strife among the warlords, ruin in the countryside, and hardship for the people. Meanwhile, nationalism and the class consciousness of the workers, peasants, and intellectuals continued to rise. In 1925 a revolution shook the world.

Its course showed that the victory or defeat of the revolution was directly determined by the correct or wrong understanding of the leadership on fundamental questions. This in turn determined the opportunities of development for the leadership itself.

The CPC played a real leadership role in this revolution. At the time, this infant party consciously criticized the KMT for its alienation from the masses. It devoted its efforts to organizing the urban workers' movement and conducted propaganda work for socialism. Thus, it quickly and broadly won the confidence of the workers, peasants, and intellectuals, and became the leadership of the mass movement in

China at the time. The proletariat was obviously the central force of the mass movement.

This proves that:

1. Lenin's assessment of the nature and motive force of revolution in backward countries could be fully applied to China.

2. No party other than that which grouped revolutionary vanguards with a socialist perspective (that is, the CPC at that time) could mobilize and organize the masses. And only by actively mobilizing and organizing the masses could the CPC rise so rapidly in the 1920s.

The revolution could have had a high chance of success if the CPC had independently proposed a clear, democratic revolutionary program, and had called on the people to resist imperialism and to bring down the rule of the warlords by fighting for national liberation and unification. And at the same time had carried out a land reform so that the mobilization of the worker and peasant masses of the whole country could in time unite to form soviets and to consolidate the alliance of the workers and peasants.

Unfortunately, the CPC at the time took an opposite course. It followed the directives of the Comintern which ordered the CPC to join the KMT. This not only liquidated the CPC's role as leader of the revolution, but also caused the CPC to abandon land reform due to its compromise with the KMT (many KMT generals were also landowners). And what the Comintern at first sponsored and armed was not the CPC but the KMT! Only after Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Ching-wai had successfully disarmed the urban workers' movement did the CPC call for land reform. It was already too late.

In short, the defeat of the second Chinese revolution was a result of the Comintern's deviation from Leninism on the fundamental questions of the Chinese revolution. The CPC which executed this wrong line was the first to suffer. Its forces were severely weakened, and it had to retreat to the countryside.

How the CPC Understood the Lessons of the Defeat of the Second Chinese Revolution

Could the CPC correctly understand the lessons of the defeat of the second Chinese revolution? In fact, the retrospective review of the Comintern and the CPC sought mainly to find scapegoats. They attributed their so-called "opportunist line" to Chen Duxiu, and the "putschist line" to Li Lisan. Yet, why was the former opportunistic and the latter putschist? Were Chen Duxiu and Li Lisan formulators or merely executors of the lines? All these important questions were deliberately left unanswered, partly to cover up the mistakes of the Comintern and partly to foster the image that the Central Committee was always correct — that those committing serious mistakes were merely individual leaders, and that the party was capable of "redressing" the mistakes. To attain the above objectives, they even resorted to distorting historical facts.

Does this mean that the defeated CPC could not draw any lesson from the defeat? If it could not, why was it able to recover during the resistance war against Japan, and then seize power in the civil war?

Here it needs to be pointed out that the CPC drew partial lessons which can be summarized in two points:

1. It realized that it had to maintain the party's independence, and should not readily give up the party's struggles or subordinate itself to the collaborators. Put into practice, this idea meant the persistence of independent armed struggle.

2. It realized that in order to preserve and develop itself, it must join with the masses. It was also obliged to recognize that the proletariat was the leading force in the revolution.

In the later developments of the CPC, we find it applying this experience.

Yet it must also be pointed out that although reiteration of the socialist perspective and stress on the proletariat as the leading force of the revolution were necessary to maintain the confidence of its adherents, the CPC could not implement this line in practice. The CPC did not rebuild the workers' movement in the cities and look for class support. Thus, in theory and in practice, the formulation that the proletariat was the leader of the revolution dwindled to one point — that the CPC represented the proletariat, or, so to speak, the CPC was the proletariat. This was the starting point of the CPC's substituting itself for the proletariat which it verbally recognized as the leading force of the revolution.

More important still, after the Zunyi Meeting in 1935 the CPC adopted the Soviet party as a model in setting up a system of bureaucratic centralism whereby all major decisions were autocratically made by the Central Committee, and leaderships of different levels were appointed by those above. When such a party system was integrated with the concept that "the party represented the proletarian class," the party substituting itself for the people and the leader substituting himself for the party was an inevitable result.

The Rise of the CPC in the Resistance War, the Second KMT-CPC Collaboration, and the Adverse Consequences to the Revolution Distorted

When the Japanese invaded, a broad mass resistance movement developed throughout the country. The KMT regime waged a halfhearted struggle against Japanese imperialism but put all sorts of constraints on the mass movement. Hence, more and more people came under the banner of the CPC in the resistance war. According to documents of the Seventh CPC Congress, when the war was nearing its end, the CPC guerrilla troops rose to 1.2 million and its militia to 2.5 million. From this it can be seen that the upsurge of the resistance was the objective factor which allowed the CPC to rise again. The subjective factor for the CPC's development was its recognition of the necessity of mobilizing and organizing the masses and of the independent functioning of the party.

When the resistance war started, the CPC took the initiative to propose KMT-CPC collaboration, that is, the so-called "united front." The CPC also openly accepted leadership by Chiang Kai-shek. Though this is sometimes viewed as a CPC tactic, historical facts show that the formulation of the united front not only did not help to relax the KMT regime's hostility toward the CPC, but served to diminish the vigilance of the CPC against repression

directed at the party. During the resistance war, the KMT forces did not concentrate on fighting the Japanese but instead struck at the CPC; the entire New Fourth Army was eliminated by the KMT. Actual experience compelled the CPC to draw the conclusion that, although the KMT-CPC collaboration was not to be dropped, “struggles also existed within the united front.”

Questions arose: As a force confronting the Japanese puppet regime and the KMT regime, the CPC had already had considerable experience. How would it deal with national problems? What was its proposal for waging the resistance war? What sort of regime should the country build? How to define the nature, motive force, and orientation of the Chinese revolution? These were no longer theoretical questions, but practical ones.

Mao Zedong wrote quite a number of articles on these questions. The more important ones were *On Prolonged War*, *On the Coalition Government*, and *On New Democracy*.

Both in form and in content, the coalition government that Mao proposed simply combined all the existing upper forces in society so that they could compromise with each other. He did not seek replacement of the rulers, or mobilization of the people in a democratic struggle to change the state’s political structure and to advance the country toward political democratization. Since such a coalition government never existed in China, it would be sufficient to remember that Mao never identified himself with the principle that the government should be elected by the people. He even rejected this principle.

Still it cannot be denied that Mao’s guerrilla war strategy was effective. It is necessary for us to probe why the CPC could strike a victory by applying this strategy, whether the same strategy could be extended to other countries, and whether negative consequences resulted from its use.

It must first be pointed out that the CPC forces gained significant development during the resistance war and the civil war because its armed struggle won the support of the masses. In fact, the CPC’s armed struggle had long remained in an adverse situation. If not for the existence of a prolonged national liberation movement, an adequate supply of soldiers from masses of landless peasants, and an ability of the CPC to carry out a policy of joining forces with the masses so as to have cover and support, the CPC might not have been able to gradually build up its forces to improve its situation, and it might not even have been able to preserve itself. From this we can make a general assertion: armed struggle apart from the masses or lacking the support of the masses does not correspond to China’s experience. It can only be regarded as a putschist, armed adventure.

Secondly, the military situation during the resistance war showed that Japanese imperialism obviously dominated North China and the major coastal cities by its absolutely superior ammunition, and the KMT regime controlled the remaining cities. However the Japanese army was unable to wholly control the regions that it occupied; it had to join with the bourgeoisie, landowners, and local bullies of these regions to muster resources so as to maintain its war of aggression. Hence the people’s forces gathered under the leadership of the CPC could, militarily, only carry out guerrilla warfare. Moreover, due to the superiority of the enemy’s

ammunition, they could only adopt expedient tactics (such as Mao’s formulation: we advance when the enemy withdraws, we withdraw when the enemy advances). These could drain the enemy’s strength, and while gradually building up one’s own forces one would not rashly conduct large-scale fights with the enemy and would wait for the enemy’s collapse. (What Mao said in *On Prolonged War* flowed from the basic judgment that “Japanese imperialism will eventually collapse.” More precisely, this concept was developed by militants who persisted in the resistance war, basing themselves on the actual situation and their own experience. Mao simply summarized the concept.)

From the actual class relations shown in the course of the resistance war, we can see that the bourgeoisie, landowners, and local bullies of the Japan-occupied regions collaborated with the enemy and took the opportunity to extort from the people and to benefit through further vicious concentration of land. Even in areas controlled by the KMT regime, bureaucrat capital, the bourgeoisie, the landowners, and the local bullies made use of the opportunity to extort from the people and profit from the nation’s calamity. The behavior of these reactionary classes—both in occupied regions and in KMT-ruled regions—served to disrupt China’s war against Japan and push China’s society and economy toward disintegration. Hence, wasn’t it necessary for the people’s forces to remove these reactionary obstacles before the resistance war could gain a real victory?

What was the CPC’s attitude toward the bourgeoisie and the KMT regime? The fact was it persisted in its formulation of the united front, that is, covering up the class conflict within the nation, and did not draw a clear distinction between itself and the bourgeois KMT. (For example, it could have gone beyond the limitation of fighting the resistance war together with the KMT regime.) The CPC, in a supraclass effort, attempted to “unite” opposing class forces to achieve social reform. When the resistance war ended and the civil war immediately ensued, and even when the CPC seized power, it never gave up its policy of seeking collaboration with the bourgeoisie—not even today when it declares that it “practices socialism” in China and when the above formulations have long been shown to be bankrupt.

Another question: When the CPC took power, its victory through its apparent strategy of “besieging the cities by the countryside” was deliberately “summarized” as a strategy for general application. Is this valid?

It must first be pointed out that such a formulation in fact contains the presupposition that the crucial determinant of victory is in the cities and not the countryside. Thus, if this strategy is employed with the objective of advancing the revolution, it is obvious that, when the revolution is advanced from the countryside to the cities, the armed struggle must be coordinated by an immediate call to the urban masses (of course with workers as the key force) to mobilize and by a general implementation of land reform in the countryside. Thus, armed strength is still a major factor for achieving victory, but it is not the only decisive factor. In particular, the force to promote social reforms is mass mobilization that seeks class liberation, and not armed strength, which is constrained by the subjective intentions of the commanders. On the contrary, by linking “siege of the cities by the

countryside” to “political power growing out of the barrel of a gun,” one will come up with a policy of achieving victory by relying on armed struggle and not on a broad class mobilization. Such a policy will cause the self-isolating armed struggle to be a very arduous one, or even to suffer defeat. Even if victory is scored by luck, adverse consequences will follow, like the terrifying bureaucratic rule that emerged in China.

From ‘New Democracy’ to ‘General Line’

In his *On New Democracy*, Mao Zedong rather systematically discussed the nature, motive force, and orientation of the Chinese revolution. Mao considered that “since the invasion of foreign capitalism in China and the gradual growth of capitalist factors in Chinese society, that is, from the Opium War to the Sino-Japanese War, for a century, China has gradually become a semicolonial, semifeudal society. . . . Whether in occupied areas or in nonoccupied areas, feudalism is predominant in society” (see Chapter 3, “China’s Historical Features”).

Precisely because Mao considered that capitalist development in old China was not predominant in relation to feudalism, which implied that capitalism still had much room for development, he judged that the Chinese revolution could not at once proceed along a socialist path. Instead it should take the road of “new democracy,” that is, the Chinese revolution was to be divided into two stages which did not link up with each other.

Then why was the democratic revolution divided into the old and the new?

Mao thought before the victory of the October revolution that, “the Chinese bourgeois democratic revolution . . . was part of the old world bourgeois democratic revolution. After this, . . . it changed to the category of new democratic revolution; in terms of the revolutionary front it has become part of the proletarian socialist revolution.” The leader of this revolution was to be the Chinese proletariat.

Here Mao changed the previous CPC version, that is, he no longer thought that the bourgeoisie served as the leader of the Chinese democratic revolution. At the same time, he considered that the Chinese national bourgeoisie had a “dual” nature: on one side revolutionary, on the other weak and even reactionary.

In the chapter, “Politics of New Democracy,” Mao proposed building a “New Democratic Republic”: “Such a . . . republic is different on the one hand from the old type, European, bourgeois-dictatorship type of capitalist republic. . . . On the other hand it is different from the most modern, Soviet proletarian-dictatorship type of socialist republic.” “It is a third form,” “but it is also an unchangeable form.”

And in the chapter “Economy of New Democracy,” Mao proposed that the state should only control economic sectors that “affect the national economy and people’s livelihood,” and class relations should be tackled according to the principle of “caring for both the public and the private, and benefiting both the laborers and the capitalists.”

From this we can see that when the CPC had developed into a powerful force, Mao began to find theoretical justification for the CPC’s taking of state power, and to sketch the

model of how this power was to be exercised. According to this model, he would place China under what he termed “new” democratism, that is, on the track of capitalism.

However, soon after the CPC did seize power, and formally wrote the above propositions into the “Common Program,” regarding them as long-term state policies, Mao proposed the “General Line,” and then carried out “socialist transformations.” Why did this happen?

We can see that in international relations, the imperialist bloc headed by U.S. imperialism imposed a severe military siege and economic embargo on China. Domestically, apart from those who rolled up their capital and production equipment and fled abroad, the rest of the bourgeoisie were engaged in speculation, profiteering, and hoarding, and did not carry on normal production. These circumstances showed that despite the willingness of the CPC to maintain capitalism, despite its emphasis that foreigners’ property in China would be protected, and despite the advantage of land reform to the development of capitalism, in theory, in the eyes of the international bourgeoisie the Chinese revolution breached their interests in China. If they were not allowed to dominate China’s economy and seize huge profits, then they would not invest and they would impose an economic embargo to force China to surrender to them. In the eyes of the Chinese bourgeoisie, their property mattered most, and the expropriation of the property of landowners and bureaucrat capital also threatened their property. (It must be kept in mind that many of them were concurrently landowners and they had millions of ties with foreign capital, bureaucrat capital, and the landowners.) In other words, the question at this time was not whether capitalism had fully developed in China; it was already proved that capitalism was not feasible in China and its collapse was a reality. At that time, if the major means of production were not nationalized, the CPC might have found it hard to preserve power, and the national economy might also fail. Thus the Chinese revolution in effect repeated the experience of the October revolution — that is, the evolution of the actual class relations determined the orientation of social development in China. Although the CPC had intended to maintain capitalism in China, it had to change its course and nationalize property.

If we recognize that backward countries do not possess the economic basis for realizing socialism, and yet the proletariat of backward countries, in solving democratic tasks, advance the revolution toward socialism, then, when the revolution in backward countries has overthrown the rule of the bourgeoisie and established state ownership, how should its social nature be defined? To this question revolutionary Marxists give the following answer: the nature of society at this time is transitional, which means it can advance toward socialism, and it can also retreat toward capitalism. This is a practical answer, because at this stage state ownership to raise productivity is the first step to catch up with the level of productivity of advanced capitalist countries and to lay the foundation for the realization of socialism (what we generally call “to build socialist primitive accumulation”; this task is not necessary in the advanced countries). At this stage, socialism cannot be immediately realized. In addition, due to the arduousness of this task, if there is no support from the international proletariat, or if there is serious isolation,

then the planned economy that this society relies on to go toward socialism will meet with large and small difficulties or even regress toward capitalism.

When Mao Zedong proposed the General Line he totally overlooked China's backwardness. He declared that a country as backward as China could at once practice socialism. The CPC's propagandists and theorists considered that the bourgeoisie had been eliminated, state ownership had been established, so China was practicing socialism and it could even "build communism in one country"!

The reason why Mao and the CPC propagandists told such a gross lie to the people is that the CPC wanted to keep a squeeze on the people in the name of socialism so that the bureaucracy could obtain maximum material conditions to underpin its rule. By implication, it means that Mao at first proposed "learning from the Soviet Union," and later imposed the Great Leap Forward and the People's Commune in order that the CPC could control the nation's means of production and means of living, then control the state power and social power from above and build up an autocratic rule of the bureaucracy as a parasite on the state ownership. Such measures cannot help promote socialism.

Characteristics of Maoism and Its Rise and Fall

We can sum up the characteristics of Maoism and its role in the contemporary Chinese revolution as follows:

- In appearance, Maoism generally identifies with Marxism-Leninism; in essence, it concretely identifies with Stalin's positions on international and Chinese questions. Thus it has the same characteristics as Stalinism in its abstract affirmation but concrete negation of and deviation from Marxism-Leninism.

As an ideology, it reflects the consciousness of petty-bourgeois intellectuals who, going through rapid changes and placed in the middle between capitalist forces and the worker and peasant forces, attempt to get rid of the oppression of capitalism yet at the same time to dominate the workers and peasants. It has the characteristics of making use of acute, actual class struggles to build up its strength and then to rise above society.

- These characteristics of Maoism were first concealed and then exposed.

Starting from the time when it affirmed the CPC's turn toward armed struggle in the final stages of the second revolution, it made use of this form of struggle. On the one hand it grouped together party members who dared not criticize the Comintern after the defeat of the revolution and yet continued to carry out revolutionary work, and on the other it followed the example of the Soviet party by setting up a party system of bureaucratic centralism.

It made use of a strong advance of the movement against Japanese invasion to reiterate "KMT-CPC collaboration" as well as to expand its armed forces. It blended together a whitewash of the Chiang regime and promotion of class collaboration with the declaration that it would not give up its communist convictions. It stressed the urgency of conduct-

ing a national liberation struggle and, in this way, covered up its sacrifice of the mobilization and organization of the masses to carry out class struggle. On the other hand, it ingratiated itself with the bourgeoisie, declaring its position of resisting Japan and building China in a joint effort with them, and with this it covered up the irreconcilable opposition between the KMT and the rising CPC.

In the course of the resistance war and the civil war, it stressed "taking the path of the masses" and "serving the people." In this way it inspired militants with a spirit of sacrifice in struggle, and the CPC was able to grow rapidly — to shine with a dazzling brightness for a certain period. However, it functioned only to strengthen the CPC and not to develop (in fact it restrained) people's autonomy.

It directed the CPC to first expand its armed strength in the countryside, hence grouping together large numbers of landless peasants and workers and intellectuals who fled from the cities to the countryside. The rapidly expanded armed forces served as the chief basis for seizing power. This, of course, served the function of bringing down the enemy, yet it also strengthened the CPC's own bureaucratic party system and intensified the CPC's control over the masses. This eventually caused the CPC to sink into a bureaucratic megalomania from which it could not recover.

It systematized the Menshevik "theory of revolution by stages," fragmentarily quoted Lenin's ideas on revolution in backward countries (on this Mao also learned from Stalin), and then came to the conclusion that China's democratic revolution should be led by the proletariat (in effect the CPC). This reflects the reluctance of the rapidly expanding CPC to act in subordination to the Chiang regime, and its own view of itself as the leading force for defending and advancing the development of China's capitalism.

For a long time, it directed the CPC regime to remain content in the Liberated Zone, and only when the situation became critical — when it faced elimination if it did not set out to replace the Chiang regime — did it call for land reform and the "liberation" of the whole country. And after the CPC took power, it was only under the siege by U.S. imperialism abroad and a vicious offensive of landowners and bourgeoisie domestically (social disintegration would result if the major means of production were not nationalized and the major means of living were not controlled by the state) that it hastily declared the implementation of the General Line.

Yet this General Line carried with it from the start anti-Marxist characteristics: it thought that socialism could be realized simply by placing national production under the control of state ownership or collective ownership. The so-called "constructing socialism according to China's specific circumstances" in reality allowed the CPC to dominate all power and resources in a general and strict way, to set up autocratic bureaucratic rule that governed everything, to change the CPC from a leader of the workers and peasants to an oppressor and ruler in opposition to the workers and peasants.

In sum, Maoism's actions were contradictory: when the CPC was besieged and persecuted by the landowning bourgeoisie, it directed the CPC to join with the people in a limited way through armed struggle, so that its characteristics of anti-Marxism-Leninism and dominating the workers

and peasants could be covered up. When the CPC rose to power it directed the CPC to oppose the workers and peasants through a series of measures aimed at building and consolidating privileged bureaucratic rule, the characteristics of which became increasingly explicit. Hence, the CPC and Maoism itself also rapidly declined and have come to be treated with contempt.

- Maoism handled actual class struggle in an empirical way, and gave up its principles in exchange for immediate interests. For example, it initially thought that again proposing KMT-CPC collaboration would be advantageous to the CPC's public activities in its effort to expand, and so it even fawned on the Chiang regime. When the Chiang regime joined with the Japanese puppets to strike at the CPC, it was compelled to respond since cover-up was no longer possible. Another example: At first it thought that by stressing China's backwardness, hence postponing the task of socialist revolution to the distant future, it could join with the bourgeois democrats. Later, it hastily deviated from reality to practice the General Line. The "experience" it resorted to was simply this: When the CPC was in a position of being repressed, it

stressed the arduousness of the revolution to cover up its compromise with the landowning bourgeoisie. When it was in a ruling position, it used the pretext of "building socialism" to carry out policies which bred bureaucratic privileges and infringed on the interests of the workers and peasants.

- Thus, though Maoism contains numerous self-contradictions as a theoretical system, there is one constant among the inconsistent variations: it has served as the ideological justification for establishing a bureaucratic party and bringing it to power. For the CPC, which needs to dominate the workers and peasants, these ideological justifications were not only "appropriate" but were also irreplaceable. Precisely because of this, today, when many many of Mao Zedong's mistakes can no longer be covered up, the CPC still treats "Mao Zedong Thought" as its guiding principle.

Needless to say, when people reject the CPC, Maoism is also rejected; and vice versa. ●

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Program, Organization, Revolution: Lenin and the Bolsheviks, 1905-1917

by Paul Le Blanc

This is the third and final installment of a three-part article, based on a talk given in the autumn of 1987. The first and second installments appeared in Bulletin in Defense of Marxism Numbers 56 and 57.]

3. Bolshevik Hegemony in the Working Class Upsurge of 1912-1914

It is a common perception that the chaos of war and the impact of military defeat are necessary to weaken the forces of the *status quo* as to make a revolution possible. Hence, there would have been no 1905 uprising in Russia without the Russo-Japanese war; there would have been no 1917 revolution without World War I, and in general there can be no revolution without a devastating war coming first. The meaning of this for revolutionaries in at least advanced capitalist countries is rather grim in our nuclear age.

In fact, the Russian experience of 1912-1914 suggests that this common perception is an illusion. As historian Leopold Haimson has commented, "what the war years would do was not to conceive, but to accelerate substantially, the two broad forces of polarization that had already been at work in Russian national life during the immediate pre-war period." Suggesting that the Bolshevik revolution could well have occurred even in the absence of the chaos of the First World War, he has drawn attention to "a set of hypothetical circumstances under which Russia might have undergone—even in the absence of the specific strains induced by the war, though maybe under the stimulus of some other, purely domestic crisis—the kind of radical overturn on which Lenin was already gambling by late 1913-early 1914 and which Russia actually experienced with the October Revolution."³⁰

A domestic crisis was rooted in an economic, social, and cultural upheaval that Russia was experiencing. This was fueled by a partial "modernization" and great new surge of industrialization, largely initiated by the policies of the tsar's handpicked prime minister of 1907-11, Peter Stolypin. One manifestation of this, which we will return to later, was the fact that the industrial labor force grew more than 30 percent between January 1910 and July 1914. In this period there was a dramatic upsurge of working class activity. An important factor in the direction this upsurge took (and, on the other hand, a reflection of the upsurge itself) was the rise of Bolshevism as a hegemonic force in the workers' movement during these years.

In examining the rise of working class militancy and of Bolshevik influence, it would be a mistake to assume that the radicalization of Russian workers would automatically result in the success of Lenin's party. What a revolutionary organization does and fails to do—its general orientation and practical activities—are decisive in determining whether it

is able to provide a leadership that masses of working people (both experienced activists and the newly politicized) will want to follow; and the test of events will increase or erode the authority of that leadership depending on the adequacy of that organization's orientation and activities in the real world. This suggests a fundamental link between Bolshevik fortunes in 1912-14 and the earlier factional disputes that we examined earlier.

More than three decades ago, Isaac Deutscher offered an historical summary which has relevance for the questions we are examining:

One of the striking features of the Russian labor movement before the revolution of 1917 was the relative insignificance of the trade unions. . . . In suppressing trade unionism, tsardom unwittingly put a premium upon revolutionary political organization. Only the most politically-minded workers, those prepared to pay for their conviction with prison and exile, could be willing to join trade unions in these circumstances. But those who were already so politically-minded were, naturally enough, more attracted by political organizations. The broader and more inert masses, who were inclined to shun politics but would have readily joined trade unions, were not only prevented from forming unions but were gradually accustomed to look for leadership to the clandestine political parties.³¹

After 1912 this was predominantly the Bolshevik party. Yet two modifications need to be made in Deutscher's summary. First, while trade unions were limited, harassed, and undercut by the regime, after 1905 they were allowed to exist—they were just not permitted to be overly effective. Second, while trade unions suffered from relative insignificance (compared, for example, with the situation in Britain or Germany at that time), they were not insignificant for key layers of conscious workers. The period that we're looking at was one of growing strike waves—especially after the massacre of protesting workers in the Lena goldfields in 1912. The Lena incident has been compared by some historians to the massacre of workers in Petersburg in 1905 in terms of working class radicalization. In this later period one of the initial forms of organization that many radicalizing workers turned to was the trade union.

Significantly, the Mensheviks lost control of the bulk of the trade unions in 1913 and 1914. For example, by the summer of 1914 Bolsheviks controlled the leadership of at least 14

out of 18 trade unions in Petersburg and 10 out of 13 trade unions in Moscow. In 1913 the Menshevik leader Martov wrote to one of his comrades:

I am dejected by the story of the Unions of Metal-workers which exposes our weakness even more than we are used to. It is altogether likely that in the course of this season our positions in Petersburg will be squeezed back even further. But that is not what is awful. What is worse is that from an organizational point of view, Menshevism—despite the newspaper, despite everything that has been done for the past two years—remains a weak little circle.

Martov blamed the workers—the change in the working class due to the dramatic expansion of the industrial proletariat, with the new influx into the urban labor force of ex-peasants “driven by instincts and feelings rather than consciousness and calculation.” They introduced a “disorganized, primitive, elemental character” into the working class—a “swilling mixture of anarchist and syndicalist tendencies with remnants of peasant urges and utopias.” Martov elaborated: “As they face the hardships, the darkness of city life, they hold onto their dream of returning to a patch of land with their own cow and chickens . . . and they respond to the slogans of those who promise them the fulfillment of this dream.” The demagogic culprits, of course, were the Bolsheviks.

A recent historian, Reginald Zelnik, has restated this in a way that implies the superiority of the Bolshevik programmatic principle of the *worker-peasant alliance*, writing that workers drawn to Bolshevism had “a uniquely volatile and dynamic *mixed* consciousness that combined *peasant* resentment against the vestiges of ‘feudalism’ (i.e., serfdom) with a *proletarian* resentment against capitalist exploitation in the factories.” Certainly the “three whales” of Bolshevism—combining immediate aspirations of workers (the eight-hour workday) and peasants (confiscation of the big landed estates) with the vision of a democratic republic—would appeal to such dynamically mixed consciousness. This is an intriguing interpretation, appealing especially because it seems to correspond to the “mixed” reality of proletarianized masses in third world countries of today.

Yet the Russian reality was more complex than suggested by Martov or by Zelnik. As a number of historians have pointed out, newly arrived unskilled workers from the countryside were generally inclined to make some quick money and not to get into trouble, tending to avoid trade unions—not to mention illegal political activities. The unions, on the other hand, recruited mainly experienced, skilled, and urbanized workers, and many of these workers were in a position—from their own observations and activities over a period of years—to critically evaluate the claims, appeals, and proposals of contending left-wing currents. There are indications that the Bolsheviks *did* make gains among unskilled and rebellious young workers, but they also had to win over seasoned activists in order to win the unions.

In fact, we find a similar pattern of Bolshevik hegemony developing in other arenas within the working class as well during this period. By 1914, for example, an investigation by

the International Socialist Bureau of the Second International determined that the weekly circulation of the Bolshevik newspaper *Pravda* was 240,000 as opposed to 96,000 for the Mensheviks’ *Luch*. In the Duma the Mensheviks had seven deputies to the Bolsheviks’ six, but the majority of working class districts tended to vote Bolshevik; thus, out of the nine deputies permitted by law to be selected by the workers’ curia (working class electoral colleges set up under tsarist law), six were Bolsheviks. In elections to the All-Russia Insurance Board 82 percent were Bolsheviks.

We need to go beyond raw statistics, however, to get a feel for the dynamics of Bolshevik ascendancy. It’s worth considering the reflections of the careful pro-Menshevik scholar Leopold Haimson, who has commented on the Bolsheviks’ ability “to strike a note of militance, and yet seemingly a note of realism; to appeal to anger, and also to make its expression appear eminently reasonable, if not practical.” He continues:

And it is because of this multiplicity of the notes they strike, and the varying ways in which they harmonize them, that Bolshevik propaganda and agitation prove so successful by the eve of the war, not only among the explosive strata of the Petersburg working class, but also among the “less advanced” workers of the more isolated industrial towns and villages.

By 1914 the Bolshevik platform variously offers the workers the promise of the eventual overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship; the more ambiguous, if less distant, promise of the establishment of a “firm democratic regime,” in which the masses of workers and peasants will already hold the upper hand over the privileged elements of “census” society; and most literally the political objective of a democratic republic, under which the workers will gain civic and political rights equal to those of more privileged elements, as well as a better opportunity to pursue their struggle against their employers. Even more strikingly, Bolshevik slogans emphasize the need for workers to unite, not only in pursuit of these (vaguely distant) political objectives, but also to achieve more immediate improvements in their lives. And even the definition of these ostensibly more tangible objectives, particularly in the workers’ economic struggle with their employers, are subtly adjusted to the differences in the mood and expectations of the various working-class groups to which they are presented.

It is difficult to imagine, given the history of Russian labor and socialist movements since 1900, that the Bolsheviks could have become what Haimson is describing without the previous struggles which we examined earlier—without an uncompromising dual struggle against the ultraleft *Forwardists* and the opportunist liquidators; without an uncompromising struggle against the conciliators who sought the organizational unity of such profoundly divergent forces; without an independent party based on the Bolshevik program.

To fully appreciate these realities, however, we must integrate them into the larger realities of the class struggle in the period of 1912-14. Here it will be impossible to do jus-

tice to this topic, but a sense can be given from the accounts of two historians and a participant. Dietrich Geyer offers the most succinct summary:

During the two years before the First World War the economic cycle in Russian industry prompted another wave of strikes which were repeatedly transformed into political demonstrations under socialist watchwords, especially in the two capital cities [of Petersburg and Moscow]. When [the French president] Poincaré paid a state visit to Petersburg in July 1914, he was confronted by a general strike involving approximately 200,000 workers. Not only Soviet researchers but also Americans speak quite properly of a revolutionary situation which did not abate until war erupted.

And Robert Service tells us the following:

In the first half of 1914 alone there were over 3,000 strikes, and two-thirds of them were associated with political demands. The slogans were those espoused by the more intransigent Russian Marxists: both V.I. Lenin's Bolshevik supporters and L.D. Trotsky's faction had cause to cheer. The police's penetration of all revolutionary groups was as successful as ever; and presumably few workers were even acquainted with the doctrines of Bolshevism. Nonetheless the social unrest had reacquired political content. Huge demonstrations against the monarchy shook St. Petersburg in summer 1914. The participants announced clear aims: they wanted a democratic republic, an eight-hour working day in the factories and the expropriation of all gentry-held land. And they wanted no delay of fulfillment.

We can see here that, even if "few workers were acquainted with the doctrines of Bolshevism," it was still "the three whales" of Bolshevism that they adopted as their slogans when they were ready to take militant action. Nor was this a coincidence. A seasoned layer of worker-Bolsheviks were in the thick of the upsurge. One of the most prominent of these, the metalworker Alexander Shlyapnikov, has recounted:

Workers converged from all sides on the Bolshoi Sampsonievsky Prospekt, forming a crowd of demonstrators over ten thousand strong. Revolutionary songs began, red banners and kerchiefs were waved. The police locked themselves up in their station. Speakers got up appealing for armed struggle and the overthrow of tsarism. Trains in the [working class] Vyborg district were halted and for over an hour workers moved through the streets to the sound of revolutionary songs. . . . Several hours of cavalry charges were required to "impose order," but calm could not be established just like that. With the onset of dusk the police and Cossacks decided not to probe any deeper into the working-class quarters, where deep into the night the strains of revolutionary songs could be heard.

The action was led by groups from our party. . . . From 6 July till 12 July the strike was almost general, and the number of strikers reached 300,000. Meetings and demonstrations took place everywhere, and in

some places barricades were erected. . . . Every day workers arrived at the plants and factories at the normal time, held meetings and demonstrated through the streets. This movement was especially militant in the Vyborg district. On the morning of the French visitors' arrival in Petersburg, nearly all the working-class districts had gathered in the Bolshoi Sampsonievsky Prospekt, filling the whole width of the street from the New Lessner Works to the police station. The sun smiled happily upon the twenty-thousand-strong crowd, among whom were working women, wives, children, and so on. Police and Cossacks were absent.

As the demonstration moved toward the center of the city, however, it was ferociously attacked by troops of cossacks. Fierce street fighting erupted. Despite numerous arrests and a termination of the strike, the combative spirit and high morale of the workers remained intact, and a resumption of the insurgency seemed imminent.

The revolutionary dynamic was abruptly interrupted with the onset of the First World War at the beginning of August. The war generated confusion among the workers, and it unleashed unrelenting government repression against the Bolsheviks and all other opponents of the imperialist slaughter. But this only postponed the revolutionary upheaval. Within three years a semispontaneous working class uprising—in many ways similar to that of July 1914—toppled tsarism. Within a short period the Bolsheviks regained their hegemony within the workers' movement. The studies of new social historians (summarized in a recent and excellent collection, *The Workers' Revolution in Russia, 1917*, edited by Daniel Kaiser) demonstrate that the kind of dynamics described here came into play once again, but on an even greater scale, culminating in the 1917 socialist revolution.

The Bolshevik experience from 1907 to 1914 and Lenin's approach to the interrelated questions of program and organization were essential for Bolshevism's triumph and the victory of the Russian working class.

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(Notes continued on page 36)

Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

26. Acquaintance with Vorkuta

They hauled us in prison cars as far as Arkhangelsk, from which we went by sea to Naryan- Mar; and then north on the Pechora. The sky hung over the Bering Sea, troubled and gray, as if made of one whole, flat leaden sheet. During all the days of our boat trip, the sun never once showed an interest in this crowd of people who had been convicted in the night.

The sea gulls flew over the leaden waves. Their sad cries were the only mourning for us that was not forbidden. The wives and mothers were not allowed to express their grief aloud.

We were not allowed to go near the side of the boat. At the bow and aft guards were posted. Like sickly flies of autumn, we huddled close to the steam pipe.

When they loaded us into the river boat, it became more crowded and therefore more comfortable. From the crew we learned what kind of place Vorkuta was. Many wrote letters home. The sailors promised to slip them into the mailbox. Simple, good lads, they did not know what kind of terrible criminals they were helping with this impermissible service. This was soon explained to them.

At every bend the Pechora revealed anew its austere beauty. Coniferous forests came all the way to its shores and cliffs hung behind the forests, casting black shadows on them. After many kilometers of steep shores made up of intertwined strips of white, would appear a strip of sandy beach, as if transported here straight from the shores of the Black Sea. And then again, forests and rocks, forests and cliffs.

We encountered more and more shoals on the river. When we entered the Usa, a tributary of the Pechora, it became impossible to stay afloat. They unloaded us. We began the stage on foot, with which they had frightened us in the Butyrka cell.

Would it be far? No one knew except the convoy; but they were forbidden to mingle with us.

That September happened to be dry, a rarity in these parts. In the evenings, we built bonfires and slept around them. For the last hundred kilometers, the landscape suddenly changed, and with it the weather. We had entered the tundra.

Finally, we reached the camp settlement of Vorkuta-vom, usually called simply Usa. This was a kind of river port that grew up to serve Vorkuta. During high-water times, barges reached here. There was no other way to provide the new coal basin with equipment, food, and prisoners. Navigation was impossible when the river grew shallow. Cargoes were left at transshipment points until spring; people moved on foot. In times of heavy snow, all movement ceased. Some years, the river was not opened up at all.

From Usa to Vorkuta, a narrow-gauge railroad stretched for a distance of about sixty kilometers. It had been built by our predecessors, Vorkuta's first camp residents – basically repeat offenders who had been shipped out to the most god-forsaken camps. In a rainy, cold twilight, we were loaded onto small railroad platforms; and on a rainy, snowy, black night, we arrived there, where many were to remain forever. Along the unlighted paths moved the dark figures of the convoy carrying benzene miners' lamps. We were unloaded and counted, touched one by one to make sure no one had jumped from the train along the way, and led to the barracks. The next day they issued me a lamp and a *zhelonka*, a kind of mining pick with a detachable point.

The coal was mined by hand; the carts were pulled by hand, too. A rich seam, no match for the Donetsk region, was being mined. In the face of the mine, a man of average height could almost stand up straight.

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.

The polar winter was instantly upon us. Over many years, the climate here had changed for the better; structures served as a wind-break. In the terminology of specialists, the chill factor had been diminished. On the high steep shore of the Vorkuta river, there were then only several long barracks that had grown into the earth and a snowstorm could rage at will.

All Vorkuta then consisted of one mine with a sloping shaft. It was called the pit; the settlement has kept that old name to this day. I was taken to the pit; Volodya was left on the Usa. Most likely the orders were "split them up." After that day, we did not see each other for almost five years.

But how many friends you do meet whom you never expected to see again.

At the Arkhangelsk transfer point I met Arkady, my young Kharkov friend, who had seven years ago renounced me at a party meeting. I have already mentioned that he was arrested six months before me for a "link with Lominadze." First he was sent to Uzbekistan to build the Chirchik electrostation. That was the largest camp. Soon an order was issued: Deliver all KRDT prisoners from Central Asian and other southern camps to the harsher conditions in the North. But you still do not know what the KRDT is. This was the name for articles by which a person was condemned without trial for "counterrevolutionary Trotskyist activity."¹ At roll call, they called your last name and you had to respond not with "I" or with "here" but by enunciating your full title: first name, middle name, year of birth, article under which you were condemned, length of sentence received, and the date the sentence ends. This means of establishing identity was built on the assumption that the prisoner was absolutely stupid and not able to remember "fundamental data" of another prisoner if he took it into his head to exchange sentences with him.

Such an exchange did not interest us at all, but among the common criminals it did happen that a petty thief who was beaten at cards by an inveterate repeat offender would lose his three-year term in exchange for the recidivist's twenty-year term.

The sweetest and bitterest surprise that befell me was to run into Grisha Baglyuk in the courtyard of the Arkhangelsk transfer point, where every week several hundred people were sent further north. From there we arrived at Vorkuta together. He had spent a long time in the mountain region of Shoria. They built roads there to bring European culture to Asia.

Grisha told how he had been imprisoned. In 1933, he had gotten a term of two years internal exile in accordance with a decision of the Donetsk provincial ruling triumvirate. The story of the sentence alone can throw light on many aspects of the morality of Stalinism.

The reason for everything was a run-in with Sarkis, who was notorious in those years and about whom someone said: "Sarkis was the first on the skids." A prominent figure in the Leningrad opposition (the so-called Zinovievists), he confessed his sins profusely and then and there undertook to prove his devotion to Stalin by the means already well known to you: betrayal.

A sacrificial offering and the entire ritual linked with it of

dismissal from work of some and the appointment of others was designated by a special phrase in which one gets a clear sense of the nature of its inventor: "This calls for blood." Wishing to win full acceptance into Stalin's crowd, Sarkis began to look around to see whose blood to let. He did not know that even a river of blood would not save him, and that his treachery was absolutely trivial when compared to the avalanche of treachery being prepared when the leader himself would betray tens of thousands of faithful supporters and a multitude of personal friends, including relatives of his first and second wives.

Because Sarkis had already betrayed his friends, he began to look among those who weren't his friends. One of them was Grigory Baglyuk, the writer and editor of the literary journal *Zaboi* [The Mine Face]. Could Grisha not have come to hate Sarkis — who was sent to the Donbass to be secretary of the provincial committee — when he heard his history? At a city party conference, he spoke against the new secretary on some question and when the secretary attacked Grisha in the demagogic manner that became fashionable once Stalin got it rolling, Grisha was not too lazy to go home for a volume of Lenin, repeatedly taking the floor and ridiculing Sarkis. You can imagine the vengeful malice of the insulted secretary.

On his orders, a case was concocted accusing the editor of *Zaboi*, Grigory Baglyuk, of printing Trotskyist poetry in the pages of his journal. "Trotskyism" consisted in the following lines of Grisha's poetry: "Vasil slowly examined the program of the Young Communist League syllable by syllable." Do you see the Trotskyism here? Yet this is what was found by the experts assigned to find material incriminating Baglyuk in the journal. The Young Communist League, they discovered, had no program. It carried out the program of the party. Consequently, in the words cited, the Young Communist League was being counterposed to the party. And this was one of Trotsky's favorite pastimes: The young are the barometer of the revolution, the renegade Trotsky falsely maintained. It follows that the author of the poetry is guided by Trotsky's renegade thinking. Q.E.D!

This line was one of the main points of the charge. As early as 1933, long before 1937, false juridical documents were being fabricated. And not in Moscow, not on the orders of Yagoda or Yezhov, but in the provinces, on the instruction of a committee secretary. 1937 did not fall from the sky.

Grisha was given two years' exile — very lenient. The precedent of cruelty, it seems, must not have originated in the provinces.

The charge according to which Grisha was convicted was the same as the one cited against Gorbatov for *Ourcity*. However, no triumvirate dealt with Boris; he was lucky. The system of persecution for ideological deviations had not been fully elaborated before the shooting at the Smolny. It had the character of a developing attack. The offensive on all fronts began in December 1934.

Grisha served his term of exile in Kazan, working in a bridge-builders' artel. He got his proper documents and caught the train to go home. But this was now 1935. At the first stop, two people entered the car and arrested him. The decision in absentia to give him five more years of camp (and

not exile) for a crime that it would seem he had already atoned for, had been handed down in advance. Why was Grisha set free for two hours? This did not happen to him alone. Such was Stalin's style of work, a Stalin game. Freedom, justice, humanism — a game of cat and mouse.

At the entrance to the camp barracks the loudspeaker greeted us with a song: "I know of no other country where a person can breathe so free." Lebedev-Kumach wrote it. Most likely, he sincerely thought that way. The song was broadcast many times each day. In the barracks of Vorkuta, it had the ring of a particularly pure, beautiful, and expressive artistic truth.

Vorkuta was a glimpse of the future. People were needed, more people. Until our arrival, only criminals worked there. In the harsh conditions and the total disorganization of the camp (for a while we had to sleep right in the snow), they had made it through one winter. The words "made it through" made it through to all of us now.

The vein produced little coal and without a railroad, it was hauled out with great difficulty. But there was a machine shop, a blacksmith's shop, and a foundry. There were not enough specialists. We couldn't have arrived at a better time.

The camp had not yet been surrounded with barbed wire, but even without it, you could not escape. With the Usa and several camp subdivisions scattered below along the river (so-called outposts), the Vorkuta camps occupied an area no less than the size of Belgium. And all of it was guarded by a few dozen towers and, of course, the impassable tundra all around.

But does it matter how a prison is guarded? What would be packed into ten-square-meter cells is here scattered over a vast space. All the camp points are built only along the river and the narrow-gauge line of the Usa mine (i.e., Vorkutavom or simply Vorkuta, if you want to use the official name). There were no telephones then, no telegraphs, and of course, no radios linking us up. Even the officials went on foot when a blizzard stopped movement on the narrow-gauge railroad line. In a blizzard, the prisoners were sent to do the most senseless and exhausting work in the North: "the snow struggle." It had much in common with bailing out the ocean with a bucket. But the clever name created the impression of some struggle to achieve the plan. However, the plan for the "snow struggle" had in fact been devised. I read a description of the well-known tsarist penal colony in Kara. The Vorkuta of those years did not differ much from it. Only the food was much worse. Just as with the tsarist penal colony, it was almost impossible to escape from Vorkuta. Only a few of the recidivists made the decision to try. If the fugitive did not perish in the mountains of the Northern Urals, he found himself in a more livable region of Siberia. Here they would catch him when, beside himself at having won his freedom at such a risk, he got drunk for the first time.

The local population did not sympathize with the fugitive. The Chaldons [natives of Siberia] would give him no bread and the lads with makhorka [cheap tobacco] had no time for him. Criminals have no sense of gratitude: they could rob the person who has just saved them from starvation. The spirit of betrayal had become the spirit of our time.

An encounter with the Komi hunters always meant one thing: you were caught. The alluring prize for apprehending a fugitive (flour, sugar, gunpowder paid in kind) did mean something. Relations between the campmates and the population was built not on sympathy, voluntary assistance, and gratitude but on hostility, deceit, theft, and self-defense from it. But the reasons for this lay deep below the surface. Hatred for a thief and finding theft unpleasant are two different things. We have far more of the first than of the second. In particular, if we are to speak of social funds, then many extravagances to which our consciousness has now become accustomed were considered theft in Lenin's time.

Under Stalin, on the other hand, gathering ears of corn in the field after the harvest was brought in — ears that at any rate would have rotted by fall — was termed theft of public property.

But the Komi hunter did not go into these questions. The criminals stole, so the Komi had to buy himself a lock which he had never heard of just five years ago. The camp taught the hunter to use his rifle not only to get squirrels and foxes but to shoot people. The majority of those staffing the guard towers were recruited from the Komi. They lived with their families there on the banks of the river in huts built from camp materials, plank walls with slag filling.

I once observed the children of the guards at play. A little girl about three and a boy just a bit older were throwing chips into a puddle. The children spoke in their native language but their baby talk was thickly laced with Russian words — words of the most unbridled profanity, created under Batyr's yoke, but perfected under the reign of the camp officials. Their mother, barely able to understand Russian, also swore inside the walls of the hut using the vilest Russian words. Such words simply did not exist in the Komi language. The camp system brought the Komi people much that was new.

Industrialization, the economic foundation for a national flowering of the peoples of the Soviet North, came to them dressed in camp cotton pea jackets and a convict's hat of flannelette.

* * *

In the prison and at the way stations, people easily became close — you begin to share your makhorka with comrades and to receive your gruel in a common pot. So I became friends with a nice chap by the name of Buleev. The criminals immediately called him "Chapai" because of his outward resemblance: he had a blond mustache.² Hearing himself so christened, Buleev tried to strengthen the resemblance. He cocked his hat, unbuttoned his collar; began to constantly sing "The Storm Was Raging," and in general presented a devil-may-care image which suited him. He was sentenced as a KRDT not for his own Trotskyist activity but — as with tens of thousands of others — he was thrown in the can to magnify the dimensions of the conspiracy and to multiply the praise for uncovering it.

Our Chapai immediately became well known among the criminals. And we were for them not simply strange but harmful people. With us came new complications and restrictions. The officials became more vigilant, and at the

infirmity they made it more difficult to get a day or two off from work by skillfully raising the level of the mercury of the thermometer. Formerly, there had been medical aides, undereducated and compliant. But now they brought in doctors (among the KRDT there were quite a few) and they set out to be honest. In camp honesty is out of place. Everyone wants to get by. You're a doctor: then cure people's ailments but don't get in the way of their survival.

The criminals immediately began to hate us. But my little friend, following some instinct, took the right course with them. He conquered the primitive minds of the common criminals using the charm of his mustache and his bold cries: "OK, off we go! What could be out there? Let's go! Chapai isn't afraid of anything!"

Upholding Chapayev's glorious reputation, he acted with a sweeping boldness. He was himself a clever blade, but the duty of being a Chapai demanded still more.

Cunning in a silly way, this good-natured, blustering ex-communist helped us all. Not with parcels—he received none; he had evidently been repudiated by his people. And not with makhorka—but I never noticed that our common tobacco bag got emptier because of him. He helped us with his eternal call: "OK, let's go! Chapai isn't afraid of anything!"

If Chapai were afraid of nothing, how could we be cowards? Then: "Let's go!"

Another fellow, one of the Odessa Komsomol members I met in Vorkuta, had just the opposite effect on me (true, for only half an hour). Didovsky, a lad from Moldavanka, was from the first unsociable and cold. During all the years of work in Odessa, we hardly ever ran into each other even though we lived in the same building. We ran into each other in Vorkuta.

He recoiled from me as though I were a rattlesnake. I let fall my extended hand. In a few abrupt and bitter words he lay everything out to me:

First, he did not want to have anything to do with me.

Second, he was absolutely innocent and considered himself a communist, about which he had already written several times to Stalin and Yaroslavsky. But—and this he said with special emphasis—he considered me guilty of everything that had been uncovered after the evil murder of Comrade Kirov and also for the fact that an innocent like himself was imprisoned. But he was sure that the mistake would be corrected.

That's all. We don't know one another.

Many times after that I met Didovsky in the lavatory or in the dining room. The lavatory was small, two was a crowd. He worked in the mine and I saw how his frail body got smaller every week. But in his eyes, the fire of hatred never died toward those people whose unquestionable guilt led to the fact that he, who was unquestionably innocent, was in prison.

* * *

Grisha Baglyuk and I did not meet every day. The winter's constant blizzards so covered things with snow that it was sometimes difficult to move from one barracks to another.

A person who has never been to the polar region would not know how the snow becomes during a blizzard. It is flat, and hard, like sand. The blizzard raged for a week at a time. The barbed snow beats against your face; the wind hampers your breathing. It seems that any second it will kill you, by pumping into your lungs ten times more air than your lungs can hold. It is difficult to walk forward in the storm.

The flatterers of Stalin, insulting the memory of Belinsky, dreamed up a song of praise, "The Furious Vissarionych."³ Stalin somehow reminds me of a blizzard. Meeting the most insignificant obstacle on its path, the blizzard buries it under a huge mountain of flat, hard snow.

Usually Grisha visited me—my barracks was quieter. Grisha clambered into the top plank bed. Lying on the black mattress packed with damp wood shavings, we talked in low voices, to a tune of Lebedev-Kumach.

Grisha could not stand the radio. Was it because the loudspeakers in our barracks at that time were of such poor quality, seriously distorting the music? Or because of the monotony of the political broadcasts? Grisha could not reconcile himself with the mass culture which at that time was only beginning its victorious march, and which in a mechanically measured way was being beaten into our brains, as the pile driver drives in the Chuchuk piles.

As the best means for having this effect, newspapers and still more radio and television are essentially distinguished from books. Sitting with a book, one can think, pause over the author's words, attentively examining them and rereading if something is unclear. Newspapers, since yesterday's issue is not in front of you, can persistently repeat what they said yesterday, without it's being noticed, instead of setting out new arguments, which a book would have to do. Therefore, a newspaper cannot by its very essence replace a book since it is more primitive than a book.

As regards radio or television, you simply cannot stop the announcer or operator to ponder something that has been said. Thoughts are hurled at you one after another; you cannot collect yourself. Such thoughts by necessity cannot be very deep.

And what is still more important, to listen (and, all the more, to look) is easier for the mind than to read. The newspaper requires significantly less practice and skill than a book. The radio requires still less and the movies and television almost none. Therefore, the radio, movies, and television made it hundreds and thousands of times easier and faster to create stereotypes of thought.

* * *

I told Grisha about my first days in the mine. I was assigned to learn from an experienced coal-hewer from among the criminals. A healthy young fellow, he chopped away the coal in a classic manner. The pick flew in his hands. He was able to chop along a layer, a bit at a time, and with almost every blow, he knocked off a pound-sized chunk. He earned his kilo ration by honest work. I exerted twice the effort but chopped loose about half as much coal as he did. My mentor explained that Yids don't make good miners, and I asked

Grisha, as an old miner, to comment on this issue. Grisha laughed at me and said:

"I don't know. You and I are different in a lot of ways, but when it comes to working in a mine, these differences don't matter much. Dusya asked me once about this and I guess I didn't answer her quite precisely. But if you want me to give you a serious answer, then I think anti-Semitism in our country has already almost died out. You were talking to a kulak. The kulaks hate everybody, and especially Jews. But we never paid attention to who was what in the mines."

Noticing a bug crawling along the ceiling over our heads, I said:

"I wonder. Where did they come from! This building is no more than built and there they are, crawling, crawling, almost like humans do."

"What are you talking about?" Grisha asked in confusion, evidently still continuing our line of thought. "Yes, Misha, ever since I can remember, I have been friends with the Jewish lads. And with the girls, too, with some at least: There was Nina, Manya . . . Of course, he will soon die."

When we got to recalling Artemovsk, Grisha often became pensive. And then, he would sing, most often in Ukrainian:

"Oh, there were three springs in the field,
The Cossack loved three little girls."

The barracks got noisier. It was nearly time for shift change, and people started getting dressed. The mine was

waiting for me, too. I took my pea jacket from the bed.

"Go," Grisha bid me. "And take comfort from the fact that your son will never hear the word Yid. It cannot be otherwise. If anti-Semitism rises up again, then we can junk all these books of ours, every last one of them! I'd take pleasure in giving that mentor of yours one good one in the mug. Is that him over there in the corner dressing?"

But I hurried out. We left the barracks in pairs. The snow immediately began to cling to our faces. The wind obstructed our breathing. The blizzard raged on.

[*End of Notebook Four. Next month: Notebook Five — "At the Brick Factory."*]

NOTES

1. KRDT is an acronym for the Russian words for "Counterrevolutionary Trotskyist Activities."

2. Vasily Ivanovich Chapayev (1887-1919) was a civil war commander. He headed a Bolshevik division against the Czechoslovak Legion and Kolchak's forces and was killed in action. His political commissar D. Furmanov wrote a novel based on him in the early 1920s. On the basis of the book, a famous movie was produced about Chapayev by the Vasilyev brothers in 1934.

3. Vissarion Grigorevich Belinsky (1810-48) was a Russian writer and literary critic, considered a great progressive thinker. The name "The Furious Vissarionych," or son of Vissarion, was intended to apply to Stalin, whose patronymic (middle name) was Vissarionych. Baitalsky's ironic remark draws attention to the great intellectual and political distance between the enlightened 19th century intellectual and the 20th century despot.

Election (*Continued from page 4*)

Curtis in Des Moines, Iowa, is not worthy of comment. The Socialist Party, whose candidates are Willa Kenoyer and Ron Ehrenreich, has presented some good literature on socialism in the abstract, but it has not made participation in struggle a big part of its campaign—and it is less well organized and less visible than the SWP. The Communist Party did not even attempt to run a presidential campaign in 1988, and if the Socialist Labor Party is running candidates they have not even managed to get them on the ballot in New Jersey, where only 800 signatures are required for ballot status.

What a sorry state of affairs! Even with all of its serious political shortcomings, with which every *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* reader is quite familiar, the SWP remains the best alternative for working people in the 1988 election. But what a weak alternative it is! What is needed in this election is a socialist alternative which inspires and excites working people, which generates discussion, debate, and action around the issues which are important to working people. The SWP campaign does not fill the bill. The SWP "Action Program," sold for a dollar and not even presented as the Warren-Mickells election platform, can better be described

as an "Inaction Program," with many dire predictions of things which will happen and few ideas about what to do now (see *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* No. 55).

Revolutionists can feel no enthusiasm for this campaign, nor can we convey any to our co-workers.

In 1972 the Socialist Workers Party set out to run "the biggest socialist campaign since Eugene V. Debs," and to a great extent it succeeded. Had it attempted to take the same approach in 1988 the SWP could have made a big and important contribution toward the working class's making a permanent break with the Democrats and building its own political party. The SWP could have made organizational gains for itself and in the process helped to build all the struggles which oppressed people are waging throughout the United States. All these opportunities were missed in the 1988 election campaign. What revolutionary socialists have to put their mind to doing now is making sure that more opportunities are not missed in 1992. We need to use Dukakis's likely defeat to convince working people that it is time for labor to drop the losing strategy of supporting the Democratic Party. The formation of a labor party is labor's "next giant step," and the time to take it is now. ●

Marxist Theory, Revolutionary Program, and Socialist Action

Marxism's Lessons for Today, by Ann Robertson. San Francisco: Socialist Action, 1987. 24 pages. \$1.00.

Reviewed by Albert Harris

There are many small socialist groups in the United States which claim to represent a revolutionary socialist alternative to capitalist oppression. Of these, Socialist Action — with less than 200 members, a majority concentrated in San Francisco — is one of the better ones. Anyone reading its attractive monthly newspaper *Socialist Action* will see that its members are serious-minded activists who identify with and seek to popularize the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky; they are loyal to the traditions of American Trotskyism and to the Fourth International.

Recently Socialist Action has begun to produce, at a phenomenal rate, an expanding quantity of impressive looking pamphlets. To a large extent — for example, Paul Siegel's *Democracy in America: Fact and Fiction* and Asher Harer's *Toward a Socialist America* — these pamphlets consist of popularizations of basic socialist ideas for a general audience. Taken together, they represent the kind of effort which Bill Onasch carried off so capably in his introductory *Organizing for Socialism: The Fourth Internationalist Tendency — Who we are, What we stand for*. Some of the Socialist Action pamphlets, however, contain questionable interpretations — for example, Nat Weinstein's essay in *The Legacy of Malcolm X* and certain sections of Alan Benjamin's and Jeff Mackler's *Dynamics of the Nicaraguan Revolution*. So it's important for thoughtful socialists to avoid judging these works by their attractive covers, but to give careful consideration to their contents.

In *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* Socialist Action has come in for its share of criticism around what seems to us a sectarian analysis of Nicaraguan realities, a faulty perspective on how best to build an anti-intervention movement, and an arrogant approach regarding other Fourth International groups. The criticisms have been advanced because we take these comrades seriously and look forward to an eventual reunification with them and other Fourth Internationalist forces in the U.S. on the basis of political clarification, which can only be achieved through critical-minded discussion.

One of the greatest obstacles to such unity is the impatience of Socialist Action with the process of genuine programmatic clarification. Its attitude seems to be: Socialist Action already has the correct revolutionary program, so all revolutionaries should simply join Socialist Action; any disagreements with Socialist Action's positions simply represent disagreement with the revolutionary Marxist program.

Such an attitude makes it especially important for us to look carefully at Ann Robertson's pamphlet *Marxism's Les-*

sons for Today. As the title implies, here is a clear example of Socialist Action's understanding of the revolutionary Marxist program. Examining the pamphlet will help us evaluate Socialist Action's claims.

What Is Marxism?

Our own approach to revolutionary Marxism was articulated over 20 years ago by George Breitman. Of course, Breitman himself was simply restating the orientation of such people as Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Lenin, and Trotsky — but he restated it quite well, and it's worth quoting at length:

As a theory Marxism began with Marx, but it did not end with him. If it had, if Marxism was only what Marx discovered and formulated a century or more ago, it would have no claim whatever to being called scientific; it would be classified now as some kind of dogma or cult, and the world would have stopped debating about it long ago. Marx developed his theory and worked out some of its laws on the basis of the knowledge and conditions of his time. His theory would indeed be useless today if other thinkers, using his method, had not added to it and brought it up to date in the light of subsequent knowledge, different conditions and new experiences. . . .

While we recommend Marxism as the best theory now available and defend it against . . . attack, we know that no theory, not even the best, is perfect. That would mean knowing everything about a given situation, which is impossible. No theory automatically provides all the answers; that takes work. No one gains access to the answers merely by adopting a theory, or by saying I am a Marxist, or . . . any other ist.

Even the best theory in the world does not safeguard anyone or any movement against making mistakes and lagging behind changes in reality. The question is whether their theory enables them to learn from mistakes, correct them, and avoid repeating them. In this respect too, the Marxist record is superior to others.

Years of isolation and attack by backsliders and refugees from Marxism as well as by capitalist spokesmen, and the need to stand firm against them, have unfortunately tended to create the impression that Marxists are rigid people who think they know it all: "Here is a finished science with all the answers worked out, sit down and study it." But this is not the case, and mature Marxists do not think it is. (*Marxism and the Negro Struggle*, pp. 16, 39)

One of the many things missing from *Marxism's Lessons for Today* is any sense of this mature Marxism which Breitman sought to develop in his readers. "We don't have all the answers," Breitman insisted. "We think we have the method for finding them and we have no patent on that." He added that in seeking the answers and using the method "we urgently need and want the active collaboration and aid of those who have most to gain from revolution," even if they don't call themselves Marxists. This openness—the sense that we not only have something to teach but also have something to learn from others—is not seen by Ann Robertson as one of Marxism's lessons for today.

It could be argued that an author attempting to explain Marxism might get too involved in the exposition of its basic structure, methodology, and doctrines—dialectical materialism, historical materialism, the analysis of capitalism, the conception of socialism, the class-struggle program for the working class—to dwell on the fundamental point that Breitman saw as so essential. But sadly, Ann Robertson's pamphlet doesn't offer such an exposition of what Marxism is. She makes fleeting allusions to some of these components of what Rosa Luxemburg once referred to as "the titanic whole" of Marxism, but she chooses to grossly oversimplify by reducing her exposition to "the thesis of the political independence of the working class." There can be no argument that an essential element in the thinking of Marx (whom Robertson describes as "a 19th-century philosopher") is the belief that "only the working class can liberate itself." But to treat this as a philosophical principle to be buttressed with "as many premises as possible"—which is how the author herself describes her approach—distorts one's understanding of what Marxism is, what the method of Marxism consists of, and how readers of her pamphlet can develop themselves as mature Marxists. It would be unfortunate if readers come away with the impression that they are Marxists simply by hewing to the principle of working class political independence.

What Is History?

Engels once criticized well-meaning revolutionaries who utilized Marxist theory as an excuse for *not* studying history. Lenin found it necessary to make similar criticisms of some of his comrades in the Third International, and Trotsky did the same in regard to some militants of the Fourth International. It's all too easy to rummage through history to pull out various half-understood historical events (often garbled accounts of such events) to "illustrate" one or another abstract principle. Whenever one of us does this, hopefully a comrade will help to set the record straight and raise questions about our methodology.

Ann Robertson's use of history to illustrate her "thesis" requires such intervention. Thus, her discussion of the Chinese revolution simply gets the facts wrong. According to her account the bourgeois-nationalists in China under Chiang Kai-shek were engaged in a meek and halfhearted struggle against Japanese imperialist invasion in the 1920s, and the Chinese Communists, "at Stalin's prompting," joined Chiang Kai-shek's party "in order to help in the struggle for national liberation. The Chinese bourgeoisie turned on them and

slaughtered them. Why? Because the bourgeoisie understood better than the workers themselves that an armed revolutionary working class is far more threatening than a foreign imperialist power."

The correctness of the principle of working class political independence may be obscured, for some knowledgeable readers, by the fact that it is being "proved" with historical fantasy. The Chinese Communists were prompted to join with the bourgeois-led Kuomintang in the early 1920s not by Stalin but by Henrik Sneevliet with the support of Adolf Joffe—representatives of the Communist International and the Soviet Republic, respectively, who were on the scene. (Both of them were to become prominent members of the anti-Stalinist opposition led by Trotsky.) This was not Stalinist policy but Bolshevik policy. The controversy between Stalin and Trotsky on China arose afterward, concerning whether changes in the situation meant that the Communists should break with the Kuomintang. Stalin's refusal to believe that the time for the alliance had ended resulted in the slaughter that Robertson mentions. Another "minor" fact: the Japanese invasion took place *after* all of this, in the 1930s. The military target of the Nationalist-Communist alliance in the 1920s were the quasi-feudal warlords of northern China. When the Japanese invasion threatened the country, Trotsky favored a united front between Communists and bourgeois-nationalists—but without "mixing banners" (i.e., subordinating workers to capitalists).

It would be unfair to pillory Ann Robertson for these inaccuracies. Her admirable desire to help advance the socialist cause is clear on every page of this pamphlet. Socialist Action as an organization is responsible for the education of its cadres and for helping to correct misunderstandings which crop up in the work of its own educators.

The actual history of China does nothing to negate the Marxist principle which Socialist Action defends, but its garbled understanding of that history raises questions on how it applies the principle. If complex realities preclude a very simple application of the principle, will these comrades choose to pretend that the realities themselves are simpler than they really are? This could lead to sectarian irrelevance, not the working class victory that Socialist Action sincerely desires.

Getting the history straight is important for revolutionary Marxists, because history does not exist to provide illustrations for our theory. "Theory is grey, but ever green is the tree of life," Lenin insisted, quoting Goethe. History, the actual unfolding of human experience, the complex and vibrant realities—this is primary. Our theories and principles are attempts to make sense of this, to find patterns, to summarize lessons. If we oversimplify the reality, we miss the lessons and impoverish the theory, and this makes it impossible for us to put forward a genuinely Marxist program for the working class.

The temptation to flatten-out historical reality and use pieces of it selectively to create romantic illustrations of abstract principles is something which the author falls into while discussing the Russian Revolution. She quotes glowingly a woman worker who explained to N.K. Krupskaya after the Bolshevik insurrection: "None of us are working

today. We had a meeting yesterday evening, everyone was behind with her domestic work at home, so we voted to knock off today. We're the bosses now, you know." This is, Robertson implies, an illustration of how Russia was moving toward the goal of socialism under workers' control. Indeed the sentiment expressed by the woman worker illustrates the proletarian exuberance and aspirations of the time—and also the illusions. The growing disruption and disorganization of the economy quickly spiraled into chaos and collapse. Under the circumstances it was impossible to maintain the workplace democracy to which Robertson alludes. It became necessary to create greater centralized planning, industrial discipline, and productivity which precluded workers in a workplace being allowed to "knock off" a day to do other things. To comprehend the contradictions and immense difficulties of the situation one must have a grasp of central elements of Marxism—dialectics and the materialist conception of history—which Robertson neglects. Achieving socialism is far more difficult than she implies, because history is not a revolutionary heroine but, as Engels put it, a cruel goddess. Understanding the actual dynamics of history is a precondition for actually changing history.

Workers' Rule: Past, Present, Future

Robertson's pamphlet consists of a talk she gave at the 1986 Socialist Action Educational Conference plus three columns she wrote for *Socialist Action*, including one on the Paris Commune of 1871. This was the first example of what Marx and Engels viewed as "the dictatorship of the proletariat," which as Robertson points out was "the first genuine democracy in human history." Such a state is the cul-

mination of the strategic orientation of working class political independence and is a precondition for socialism. Robertson does justice to the Commune as an inspiring demonstration of proletarian rule, when the working class smashes the apparatus of the capitalist state and replaces it with its own. She sketches some of the historical background and offers details on what the Commune accomplished before being brutally suppressed by the forces of capitalist reaction.

Yet she blurs an important point: although a few abandoned factories were taken over by the workers and some producer cooperatives were established, the Commune refrained from abolishing capitalist enterprise as a whole and from replacing it with a socialized, planned economy. Had Robertson allowed herself to point this out, she would have thrown into question Socialist Action's refusal to recognize that "the dictatorship of the proletariat" has been established in Nicaragua. The reason for this refusal, after all, is precisely the fact that the Sandinistas maintain a "mixed economy," refraining from totally replacing capitalist enterprise with state-owned enterprises (although the process has advanced much further in Nicaragua of 1988 than was the case in Paris of 1871).

If one fails to take history seriously, one is also failing to take theory seriously. The inevitable result is political disorientation. This can only be overcome by giving more patient attention to questions of programmatic clarification than the comrades of Socialist Action have demonstrated so far. Hopefully they will join us and others in the Fourth International in this process—which will contribute to the strengthening of the revolutionary socialist movement as a whole, and to the eventual triumph of the working class. ●

Lenin notes (Continued from page 28)

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- Please note: The following authors' names were misspelled in the text (parts 1 and 2) and should read as above, Eva Broido, Solomon Schwarz.

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