

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

No. 59
January 1989
\$3.00

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Who We Are

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

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

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

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

BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism, No. 59, January 1989

Closing date December 5, 1988.

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

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The Anti-Abortion Offensive And How Women Can Combat It

by Mary Scully

Since the 1973 Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, anti-abortionists have been on a sustained and relentless offensive to overturn that decision and make abortion a crime again. They have left no stone unturned. The anti-abortion campaign is distinguished by its persistence and thoroughness, and how systematically thought out it has been. At this point it has effectively eliminated abortion rights for thousands of women. But that effectiveness is not due only to vigilance and good strategy. More accurately, it can be attributed to the immense resources of their most powerful allies—the U.S. government, the Catholic Church, and fundamentalist Christian outfits—combined with a political default on the part of the leadership of the U.S. women's movement.

Attacks on Abortion Clinics

In this campaign anti-abortionists have employed many tactics, but the most notorious and well publicized is clinic violence. This is the method evidently preferred by some fundamentalist Christians. In October 1986, according to the Reverend Randall Terry, God spoke to him and asked him to be the "apostle to the unborn." As the righteous reverend interpreted the message, his was to be an apostleship of terror against abortion clinics. He launched his Christian crusade by forming Operation Rescue, which describes itself appropriately as the "Green Berets of the pro-life movement." Now claiming 6,000 members nationally, Operation Rescue has laid siege (as they term it) to abortion clinics in cities across the U.S. from New York to San Francisco. Their most notorious "apostolic" campaigns were in October of last year when they held a four-day "Siege of Atlanta" abortion clinics, followed a few weeks later by a day of nationally coordinated clinic blockades in 32 cities.

The method of Operation Rescue when they lay siege to a clinic is not only to pray and sing hymns, but to harass and intimidate clinic workers and clients, and block entrance to

the facilities. They engage in what they term "sidewalk counseling," displaying pictures of bloody fetuses and badgering women not to "murder" their "babies." Their intention is to disrupt and stop abortion services—or, as they express it, to "intervene between the killer and the innocent victim at the mills"—and they have, in fact, succeeded in at least temporarily shutting down several facilities.

Operation Rescue's rampage may be well publicized, but clinic violence and terrorism is not a new tactic employed by the anti-abortion cause. Since 1977 the National Abortion Federation has been tracking such activity. Between 1977 and 1987 they report 70 arsons and bombings, 34 attempted arsons and bombings, 213 bomb threats (where clinic evacuation must be considered), 216 clinic invasions, 41 assaults and batteries, 2 kidnappings, 191 instances of vandalism, 143 clinics beset by hate mail and harassing phone calls—including 61 death threats—and 624 clinics affected by picketing and blockades.

Anti-abortionists publicly purport to model themselves on the protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and while the comparison is vile it does reveal their intention to build a real movement opposing abortion—or at least create the impression of a groundswell of popular opposition. They employ the method of terrorism, however, because they do not in fact have mass support. During their well-publicized "Siege of Atlanta" they promised 3,000 protesters, but mustered only about 700; on their national day of blockades they rallied from a dozen to several hundred in different cities, and were met in many places by larger contingents of pro-choice counterdemonstrators.

Legal Assault

As threatening as this violence is, clinic terrorism is only one of many tactics used by anti-abortionists. The most enduring challenges to abortion are primarily in the legal arena, rather than the paramilitary.

The persistent, step-by-step, state-by-state legal approach of the anti-abortionists has resulted in cutting off abortion rights for thousands of women—primarily poor women and minors. It is no accident that these women were the initial targets, since they are the least able to defend themselves.

As early as 1976, the infamous Hyde amendment was passed in Congress cutting off federal Medicaid funds for abortion except in cases of rape, incest, or when a woman's life was in danger. In 1981, funding was eliminated even for pregnancies resulting from sexual crimes. Current law per-

Plans Announced for April 9

The National Organization for Women has announced plans to hold mobilizations next April 9 on both the East and West Coasts. The actions will protest attacks on abortion rights and raise other issues of concern to the women's movement. Watch the pages of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* for additional coverage.

mits federal Medicaid financing only when a woman's life is endangered. Similar restrictions have been attempted on military and federal employee health insurance coverage.

Medicaid is a joint federal-state program to fund medical care for welfare recipients. Anti-abortionists went after the state side of Medicaid funding on a state-by-state basis, through state legislatures and ballot referenda. Since 1978 they have attempted 23 times to restrict or outlaw abortion through a ballot referendum and have been defeated 21 times. Failing to win a popular mandate to stop Medicaid funding, they found willing allies in the state legislatures. Today only 13 states provide Medicaid funding for abortions, with four of those states doing so only under court order. When challenged by the pro-choice forces, these cutoffs have all been sustained by the U.S. Supreme Court. The estimate is that 1.5 million women are denied abortion annually as a result of these funding restrictions.

Women unable to afford private health care are also the primary targets of recent federal regulations issued by the Reagan administration for federally funded family planning agencies. Under the Family Planning Act of 1970, the federal government makes grants to health care facilities to provide family planning services. Under that law (passed before *Roe vs. Wade*) funds cannot be used to perform abortions. Under the proposed guidelines, funded agencies would also be forbidden to even *inform* women about abortion. The new regulations were legally challenged by Planned Parenthood and other agencies almost as soon as they were issued, and the government was temporarily blocked by court injunction from implementing them. The legal battles over these guidelines have just begun. Nevertheless, in early 1989, the government will begin implementing them in the several states not covered by the court injunctions.

The second group of women whose abortion rights have been seriously abridged has been teenagers. Out of the 1.5 million abortions performed annually in the U.S., at least one-third of the women involved are minors. In 1976 a Supreme Court decision struck down parental consent laws, but since 1981 the court has upheld state laws requiring teenaged women to obtain parental consent for abortion. The last time this issue was reviewed (1987) the court was evenly divided (4-4). Currently 25 states have laws requiring parental consent, although only 10 states enforce them. Recently two federal courts issued contradictory judgments on the constitutionality of parental consent restrictions, and this means it will once again be reviewed by the Supreme Court.

What emerges from a review of the legal record is that the anti-abortionists do not accept defeat; they barrage the courts at all levels with parental consent suits in the hope of making some advances. Their tenacious and incessant activity has paid off, as the inconsistent court decisions show.

The most insidious court actions against abortion rights have been brought by men attempting to halt abortion by claiming "fathers' rights." At least eleven such suits have been brought, and the plaintiffs include boyfriends, husbands, and estranged husbands. These spurious claims have not emerged spontaneously but appear to be an orchestrated campaign by anti-abortion forces who seek out and finance these cases. In the most prominent suit, the lawyer repre-

senting the father is a general counsel for the National Right to Life Committee.

One of the results of these suits is to delay abortion, which leads to medical complications for the woman. Here again the anti-abortionists have barraged the courts in an attempt to gain some ground. In the case of "fathers' rights," however, they have been less successful than in that of parental rights. In 1976 the Supreme Court struck down state laws giving the father the right to prevent abortion; in November 1988 it once again sustained that decision in two separate lawsuits.

Anti-abortionists have not only used the courts, but have doggedly pursued their cause in the state legislatures and the U.S. Congress. From 1977 through September 1986 the U.S. Congress alone dealt with 453 abortion bills, amendments, riders, and procedural motions. One of the most cynical methods employed by legislators is to piggy-back anti-abortion provisions as riders onto legislation dealing with civil rights or women's rights.

Ruling Class Attack

An overall review of the status of abortion rights in this country shows clearly how the U.S. government, through its executive, legislative, and judicial bodies, intervenes repeatedly and openly not to enforce *Roe vs. Wade* but to reverse it. Moreover, while Operation Rescue boasts that since its formation 9,000 have been arrested, for the most part the police and courts allow them to rampage with impunity. Those arrested are, in the majority, let off with small fines.

When we compare the massive popular support for abortion rights (8 out of 10 Americans in 1986) with the successes of the anti-abortion offensive, it seems obvious that the real driving force behind the anti-abortion campaign is not the relatively small core of religious and right-wing activist groups. The success of the movement can only be explained if it is backed by a major component of the U.S. ruling class.

The controversy surrounding the abortion-inducing drug RU 486 is quite telling in this regard. Over the past year there have been several reports in the press about RU 486, which is sold in France, China, and England. According to these reports, anti-abortionists have successfully blocked sale of the drug in the U.S.—by threatening to boycott drug companies if they distribute it. In October 1988, a French company withdrew the abortion pill from the French market as a result of pressure primarily from the American anti-abortion movement. (Two days later the French health minister ordered the drug company to resume distribution, citing the French law legalizing abortion.) It is obvious why anti-abortionists would oppose the sale of this pill; what is not so clear is how a movement with so little popular support in the U.S. can wield such clout not only here but internationally. That can be understood only if the real political forces behind the anti-abortion campaign are more substantial than they appear to be on the surface.

There is today considerable speculation that *Roe vs. Wade* will be overturned. The concern is justified. Operation Rescue has played no small part in alerting women to the dangers

(Continued on page 5)

Cleveland Anti-Intervention Conference Held

by Steve Bloom

On November 12, in Cleveland, Ohio, around 150 people met to discuss the question: "Where does the movement to end U.S. intervention in Central America go from here?" The one-day conference was organized by the Central America Coalition of Northeast Ohio and was billed as a regional event, though invitations were sent to anti-intervention groups in other parts of the country inviting them to participate. Those in attendance were primarily veteran activists of the movement.

The importance of this conference lies in the question which it posed and the broad range of speakers from different points of view that were brought together. In the current situation of the Central America movement, which is characterized by dozens of different groups each working on its own particular projects, it is rare for there to be an opportunity to discuss the broad strategic questions that the movement faces. The Cleveland conference should be seen as the beginning of a process that, to be most effective, should be broadened out to include even more activists in many other parts of the country.

The morning session was devoted to hearing reports on the present situation in the various Central American countries, while the afternoon plenary discussed the big problem of overall perspectives for the movement. There were also workshops on labor, humanitarian aid, solidarity networks, and campus activity. The panelists for the afternoon session were Maureen E. Fiedler, codirector of Quest for Peace and the Quixote Center; James Lafferty, East Coast regional

coordinator for the Emergency National Council Against U.S. Intervention in Central America; Marilyn Lerch, co-chair Washington D.C. Area Labor Committee on Central America and the Caribbean; Angela Sanbrano, executive director of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES); Louise Sandercock, Witness for Peace; and Sylvia Sherman, co-coordinator of the Nicaragua Network. There was also extensive opportunity for participation from the audience.

It had been previously decided that the conference would not try to reach any decisions. Its purpose was to allow a friendly exchange of views, in a nonconfrontational atmosphere, and it succeeded in this despite the obvious differences in perspective that were represented. There was a definite trend in the discussion, however, with many of the speakers from the floor favoring the idea of organizing the kinds of mass demonstrations which can unite the movement. While all recognized the value of having many different projects carried out by a broad diversity of groups, the majority also strongly favored a renewed emphasis on coalition efforts that could show the united strength of opposition to U.S. policies in Central America. In one way or another, each of the speakers responded to these sentiments by affirming that, at least at times, such coalition efforts around united mass demonstrations are valuable and necessary.

The talk given by James Lafferty as one of the initial panelists focused on this problem. It appears below. ●

How Can We End U.S. Intervention in Central America?

by James Lafferty

James Lafferty is East Coast regional coordinator for the Emergency National Council Against U.S. Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean. This talk was given at the November 12 anti-intervention conference in Cleveland, Ohio.

During the past 8-10 years, over 1,000 different groups have been established throughout this nation to oppose the U.S. government's war against the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean. Tens of thousands of dedicated activists have worked hard and creatively to end U.S. intervention in the region. But, despite all of these groups, and all of the hard work they have done, and some partial successes, the war continues. This is the reality we must face today. Therefore, the question we must now ask ourselves is this:

What can our movement do to finally end U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean?

In my opinion the single most important thing that we could all do now is to unite in establishing a national coalition of all groups that oppose U.S. policies in Central America. *The coalition that I envision would have one function: to organize and coordinate periodic mass mobilizations against the war.*

Presently, these 1,000-plus groups employ many different tactics in their efforts to end the war. Some lobby Congress; some engage in acts of civil disobedience; some hold picket lines; and some send material aid to our sisters and brothers in Central America; to name but a few of the programs of action pursued. Now, we don't need a national coalition to carry out a material aid campaign. Quest for Peace and other groups are doing a great job of that right now. Nor do we need a national coalition to organize solidarity actions which are handled so well by the various solidarity groups. But there is one tactic, which is in my opinion critical to the success of our movement, that simply cannot be carried out by any one organization: the mobilization of tens of thousands of our nation's people in the streets demanding an immediate end to the U.S. war of aggression against the peoples of Central America/the Caribbean.

I believe that such mobilizations—like the one that an ad hoc coalition built on April 25, 1987—are the single most effective tactic that our movement can periodically engage in to force an end to U.S. intervention. Let me explain why I believe this to be true.

First, such mobilizations provide our entire movement with an opportunity to do grass-roots organizing for many months leading up to the mobilization. During this time we have the opportunity to speak to labor groups, church groups, students, etc., on why U.S. policy in Central America must be opposed. In short, such mobilizations give us a wonderful opportunity to take our case to the people of this nation. And as we do so, we not only build attendance at the demonstration, we also recruit new members for our various organizations for the ongoing work of all groups between these national mobilizations.

Second, a nationally coordinated mobilization gives us a much needed opportunity to broaden the base of support for our movement. It gives us the chance to relate the issue of the war to the other burning social issues in our land, be it the issue of racism, or housing, or other pressing social concerns. In short, these mass mobilizations are the most effective way for us to reach out to other powerful constituencies in this country. At the rally, that is central to these mobilizations, speakers from the labor movement, the women's movement, the racial justice movement, and the like, all have a chance to speak out against the war from the perspective of their constituency. Such broadly representative rallies show the depth and breadth of our movement. They show that we really do speak for the majority of the people in this nation who, as all public opinion polls show, oppose U.S. policy in the region.

Third, we learned during the movement against the war in Vietnam that these mass marches and rallies are indeed the most effective way to influence U.S. government policy. The Pentagon Papers disclose that on one occasion, when President Johnson was being counseled by his advisors to bomb the dikes in North Vietnam, he called his advisors into the oval office and said: "Can any of you whiz-kids tell me how, if I follow your advice, I can protect myself against the 500,000 angry Americans who will march on the White House if I do what you suggest?"

And, former president Nixon's memoirs are just as revealing as to the effectiveness of mass action. Remember, Nixon

said he had a "secret plan" to end the Vietnam war. It turns out that his plan was to issue an ultimatum to the Vietnamese to capitulate by November 1, 1969, and if they did not to then try with nuclear weapons to bomb them back into the Dark Ages. But, in his memoirs, Nixon said of his plan: "Two weeks before the ultimatum deadline a half million antiwar protesters filled the streets of Washington D.C. and similar demonstrations were planned for the following month. *The very people who said they were against the war prevented me from carrying out my plan to end the war.*"

Now, Johnson and Nixon were hardly "men of peace"! But the combination of Vietnamese victories on the battlefield and the mobilization of millions of people in the streets of this country ultimately made it impossible for them to continue their dirty war. In short, we learned during the Vietnam war, and must not forget now, that the most important question our movement must always be asking itself is not who is sitting in the White House or in the Congress but who is marching in the streets of our nation!

As we heard this morning, the situation in Central America, in general, and in Nicaragua and El Salvador, in particular, grows more dangerous daily. In the immediate period ahead there is not only the danger of escalating U.S. intervention, but also the threat that the U.S. government will try to block private hurricane relief money being sent to Nicaragua. What we need now is a united, national demonstration demanding, "No U.S. Interference with Relief Aid to Nicaragua!"—"No U.S. Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean!"

But, as things now stand, who will call and organize such a demonstration? No one group, or cluster of groups, can do this on their own. Only a national coalition—like the ad hoc coalition that built April 25, 1987—can do this. This is why we must act—and act now—to put together the national coalition that these times demand!

How is such a national coalition to be put together? I believe that the present national organizations working against the war are the natural groups to initiate this process. I believe that if these groups were to issue a call for a conference or national meeting for this purpose their initiative would be warmly applauded by rank-and-file activists all across this land.

Who would be the members of this national coalition? I believe this coalition must be open to every national and local group that shares our goal of ending U.S. intervention in Central America/the Caribbean.

How would this national coalition be structured and run? I believe that it must be organized according to strict democratic principles. All groups who join must be given voice and vote in the decisions made by the coalition. This includes local as well as national groups. Indeed, local groups are truly the "foot soldiers" of our movement. They would be the "life blood" of any such coalition. Many of you may remember that back in 1985, when the demonstration called by the April Actions Coalition for April 20th was stalled, it was the local coalitions who, after being given voice and vote in the national coalition, did the work that finally made that demonstration a success.

Let me summarize: I am *not* suggesting that any group active today should abandon its own program of work. I am *not*

saying that our movement should only organize mass marches and rallies.

But I *am* saying that periodically held massive mobilizations are the most powerful weapon in our arsenal of tactics; that such mobilizations are the only way to involve the broad array of forces that our movement must enlist if we are to eventually prevail in this struggle; that only in this way can we finally move from our present stage where hundreds of individual groups are each "doing their own thing," to the stage where we can claim to be a truly united *national movement*. And I *am* saying that only through the creation of a national coalition can we ever hope to mount the kind of nationally coordinated mobilizations that can capture the imagination and allegiance of the majority of people in this nation who share our opposition to the deepening U.S. war in Central America/the Caribbean.

Abortion (Continued from page 2)

facing legal abortion. Mainly in response to the anti-abortionist rampage, local pro-choice coalitions have been formed or reactivated. They not only organize "escort services" to walk women through the gauntlet of abuse at clinics, but also counterdemonstrations at the sites of the anti-abortionists' disruptions. And they have been successful in a few places in driving away the anti-abortionists.

The result of the presidential elections have also alarmed many leaders of the pro-choice movement. All of the ruling class's attacks on reproductive freedom have been attributed by this conservative feminist leadership to "Reaganism" and the Republican administration. They point to the fact that during his eight-year tenure, all of Reagan's appointments to the Supreme Court have been anti-abortion (in particular Bork). Moreover, Reagan's judicial appointments have affected not only the Supreme Court but also the entire federal court system. As a result, this wing of the women's movement hitched its fortunes to a change in administrations. But the Republicans remain in office. And in November the Reagan administration filed a brief with the Supreme Court urging them to hear a Missouri case attempting to reinstate a 1986 state law declaring the fetus a human person. This would mean a reconsideration of *Roe vs. Wade*.

The fundamental problem is the current strategic conception of those women's groups like the National Organization for Women (NOW) that proposes to rely primarily on "friends" in Congress and the courts. This is the same approach that doomed the campaign to win the Equal Rights Amendment—that of lobbying, electoral activity within the Democratic Party, and legal suits. The problem is that the pro-choice movement has been put in a defensive position, reacting to attacks against it, rather than being on the offensive to defend and extend abortion and other women's rights.

It is necessary to give attention to court struggles on this issue, but we can't afford to make this our exclusive approach—as some feminists have mistakenly argued. The anti-abortion movement has so many powerful allies and resources at its disposal for fighting on that front. The pro-choice movement has something else which we must use to our advantage—overwhelming majority support. Thus far the leadership of our movement has failed to consistently

Finally, this new national coalition must be an ongoing coalition. After all, the war in Central America is certainly "ongoing." If we are serious about ending the U.S. government's war of aggression in Central America, we cannot think in terms of a coalition for only one mobilization. Rather, we must think in terms of creating an ongoing coalition that has the determination and staying power to see our struggle through to the end—to the day when we can finally say that U.S. intervention has ended and our sisters and brothers in Central America/the Caribbean are at last free to determine their own destiny. For their sake and for the sake of our movement, I urge us to get about the business of putting such a united coalition together immediately!

Thank you for inviting me to share my thoughts with you today and for the chance to participate in this vital discussion. ●

draw on this political strength by building a visible mass movement to defend and extend abortion rights. Yet that is the only possible power that can defeat the anti-abortion movement and its powerful allies.

It is common for many activists to attribute the lack of a real movement today to the complacency of young women: "They don't remember what it was like before *Roe vs. Wade*." But evidence does not support that. In March 1986 when NOW called actions in Washington D.C. and Los Angeles to defend abortion nearly 170,000 people showed up, making it the largest women's rights demonstration ever held in this country. The participation of young women was predominant. In fact, most of the women were also young at the *pro-choice* action in Boston on October 29 of this year. The problem is not the complacency of young women, but the indifference and opposition of the feminist leadership to building a mass movement to defend abortion.

Build April 9

NOW has once again called a national action in Washington D.C. for April 9 of this year to defend abortion rights. This date could become the start of a change in the traditional strategy of relying exclusively on the Democratic Party—but only if it is seen as something more than a one-shot mobilization.

We must work to make April 9 the launching pad for an ongoing series of actions in the streets and keep up the pressure through other visible protests (speakouts, teach-ins, educationals, etc.) representing the majority sentiment in this country in favor of a woman's right to choose. April 9 has the potential to be even larger than the 1986 march, which would deal a powerful blow to the anti-abortion cause. If we don't stop there, but continue to build an even more broadly based and more active movement, we will get our message across in the most effective possible manner.

April 9 can educate thousands of women and draw them into activity in defense of their own rights. Everything should be done to publicize and help build this action. The right to abortion is in jeopardy and only a visible mass movement in the streets of cities all across the U.S. can save it. ●

The Situation in the Philippines

Interview with Zenaida Uy

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism correspondent Sarah Lovell obtained the following interview with Professor Zenaida Uy on October 19, 1988. Uy is secretary general of BAYAN, an umbrella coalition of labor and other mass organizations in the Philippines. The previous secretary general of BAYAN, Lean Alejandro, was assassinated by right-wing vigilantes in 1987. Uy began a tour of the United States in September sponsored by the Campaign to End U.S. Intervention in the Philippines and the Alliance for Philippine Concerns. She has spoken all around the country at public forums, on campuses, and at other events.

BIDOM: Can you tell us something about yourself and about your organization, BAYAN?

Uy: Yes, thank you. I am a mother of six children, the eldest is 22 and the youngest is 6 years old. I teach sociology and anthropology in the University of San Carlos in Cebu City. But this year I am on leave because I am working full time as secretary general of BAYAN. BAYAN is the largest federation of organizations — sectoral and territorial organizations, and individual persons — in the Philippines, united for a common cause which is to make Philippine society more humane, truly just, and more progressive.

BIDOM: How do most workers and peasants in the Philippines view the Aquino government today and how have their views changed since the revolution in 1986?

Uy: Well, I wish to impress upon you that when we ousted the dictator Marcos and we placed Corazon Aquino in power, we built up great hopes that the basic problems of the people would be addressed and that there would be some concrete change in the lives of the people, especially among the basic masses. But then, although we opted for a position of political collaboration in the early months of the Aquino government, the next thing we knew, the promises she made during the elections and the claims of what her government would do were in stark contrast to the actual performance of her government. This clearly showed that she and her government were incapable of delivering on the basic promises made. There has been a failure to make swift and decisive reforms in the country.

BAYAN, as a federation of territorial and sectoral organizations, includes the organized workers and the organized farmers in my country. I am referring to the militant workers' union, the nationalist and militant workers' union, the KMU, and the militant peasants' organization, the KMP. These organizations also had great hope in the new government to address basic demands of the workers and the peasants. But then they realized that when the workers continued to exert their right to organize and their right to go on strike — as the highest and ultimate expression of their demands — they were still confronted with the force of the military. This is the same as what had been done to them during the time of Marcos.

So, for instance, I wish to call your attention to what happened to the farmers in January 1987 when they marched to the Mendiola Bridge near the home of the president, Malacanang Palace. They had a very basic demand which

was land, land ownership. The farmers knew that the central issue of the struggle is land ownership. They knew that seven out of ten farmers are landless, and that a few families own and control the land in the country. But when they marched they were simply met with the full force of the marines, instantaneously killing 18 young farmers. And so the farmers, especially now after 30 months of power for the Cory Aquino regime, realize that their hope for ownership of land will never be realized under this government.

So they have resorted to what they call peasant initiatives as the basis of our focus for authentic land reform, which will include the following steps:

- We concentrate on lands which are idle, lands which are owned by government. We strongly suggest that these lands which will remain idle as long as they are owned by government be redistributed to the landless farmers for free.
- There are lands which were acquired by Marcos, the deposed dictator, and his cronies as well, through illegal and immoral activities. We insist that these lands, because they were immorally procured, also be given to landless farmers for free.
- There are lands which are foreclosed by government banks which are just lying idle. We strongly propose that these lands also be redistributed to the farmers free of charge.
- And finally, since there are vast tracks of lands — hundreds and thousands of acres — owned by just a few families, we strongly propose that the government negotiate with the owners and purchase a good proportion of it. Enough acreage should be left for their families and their children to own, but we insist that the rest of this private land should be purchased by government at the current market price, and then turned over to the farmers who need it for free.

Meanwhile, the big landowners may be motivated to open business concerns to generate employment. That is the whole approach of the KMP and BAYAN as far as an authentic land reform program is concerned.

But we do not end with simple redistribution. We insist that redistribution is not enough. There should be a complete financial and technical assistance program established to help the farmer who receives land to become productive, self-reliant, and self-sufficient. For once he should have an adequate surplus product from his land so that he can pur-

chase the goods which are produced by the working sector, by the working class. We see a relationship between the power of the farmers and the power of the workers. By becoming self-sufficient and self-reliant, the goods produced by the working class will now be affordable to the farmers.

The flip side of an authentic land reform program is what we call the nationalist industrialization program, initiated by the workers. What does this mean? Realizing that the country's economy is basically dominated by foreign big business, we strongly insist that the time has come for us to exert our right to a nationalist industrialization program. The country is rich with the resources needed for industrialization. We have the labor power — skilled, dedicated, persistent, patient labor power. And finally we have an educated layer of the population which could possibly help with this development.

Here is what we intend to do: First we look into basic industries which are now in the hands of foreign big business. We strongly propose that about 11 or 12 basic industries be owned and run by the government. Why? Because first and foremost these enterprises should be run on the principle of service to the people rather than as a source of profit. What are they? The drug industry, chemicals, communications, transportation, food processing, garment manufacturing, light and water. These are examples; there are others — about 11 or 12 only. We believe that these should be owned and run by government (but should include at the same time built-in mechanisms to control corruption). For example, if light and water become a concern of government, a service and not a basic source of profit, it will have affordable rates.

In addition to the basic industries which would be owned and run by government, we propose very strongly the formation and development of more cooperatives — farmers' cooperatives, workers' cooperatives, credit cooperatives, consumers' cooperatives, and the like. We know of countries which have been successful along these lines. There is no reason why the Philippines cannot adopt these ideas. There are already some cooperatives in place, but we still insist that this approach be studied very thoroughly and promoted by the people.

Thirdly, there are private Filipinos whose skills need to be tapped to come up with what we call the development of a Filipino entrepreneur class. This private business sector should be promoted. And finally, knowing that we are part of a global village, there are foreign investors who should be welcomed — so long as the Filipino people control their overall activity.

What I'm trying to say is very self-evident. If we are to have a 60 percent ownership in an industry in favor of the Filipinos, then let this be in writing and let it be implemented to the letter. Let's not just have a simple paper title — 60 percent on paper but not in practice. Let us have a mixed economy, and only then will the workers be able to achieve just wages.

These are the two sides of our approach to the economic betterment of the country. After 30 months of Aquino's presidency, we in BAYAN have definitely reached a conclusion. After all the antipeople, antipoor activities of the government we now believe that we can have no more il-

lusions about the ability of the present government of Corazon Aquino to deliver basic change. It has become instead antipeople, antipoor, and pro-U.S.

BIDOM: Can you tell us how the guerrilla forces, the New People's Army, have fared since the breakdown of the ceasefire with the army? Are they gaining ground, or has the government been able to consolidate its position?

Uy: This is really an interesting question. According to the reports from the military itself, as they appear in the newspapers in my country, General Fidel Ramos insists that armed resistance has grown. At the same time, even though it is growing, things are still under control and they even have a timetable for the final destruction of the armed resistance — a maximum of three years.

But then the former defense minister and now senator Juan Ponce Enrile says, on the contrary, that the military is having a difficult time. So we read in the papers that the New People's Army troops are getting killed and their hideouts are being discovered, which is open to question because no less than the former defense minister says the opposite.

BIDOM: You don't know which of these views represents the facts and which is disinformation intended to influence public opinion?

Uy: It is stated in the papers that the NPA can now strike at will. So even if in fact there is success by the government in killing the guerrillas we know that there is a running war in the countryside. The NPA can strike at will and some experts say that there is an indication of organizational capabilities. But there are others who think that perhaps, by itself, the armed resistance will just slowly fade away.

I want to look at the whole situation from a very objective viewpoint. If we look at the conditions which exist in Philippine society now, there is continuing impoverishment of the people, injustice, a double standard of morality — one kind for the rich and another for the poor. There is escalating corruption, there is grim and gruesome repression, there is a frightening escalation of human rights' violations. The very poor people — landless peasants, underpaid workers, dislocated urban slum dwellers, marginalized indigenous peoples, underpaid professionals — are the very victims now of this wave of human rights' violations. So if you look at the conditions, there is nothing discernible in the objective situation that has changed. The conditions which led to the development of the armed resistance remain.

If we could say that conditions are much better, the armed resistance would simply have to terminate its activities. But the contrary is true. As the democratic space has closed down, become more and more constricted, it's pushing people to the wall. Their options, which would exist if the democratic space were wider, are now reduced and reduced again. Some will choose, as their last options, to defend themselves and their lives through armed resistance. And so, while General Ramos says that things are under control, that is exactly what was said by Marcos in his time.

BIDOM: You say that the workers and the farmers are being victimized by the government and vigilante groups. It certainly seems that there is need for self-defense.

Uy: Yes this is true. But still I wish to impress upon you that we in BAYAN will continue pushing for a peaceful, non-armed, but militant approach to change. It is particularly sad—and this is also one of our concerns—that the very people who have been victimized under the Aquino regime, who have been assassinated, abducted, or salvaged, just killed, are men and women who have opted for a peaceful approach to change. Our previous secretary general, Lean Alejandro, was a young man and father of a seven-year-old. He was a man of peace. He believed in protest, he believed in pressure politics, and he was assassinated within the gates of our office one afternoon last year, on September 19.

While we in BAYAN deeply respect those who opt for armed resistance, we will continue to exert our legality and we will continue pushing our right to organize and to express the people's views in favor of a change. This is guaranteed by the constitution for the first time in our history. We have a provision which states that legitimate people's organizations can be promoted and will be protected. These rights are what we have to exert.

BIDOM: What is your attitude towards the accord which was recently announced concerning the U.S. military bases in the Philippines, and what is your attitude toward the U.S. bases themselves?

Uy: Let me say that we in BAYAN have long articulated our misgivings about the position of the foreign secretary Raul Manglapus, which is simply in favor of amending the original mercenary approach to the whole issue of the bases. We consider the bases to be the tombstone of our lost sovereignty. We strongly propose that steps be taken for the eventual termination of this agreement. That would be the proper course.

It is very painful that the focus of attention around the military bases' review has been the proposed rent increase for the next two years. Of course this could be maximized to the benefit of those who would like the bases to stay, but we in BAYAN have long articulated our contrary position.

There are half-truths and lies that must be told to our people to justify the bases. First, the U.S. claims that the bases are necessary to protect the Philippines. Historically there is no proof of that. American soldiers were there when the Japanese attacked and they could not help us.

Number two, they claim that the military bases in the country are needed for the maintenance of peace in the region. This is also not substantiated historically. As early as 1900 we have, of course, data showing that the military bases in my country were used as launching pads for military intervention in the Pacific—in the Boxer Rebellion in China, in Siberia, in Cambodia, in Korea, in Vietnam. So we see that the U.S. presence in my country has been used to make war and for aggression, rather than for peaceful purposes.

Then, if you look at the social and moral cost of the bases, we have data showing that the number of prostitutes and child prostitutes is increasing. The youngest child registered to be a prostitute is seven. They have even resorted to putting prostitutes in a boxing ring, and of course we know that the number of children born out of wedlock and with American paternity is increasing. We also know that there is

a confirmed growing number of AIDS victims. Though some of this may be related to foreign tourists, a good many of these social ills are directly caused by the presence of foreign military servicemen.

So we in BAYAN have long insisted on the repudiation of the bases, the termination of the agreement by 1991, and the conversion of the bases for more peaceful uses. For example, Clark Air Base could be converted to a huge international airport with shopping and an industrial or commercial complex. Subic Bay Naval Station can be converted to a huge shipbuilding complex—for repairs, maintenance, etc. The only other such complex in the region is in Singapore. Subic is one of the best ship-landing marine areas and it could be maximized for productive purposes. We are very sad that instead of pursuing this line, the focus of the negotiations was for an increase of the financial rent. That is mercenary and criminal.

BIDOM: Has intervention by the United States declined from the time of Marcos, or does it continue as before, or has it grown?

Uy: Well, let me just cite an example. We have experienced five coup attempts since Aquino came to power. The most serious involved Colonel Gregorio Honasan. We have data showing that your very own American military expert, Colonel Victor Raphael, was very visible in the area where the forces of Honasan organized. He was found giving direct orders to the Philippine armed forces not to shoot members of Honasan's group which was staging the coup, and when the investigations were started he was simply sent out of the country.

We have data showing that there is an increase in CIA personnel and an increase in the CIA budget for the Philippines. That is of course not accidental. We see a growing number of American statesmen visiting the country. This is of course not accidental.

There has been dislocation suffered by the mass movement, and we in BAYAN suffered because of the killings directed against our leaders and members. And of course there was the setback which immediately resulted from the electoral boycott error. And yet despite this, after a year we experienced a resurgence of the people's organizations, which indicates that more and more people realize that if they act individually they will just beat their heads against a stonewall. The lessons of the past year, and of the years under the Marcos regime, accentuate the lesson which must always be kept in mind: only a people united, organizationally pursuing much needed structural changes in the system, can really succeed in transforming society.

And so we witnessed a resurgence of people's organizations in their sectors and in their territories—more activities, more marches, more protests, and of course the coalitions of different groups based on particular issues. This is the picture for the year 1988. For example there are groups of different political persuasions now united on the issue of the foreign debt. They know that the foreign debt service must be reduced to 10 percent instead of 40 percent. They know that there should be selective repudiation of the foreign debt. They know that somehow the possibility of a moratorium

must be studied. Now there are groups all over the land that are united on the issue of the foreign debt. They may have differences on other matters, but they are united on that.

There is another coalition, the antibases coalition. It consists of groups that may not be united on the question of the foreign debt but are united on the bases. And then there is a group that may not agree on the bases and may not agree on the debt, but is united on the issue of civil liberties. This is the National Movement for Civil Liberties. And then there are groups of farmers that may not be united on the issue of the bases or the issue of the foreign debt but are united on the issue of land. And so there is the Congress for People's Agrarian Reform. These things indicate that more and more people know the meaning of collective efforts, pushing and pushing for basic reforms.

BIDOM: *I understand that BAYAN is the largest mass organization because it unites other organizations, including the trade union federation KMU. The KMU is an alliance of various trade unions and has been growing. There are also various political parties. Is there an ongoing discussion among these organizations?*

Uy: Yes, and these are very healthy signs that eventually the principle of political pluralism will become a reality. For us this is meaningful because these are basically the indicators of a true democratic process. We would like to encourage more and more of this flowering. More and more groups and more and more ideas are needed to discuss and decide what is to be done in a truly free and democratic manner. We in BAYAN strongly insist on the need for respectful political pluralism.

But that is not what is actually happening, because now the problems of the country are being reduced simply to a problem of "democracy versus communism." And so all these groups fighting for a change—the farmers fighting for land, the workers fighting for decent wages and humane working conditions—are simply lumped as indicators of a communist trend. That is very sad. And despite this, more and more people also realize something else: If it is true, for example, that the call for all workers throughout the world to unite is a communist idea, then it is still not a bad idea. It is a just and proper call and should be supported. Some of the half-truths and the myths are beginning to be rethought.

They say that working for land reform is communist, so more people say "what's wrong with that?" The same is true of working for just wages—because the contradiction between workers and the capitalist is getting stronger. For the workers who demand what they truly deserve in terms of wages so they can support a family, "what is wrong with that?" This should be the direction of the struggle of the workers. And so, precisely because the communist hysteria is really strong, more and more people have come to realize that the myopic way of posing the problem in terms of "democracy versus communism" is in fact only half true. So there are glimmers of hope that as more and more people look at things objectively and scientifically and historically, they can begin to appreciate the validity and the justness of the people's struggle.

BIDOM: *So would you say that people are getting educated in the struggle and that there is a resurgence in the Philippines today?*

Uy: The rising expectations at the time of Aquino's election simply could not be sustained. The problems are still there. It's even getting worse. The people who are poor—and these are the basic masses—are the very victims of militarization and the very targets of the so-called war policy based on the philosophy of low-intensity conflict. Now as repression increases you see a corresponding response from the people, which is to organize people's power, exerting themselves for basic reforms.

What worries us in BAYAN is that there are two possibilities. The Pentagon knows that more and more people now appreciate precisely the nature, and the methodology, and the focus of U.S. intervention. As the growing people's movement continues to exert its right to self-determination, the geopolitical/economic interests of the United States become at stake. As more and more people insist on the need to put an end to U.S. intervention, it is perhaps possible to continue the surrogate war, this proxy war being fought for the U.S. by the Philippine armed forces. But we also see the possibility of an escalated war, a full-scale war, where once again American troops will be sent, as they were to Vietnam.

I wish to call American attention to the fact that we do not want this to happen. This war is an internal matter, a question of Filipinos exerting their right to self-determination. Sending American soldiers will only lead to another Vietnam. Many of us in the Philippines know that we were indeed the first Vietnam, with the U.S. being instrumental in the defeat of nationalist guerrilla forces in our country in the past. We have a legitimate fear that perhaps this could happen again.

This can be prevented by pressing the need to transform U.S. foreign policy which hinges around maintaining control of the Pacific and insists on a clear division of the world, that you are either pro-West, or you are pro-East. But we see glimpses of hope because there is a growing move amongst people in the Asia/Pacific region to unite. So if we in the Philippines want the bases to be removed, we will also see to it that they do not just get transferred somewhere else in Asia.

We are encouraged because we also know that worldwide there is a growing disarmament movement, there is a growing antinuclear movement, there is a growing peace movement. We hope that together with all freedom-loving Americans here and all freedom-loving peoples in other parts of the world we can overcome. We shall overcome.

BIDOM: *I have two questions now that really fit together. What has been the response in the U.S. to your talks and your tour here thus far? What can you advise us to do here to affect U.S. policy?*

Uy: Yes, I'm glad you raised that. As I go around I can't help but appreciate the enormous reservoir of goodwill from the Americans whom I have the chance of interacting with. As I explain that the destinies of our two countries are inter-

twined — going as far back as the period when the Philippines was a U.S. colony and trying to get them to see how we back home in BAYAN see the colonial experience — it is fantastic what an open mind people have. I explain that American colonialization was not an accident, but part of an overall expansionist approach to your country's economic development. I explain that when the U.S. had to end its direct control of our country it saw to it that all the treaties favorable to it were in place, including both military and economic treaties. We have a term for this — neocolonialism.

As I explain the phenomenon of economic domination through transnational corporations or multinational corporations, even people in academe respond favorably because they know that it is not a lie, that it is a fact. And the same is true when I say that more and more people in the Philippines see the problem of land monopoly and we therefore must insist on an authentic land reform program.

And in the process, all of those corporations owned by Americans will have to be dealt with, because, although we know that some kind of employment has been generated by the presence of these companies in the Philippines, we know that wages paid to the Filipino laborer working on a Dole plantation or for Del Monte are worlds apart from those paid to the Japanese or Korean workers by the same companies here on the mainland. When I explained these things, people greeted them with an open mind. The necessary openness for discussion and dialogue was there. I talked about all the human rights' violations, all the ongoing militarization, all of the killing and massacres and abductions, and explained that all these bombings definitely will not lead to peace. I said that what we're trying to develop is the peace of justice, not the peace of the graveyard to be attained by killing off all those who are fighting for nationalism and democracy.

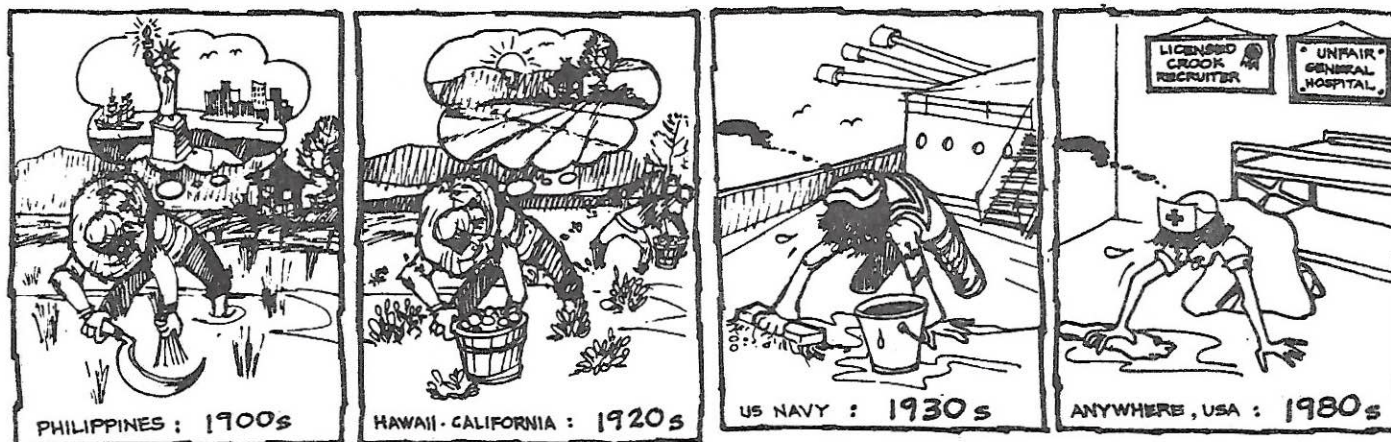
I am really heartened by the way many of the Americans who listened to my talks respected the analysis and the positions I presented. And when I try to bring in the role of American business by pinpointing the foreign policy of the United States and letting them see that this foreign policy is

really based on war and not peace, I am heartened by the way they respond to me.

I see no reason why we cannot pursue changes peacefully. I see, for example, that more and more Americans understand the need to transform their own foreign policy and to solve their own internal problems — given that about 40,000 Americans go to bed hungry every day. There is an alarming increase of homelessness; there is an alarming material and spiritual decay. More Americans realize this and therefore are concerned over the fact that a good percentage of their tax dollars, which go to the Pentagon, are being channeled to military aid which harms my country, which is used against our people. And so they simply cannot miss all of the links and this I welcome very sincerely.

I am optimistic that for as long as there are freedom-loving Americans really concerned about the plight of Filipinos halfway around the world — who are victims of injustice and now becoming the focal point of a major militarization — they will realize that by reaching out to other Americans they can help put an end to an exploitative foreign policy. With that support I see no reason why my people cannot one day achieve our sincerest dreams.

I just wish to point out to Americans that the struggle back home is very simple. It is a struggle for freedom. It is a struggle against hunger and exploitation. It is a struggle for freedom from injustice and oppression. It is a struggle against U.S. intervention. And of course it is a struggle for self-determination. It is a struggle to put an end to the continuing rape of our environment, the continuing plunder of our resources. I am sure as I go around, more and more Americans with an open mind can see why I have to continue telling the truth about what is going on in my country. This is all in the interest of peace, which must be based on justice. I call on all concerned Americans, especially those who are organized, to see the importance of coming up with something like a mass movement in the United States to bring about the greatest possible pressure to put an end to U.S. intervention in my country. ●



1,000 Days of Corazon Aquino

In November of 1988 Corazon Aquino celebrated her one thousandth day in office as president of the Philippines. When she began her term she was greeted warmly by the masses of Filipino workers and peasants in the hope that she would bring democracy, peace, and a measure of social justice to this long-suffering people. Few, if any, still harbor illusions along these lines.

Conditions today are, in many respects, worse for the masses of Filipinos than they were under Marcos. The average wage for city dwellers is about \$3.00 per day—though many are unable to find jobs at all. The promise of a land reform has remained unfulfilled. The police and the army are used to suppress the movements of workers and poor farmers demanding an improvement in their situation. Right-wing vigilante groups, known as “death squads,” carry out killings of leftists and labor activists which are euphemistically referred to as “salvaging,” while the government not only takes no action against them but actively encourages their efforts.

The reason for the failure of Aquino to fulfill her “promise” is not necessarily that she was acting in bad faith. The problem is that the injustices which cry out for a solution in the Philippines cannot be changed in any qualitative sense as long as the country remains beholden to U.S. imperialist interests and mortgaged to this country’s banks. The class of landowners and industrialists which Aquino represents enjoys tremendous profits from the present economic and political arrangement with the United States—as junior partners in the exploitation of the working masses of the Philippines.

Even if Aquino really hoped to do something to alleviate poverty and oppression, she was willing to do so only if it would not upset the present economic setup too much. When it came down to a choice—and in a situation of extreme crisis like the one in the Philippines it tends to come down to a choice rather quickly—she sided with Wall Street, Washington, and the Filipino ruling classes. That, of course, was predictable. And her choice inevitably meant turning her back on her promises to the popular masses, and even joining in the suppression of their independent movement which represents a threat to the status quo.

* * *

Without the support of the “people power” revolution Aquino could never have succeeded in unseating the Marcos dictatorship. Without the continued backing of the masses in the early days of her rule she could never have maintained her slim toehold on power against the extreme right-wing and military forces which did their best to destabilize her regime.

Aquino needed the masses to accomplish her political objectives, but the masses never needed Aquino to accomplish

theirs. Given the necessary consciousness and leadership they could have overturned the old dictatorship without her, using the same mass action methods that they applied in her support. And they could then have established an even stronger alternative government—a government truly representing the workers and poor farmers of the Philippines—which would have been able to disarm the Marcos military and establish a new army loyal to the people, carry through a complete land reform, take steps to guarantee democratic rights, and begin the process of transforming the country’s economy so that it could be put in the service of people’s needs rather than private profit. A workers’ government could have done these things because, unlike the landholder Aquino, it would have had nothing to gain from the maintenance of the present system, and no need to compromise and conciliate with the old ruling classes.

The experience of the last one thousand days in the Philippines demonstrates once again the basic revolutionary truth that workers and poor peasants have no strategic interests in common at *any time with any segment* of the ruling bourgeoisie and landowners. In the age of imperialism there are no exceptions to that rule. If the workers put their energies into supporting one or another “democratic” or “progressive” or “humanistic” bourgeois politician instead of fighting to establish their own government under their own control, they will be paid back sooner or later by repression and an intensification of social injustice. This has been their fate time and time again.

The Filipino people continue to struggle for their genuine liberation—the NPA guerrillas have not been defeated and the masses of workers and farmers maintain a high level of consciousness and organization. Because of this people all over the world can maintain a great hope for the future. As the treaty which grants the U.S. the right to maintain its military presence in the Philippines expires in 1991, it will be incumbent for those of us who support the basic democratic right of self-determination to build the strongest possible movement here against its renewal. Right now we must speak up and protest the extreme violations of human rights, and especially the CIA involvement in the right-wing vigilante groups.

End U.S. Intervention in the Philippines!

**Stop the Repression Against the Filipino Labor
and Mass Movements!**

Stop the Death Squads!

**Self-Determination for
the People of the Philippines!**

General MacArthur Represses Filipino Guerrilla Fighters

by Li Fu-jen

The following article is reprinted from the Militant newspaper, August 4, 1945.

The pattern of Allied "liberation" made familiar in the countries of Europe — disarmament of the masses and the installation of servile puppet governments to frustrate the popular will — has unfolded swiftly in the wake of American reconquest of the Philippine Islands.

American forces under Gen. Douglas MacArthur made a landing on Lingayen Gulf, on the northern coast of the main island of Luzon, last January. When they reached their first objective, the town of San Fernando to the south, they found that Filipino guerrillas had already driven out the Japanese garrison and set up their own administration. MacArthur promptly liquidated this administration.

Within six months of the Lingayen landing most of the Philippines were freed of Japanese control. American troops and Filipino guerrilla fighters cooperated in the campaign. The American press was filled with true accounts of the magnificent Filipino struggle against the Japanese violators which had continued throughout the three years of Japanese occupation of the Islands.

What the press did not reveal was the swift and ruthless destruction of the guerrilla organizations, the liquidation of local administrations which they had set up, and the arrest of their leaders. A tight censorship instituted by MacArthur has prevented the facts from becoming generally known. But from fragments of news contained in letters which escaped the censor's eye and from conversations with returning newspaper correspondents, this writer has been able to piece together a picture of what has occurred.

Outstanding among the Filipino guerrilla organizations is the Hukbalahap, which means "People's Anti-Japanese Army." Its adherents are believed to number anywhere between 100,000 and 200,000. Most of its strength is concentrated in the provinces of Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac, Bulacan, and Laguna, but it also has a sizable force in Tayabas and a smaller one in Rizal. All of these provinces are rural and lend themselves to the guerrilla type of warfare.

Socialist Leader

It was in March 1942, right after the Japanese conquest, that Hukbalahap was organized by a socialist named Avisantos and several able comrades including Louis Taruc, Costo Alejandrino, Lava, and Fileo. Avisantos was killed in an engagement with Japanese troops. When MacArthur's forces landed, Taruc was commander-in-chief. MacArthur

ordered his arrest. By this time, Hukbalahap had grown to be an effective military and political organization.

The Huk guerrillas were the most important group carrying on large-scale coordinated actions against the Japanese army. Other bands, sponsored by the U.S. Army, limited themselves in the main to intelligence work and preparations for the American invasion.

The influence of the Hukbalahap among the rural population was due to its radical agrarian program. This program called for confiscation of the hacienдеров' (landlords') land and its distribution among the landless farmers. In many districts large-scale confiscations occurred.

The popularity of such a program will readily be seen when it is borne in mind that landlordism in the Philippines, as in China, is the greatest scourge endured by the predominantly rural population. Most of the Taos (farmers) are landless and were exploited no less mercilessly under American occupation than they were later under the Japanese overlordship.

Before the war, Taos earned 10 to 15 pesos (\$5 to \$7.50) per month. They were robbed by a system of usury which exacted interest as high as 200 and 300 percent per annum on small loans, and which kept them continually in debt and tied them as bondsmen to the hacienдеров. The largest single landowner in the Philippines is the Catholic Church, which has plantations of hundreds of thousands of acres. Many of the landowners are absentees who live in Manila in palatial homes the year round. Brutal overseers "run" the plantations, heedless of human rights and without thought for conservation.

Economic Robbery

There is no system of crop rotation. Sugar, coconut, and hemp are the principal crops which, both under American and Japanese occupation, commanded ready cash and large profits. They are grown for export to the virtual exclusion of food items needed by the people, which explains why the Filipinos are so terribly undernourished, and why the land becomes less productive.

Most of the plantation owners and their business satellites in the towns collaborated with the Japanese. Some of these elements, who were more farseeing, fought against the Japanese because they knew Japan would in the end be defeated. Also, they prospered more under American occupation.

But the rural guerrillas fought against the Japanese, not because of any love of American imperialism — they knew that American imperialism had been the one real obstacle to the overthrow of the hated landlord system — but because they wanted a radical social change. They wanted land. They took it wherever they could.

In November 1942 the Hukbalahap were reinforced by a Chinese guerrilla force known as Wah Chi, drawn from the large Chinese population of whom many are sympathetic to the Chinese Communist (Stalinist) government at Yen-an, in northwest China.

A Captain X, writing from Manila under date of June 10 (*The Nation*, July 28, 1945) describes the development of the organization as follows:

The Hukbalahap established a department of civil government soon after its organization. It saw the necessity of mobilizing civilians in the struggle, for it is only by the active support of communities that guerrilla forces can be maintained. Furthermore, it was clear that the people had no confidence in the (Japanese) puppet government (headed by Jose Laurel). . . . Elections were held and governors, mayors, and minor officials chosen. Almost immediately some land reforms were instituted. The properties of large landlords were expropriated and divided among the peasants, who used the land for the production of food.

Remember Greece?

But to Gen. MacArthur, says Captain X, the Hukbalahap is a movement “dominated by Communist cutthroats who had forced their rule on civilians by threats of punishment and death.” One of MacArthur’s officers “openly admitted the plan for destroying the movement.” MacArthur’s accusation is of the same type that Churchill hurled against the masses in Greece — almost word for word. The American imperialist press pretended to be indignant at what the British imperialists did in Greece. Here is another Greece, right in the backyard of Wall Street!

MacArthur, American counterpart of the British General Scobie who shot down Greek anti-fascist fighters, fears, according to the same Captain X, “an armed uprising aimed at overthrowing the present government” and “one reason the new Philippine army is being whipped into shape so quickly is to thwart such an attempt.”

The present government is headed by President Sergio Osmena, puppet of the Washington administration. He was in the United States the entire three years of the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. He went back to the Islands with MacArthur. While in Washington, he agreed to hand over military, naval, and air bases in the Philippines to the United States — in perpetuity.

Jail Leaders

Despite Washington’s promise of independence for the Philippines on or before July 4, 1946, it is clear that no real independence is intended. The forces which could establish such independence, and guarantee it, are being suppressed. Louis Taruc, leader of Hukbalahap, and many other Filipino fighters have been thrown into prison, without charges and without trial. Wall Street intends to keep the Islands as a colony, which means that their economic development, as in the past, will be strangled. The only industry will be the processing industry, for the production of sugar, coconut, hemp, etc. This industry is profitable for both the Filipino capitalists and the American investor. It rests on a backward, semifeudal land economy. The landlords who own the land are the one sure prop of the puppet government and its American imperialist patrons. This is why MacArthur commands his troops to wipe out the Hukbalahap and restore confiscated lands to the landlords.

On the opposite side of the picture, MacArthur and Osmena are busy whitewashing Filipino landlords, capitalists, and politicians who collaborated with the Japanese invaders. One of Osmena’s own sons was a collaborator. He has been “vindicated.” Another who got a coat of whitewash is the bourgeois politician Manuel Roxas, who was head of the Economic Development Board in the cabinet of the puppet Laurel government during the Japanese occupation. Roxas is popular with the hacenderos and businessmen because he is a stronger character than the notoriously weak Osmena. They are reported to be backing him against Osmena for the presidency, in the elections scheduled for November, seeing in him their savior from threatening revolution. Doubtless Roxas has given assurances to MacArthur that he will stand up for preservation of the social status quo and protect the interests of Wall Street, just as, only a few months ago, he served the Japanese imperialists.

Unique Experiences

According to all indications, the Filipino guerrillas will not easily be liquidated. The Japanese tried and failed.

The Filipinos are unique among colonial peoples in that they have experienced, within the brief span of less than 50 years, the domination of three imperialist powers, Spain, the United States, and Japan. They, more than any other oppressed people, know that there is no essential difference between any of the imperialists, no matter what the color of their skin or the flag they fly. All perpetuate semifeudal servitude, stifle economic development, keep the broad masses in miserable poverty. Cruel experience has taught them this. Now that the Japanese imperialists have been driven from their islands, they must continue the fight against the oppressor who has returned to forge anew the chains of colonial slavery. ●

November 5 Action Against the Klan Held in Philadelphia

by Haskell Berman

The announcement that the Ku Klux Klan, skinheads, and White Pride racists had requested an application from the National Park Service to hold a rally at Independence Mall in Philadelphia on November 5 created a good deal of reaction in the news media of that city. There were also very sharp differences and conflicting positions which developed among organizations that consider themselves liberal and progressive, and some that consider themselves radical and revolutionary.

The Partisan Defense Committee (PDC), which is led by the Spartacist League, took an early initiative and put out a national call for a counterdemonstration. It accumulated an impressive list of endorsers — including trade union officials and leaders of Black organizations. Though this political tendency has little or no base in Philadelphia, it sent a team of organizers into the city, headed by Gene Herson, and set up an office in a downtown hotel.

On October 24, less than two weeks before the scheduled Klan rally, the PDC held a press conference in the Public Service Employees Union hall that was well attended by the main representatives of Philadelphia's television and radio. The speakers at the news conference called for a united front mobilization against the Klan by the labor movement and announced that a permit had been obtained for an area adjacent to the one which had been held in reserve (without a formal permit) for the racists by the Park Service.

Within the next two days an attack against this counterdemonstration was launched on TV and radio stations. Mayor Wilson Goode warned the citizens of Philadelphia to stay away from the rally because he predicted that a counterdemonstration would bring violence. A representative from the Anti-Defamation League spoke on TV and presented a similar line. An October 26 statement signed by John Weiss of the KKK quoted National Park Service superintendent Hobart G. Cawood as stating that the Partisan Defense Committee was a violent group. Cawood, by way of contrast, praised the Klan for being straightforward and seeking to conduct an orderly demonstration.

After a protest by PDC lawyers, Cawood retracted his statement. He wrote to the PDC the next day: "To the extent that any statements I made imply that the Partisan Defense Committee intends to engage, or had in the past engaged, in violent activities, I apologize. All the information available to us indicates that your group intends to sponsor a lawful, orderly demonstration and I regret that anything I said may have indicated otherwise."

At about the same time, a spokesperson for the United States League of White Christian Patriots announced that they would cancel their call for the Philadelphia rally, and

sue those who would deny them their rights through threats of violence. The Partisan Defense Committee continued with the plans for their countermobilization.

A Mixed Success

When the action took place, around 250 to 300 were present (though the local press estimates were 500 to 1000). They were largely supporters of the PDC from Philadelphia and other East Coast cities. In spite of the very extensive list of local labor and political endorsers, and a very real effort to involve the labor movement in the demonstration, only the president of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Workers Union and a vice president of the Pennsylvania Social Services Union actually showed up and spoke at the rally. Around half a dozen members of the City Council had been enlisted as endorsers, but not a single local Democratic Party figure participated in the actual rally, and there was little participation from the Philadelphia Black community. The rally began at 9:00 a.m. on a cold rainy morning. It was over by 11:30. The action was orderly and peaceful. Local TV stations provided extensive, and sympathetic, coverage.

Simultaneous with the rally of the PDC, the All People's Congress (led by the Workers World Party) held a competing picket line and rally one-half block away, in front of the Federal Court building. Their clear intention was to detour people from the PDC rally, and between 50 and 100 participated in this action. When they ended their picket at noon they attempted to stage a march that ended up in a confrontation with the city police.

An overall assessment of the November 5 mobilization would have to be favorable. The earlier rally cancellation by the Klan deflated the motivation of hundreds (perhaps thousands) who were prepared to join the counterdemonstration. The publicity around it did stop the Klan and racists from holding their action, and on paper the November 5 mobilization attracted broad support. But that support remained on paper; it was not translated into actual bodies in the street on November 5. For all of its talk about building a broad, united front response to the Klan, the Partisan Defense Committee in fact failed to do so. The All People's Congress proved to be even less capable of filling the required leadership role. The reasons for these failures are worth looking into.

Leadership Default and Political Problems

The primary problem was that the PDC organized its demonstration strictly from the top down. There was only

minimal input from local people, or from those who represented organizations other than the PDC. And all final decisions were made by the PDC itself. This undemocratic method severely restricted the ability to build the kind of broad demonstration that was obviously possible.

The political focus of the PDC's action was correct (if occasionally expressed in a somewhat bombastic and ultra-leftist style); it was open to any group that wanted to speak and participate; there were a large number of local and national labor endorsers; 75,000 flyers were distributed locally; three different newsletters were mailed from the national mobilization committee to all those who had endorsed; the news conference was well organized and presented a correct overall analysis and perspective. In short, all of the mechanics were in place for building a truly impressive action. What was lacking was a structure that could really involve people, make them feel that they were a part of organizing and planning the activity, so that the endorsing individuals and groups would have a real stake in its success. That, in turn, would give them a motivation to come out themselves, and to bring their constituencies.

The failure of the PDC to organize a real united front — as opposed to its own demonstration in the name of a united front — also made it much more difficult to overcome the general disunity which exists on the left. The All People's Congress, in response to the Klan's initial plans for a rally, held its own secluded meeting on October 17, attended by around 15 people in a church in West Philadelphia. When questioned about plans to organize a citywide meeting to build their action, Berta Joubert of APC responded by declaring that APC had no intention of forming a coalition. When asked if they would seek to reach out to the labor movement, Joubert's response was the same. She explained that they were primarily interested in organizing those who were not in unions — unemployed from the Black community. She based her approach on the fact that a year ago the APC had organized a very effective march and rally against racism, and therefore knew what had to be done. They were not about to build a broad anti-Klan action with others.

The day before the APC meeting, on October 16, a gathering had been called by the Black United Front at the Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia. It was chaired by State Representative Dave Richardson, a prominent Black Democratic Party politician. About 200, mostly Black activists, were in attendance. However, the meeting could not agree about what to do, and was badly disrupted by a series of personal attacks and counterattacks. By the time it was over, only a handful of people remained, who could only call for another meeting.

Some in attendance blamed a group called the African Socialist Party for initiating the disruption. As a result of their two subsequent meetings these forces finally made a formal decision to oppose the PDC-sponsored November 5 action, and hold instead a pro-Democratic Party campaign rally, with the theme: "Stop the Bush-Reagan Team." They also called for a long-term effort to petition for federal legislation outlawing the Klan. These forces explained their reasoning: confronting the Klan in a counterdemonstration would inevitably be inflammatory and lead to violence — such

as the killings that occurred in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1979, during a confrontation between Klan demonstrators and their opponents. A member of the African Socialist Party did ultimately speak at the PDC rally.

Overall Political Assessment

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency endorsed the PDC action and worked to build it in Philadelphia. Haskell Ber- man, a member of the F.I.T.'s Local Organizing Committee in that city, spoke at the rally.

It became evident in the weeks leading up to November 5 that ruling class forces in Philadelphia didn't want to see a counterdemonstration against the Klan — hence the attempt to organize a Democratic Party campaign rally and the effort to violence-bait the PDC activity. On the afternoon of October 24, after the PDC press conference, Mayor Goode called on the Park Service to deny a permit to any group seeking to demonstrate on November 5.

Reformist politics and sectarian attitudes contributed to a lack of unity on the left, and there was no real chance of gaining the unity that was objectively needed. In spite of their sectarian approach, the PDC had taken a generally correct initiative in a situation that did, indeed, call for an active response to the Klan and skinheads. It seemed incumbent for those who were serious about opposing the racists to give that initiative support — despite political disagreements and despite the limitations of the PDC's overall perspectives.

Many other groups in the workers' and Black movements in Philadelphia did not follow this approach. We believe they made an error. Ruling class politicians want Blacks and working people to rely on the existing institutions of the state — on the courts, and the laws, and the police — for protection against racist and reactionary violence. But history has taught us time and again that when push comes to shove these institutions are completely unable to defend the interests of the oppressed and the working class. They will side with the racists and reactionaries, not with working people or the oppressed. Only the labor movement and the Black community, mobilized in united action to defend ourselves, will prove to be a reliable force.

That is the one question which the PDC answered correctly — and it is the most important question of all. Hopefully on future occasions a truly broad united front effort can be brought together to pursue that same idea in the spirit of a genuinely nonsectarian united front.

It is unfortunate that many on the left failed to endorse November 5 because they judged the action purely on the basis of their assessment of its leadership — the PDC and Spartacist League — instead of on objective and class criteria. That was a sectarian approach. Still more sectarian, however, was the action of the All People's Congress which organized a competitive action in opposition, thereby undermining the possibility of a unified effort. In practice they aided the goals of Philadelphia's political and economic power structure which was opposed to any anti-Klan mobilization whatsoever. The same problem from a reformist point of view was created by the actions of the Black

(Continued on page 29)

Sylvia Bleeker (1901-1988)

Union Organizer, Socialist Agitator, and Lifelong Trotskyist

by Frank Lovell

Sylvia Bleeker, a product of the 1917 Russian Revolution and an early adherent and lifelong advocate of Trotskyism in this country, died November 23 at her home in New York City at age 86.

Born on December 25, 1901, in a small town in Byelorussia, Sylvia became part of the revolutionary movement at age 16. She helped set up a kindergarten in her hometown soon after the Bolsheviks took power and subsequently was sent to the nearby city of Minsk as a student under the new government's advanced educational system.

She left Minsk during the civil war period, and in 1920 sailed for the United States aboard the Danish ship *Oskar II*. During the voyage she met her future husband, Morris Lewit, also a Bolshevik partisan. They remained lifelong companions and political collaborators.

After her death Morris recalled how he and Sylvia left their native land which, until the revolution, had been under the oppressive czarist regime. In 1918 German troops occupied Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Byelorussia, and large sections of Great Russia. The Minsk region was in their hands. Later this region was occupied by Polish troops when the government of Poland prepared its provocative war against the Soviets which it launched in 1920 with the capture of Kiev, quickly liberated by a Red Army division. But the disastrous war with Poland had been triggered.

Under the harsh conditions of civil war and famine, survival was paramount for young and old. The families of Sylvia and Morris were among those who found their way to the United States. Members of both their families had previously migrated and were able to supply the necessary funds and documentation.

Their first problems here were to find work and learn the language. Morris became an apprentice plumber and Sylvia found work in the garment industry as a milliner, trimming women's hats. Both joined the Communist movement at the time and soon became prominent within the New York section, he as an organizer in the Jewish federation and she in the millinery workers' union. One of their first political projects was the organization of a Jewish-language club, the *Sunrise Club*, at the 103rd Street Workmen's Circle in Harlem, for educational projects.

In 1923 Max Shachtman, a young leader of the Communist movement, was editor of *The Young Worker*, at the time a semimonthly publication of the Communist youth organiza-

tion with a claimed membership of 4,000. Martin Abern was its national secretary. Shachtman and Abern soon became factional allies of James P. Cannon, the main proponent within the Communist movement of an open, legal Communist party and liquidator of the underground organizations. Cannon and his associates were anxious to "Americanize" the Communist movement and they sought to merge the language federations within the party into geographical units. This process took time. In 1925 Sylvia Bleeker and Morris Lewit were among the first to leave the Jewish federation and join a branch of the Communist Party. Morris remembers a write-up in *The Young Worker*, hailing and explaining the importance of this move on their part.

During the next several years Bleeker/Lewit developed their natural affinity for the trade union working class tendency in the party, the Cannon-Foster faction, and became increasingly suspicious of the Lovestone leadership. When Cannon, Shachtman, and Abern were expelled in 1928 for "Trotskyism" (introduced as a pernicious anti-Bolshevik disease and understood by few in the CP at the time), it did not take Bleeker and Lewit long to discover the real meaning of Trotskyism. Hardly more than a year after the first expulsions they were both summarily expelled on the same spurious charge. Bleeker was a candidate for Congress in New York on the CP ticket when she was expelled in 1930 as a supporter of the Communist League of America (CLA), the Trotskyist organization founded by Cannon and other CP expellees.

Bleeker by this time had become a prominent figure in the union movement, identified as a leader of the left wing. Sam Gordon, a young CLA leader at the time, recalled later that in those "early years practically all our trade union work in New York was in the needle trades, where Jewish workers predominated." He wrote (in the collection, *James P. Cannon As We Knew Him*) that the practical implementation of this work fell to Sylvia. Gordon knew her as "a long-time Communist whose considerable abilities were universally recognized by both rank and file and the bureaucrats." She had organized women in the millinery trade who had previously been left unorganized by the all-male union. The women formed a separate local (Local 43 of the Millinery Workers with 3,000 members) and Sylvia Bleeker was elected secretary-treasurer. The leadership of the millinery



union subsequently expelled Local 43 which then affiliated with the newly created industrial union. And so it was Sylvia of the millinery trade who now brought workers from other sections of the garment industry for CLA discussions of strategy and tactics.

Gordon's description of the problems is revealing: "It was the 'third period' and the Stalinist line of the CP called for dual unions. (Sylvia and most other 'left-wing' unionists were in the Stalinist union, the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union.) Our line was to disentangle from these sterile 'trade union' bodies and to get into the main swim of the AFL unions. But the hitch was to do this without giving the reformist labor skates like David Dubinsky, Sidney Hillman, and Company, an opportunity to use the transfer of our comrades for their anticommunist campaigns. This was, of course, a very touchy problem: to combine a correct trade union line with our generally correct political line and orientation as a faction of the CP."

How was this "touchy problem" resolved? Gordon says, "There were many gruelling sessions, most of them with Jim [Cannon] taking the most active part in suggesting and devising moves that would not violate union rules and at the same time present an unexceptional front to the CP militants. Finally, at one such session a course was adopted."

The course that was adopted appeared in the form of a report on the Stalinist-controlled convention of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union, titled "Aftermath of the Needle Trades Convention" and published in the June 21 and 28 and July 12, 1930, issues of the *Militant*, the CLA newspaper. This analysis stands today as a model of union strategy and tactics, and a guide to the fundamentals of revolutionary work in the conservative union movement. One such fundamental proposition is that nothing can be done without able comrades like Sylvia Bleeker in the unions who understand the workers' daily problems and their shifting moods.

This fundamental fact was tacitly included by Cannon in his report on the first CLA plenum which met in New York City, May 24-27, 1930. He said the discussion of the situation in the needle trades was especially interesting and significant, "based on the report of a prominent comrade in the union who recently found the way to the platform of the Opposition." He said, "This discussion laid the ground for the preparation of a comprehensive statement of policy in the needle trades crisis, similar to our statement on the miner's union." The "prominent comrade" was Sylvia Bleeker.

As a union activist Sylvia attended the 1925 session of the summer school for working women at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania where she first met A. J. Muste who was there as a visitor. Muste was impressed with Sylvia as a potential union leader and invited her to attend Brookwood Labor College at Katonah, New York. Brookwood was a training center for left-wing unionism. It was founded in 1920 by Muste, John Fitzpatrick (left-wing leader of the Chicago Federation of Labor), John Brophy of the United Mine Workers, and John Dewey, the philosopher and educator who later headed the Commission of Inquiry into the charges made against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow trials of the late 1930s. Sylvia studied at Brookwood for one year (1925-26) on a union scholarship. There she had an opportunity to

meet a representative cross-section of the American industrial working class—coal miners, railroad workers, and others. Some would later become organizers and officials of the CIO unions that were foreseen at Brookwood only as future possibilities.

Her main interest always was the international labor movement which gave meaning to national and local struggles and would finally determine their outcome. With the rise of fascism in Germany, Sylvia and Morris began in 1932 the publication of a Trotskyist newspaper in Yiddish, *Unser Kampf* (Our Struggle), to explain the danger of fascism and how to fight it. A letter to all branches of the Communist League, October 17, 1933, signed by national secretary James P. Cannon, reported that "twenty-four issues of the paper have appeared in this period [since its inception], having an average distribution of two thousand copies per issue (300 individual subscribers, 800 in bundle orders, the rest in sales and distribution of single copies). The paper is distributed in about fifteen cities in the U.S. and Canada. Aside from this *Unser Kampf* has been used as a spokesman by Opposition groups in six foreign countries (France, Belgium, South Africa, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil). In the same period the Jewish comrades published one pamphlet [by Trotsky on the German situation] which was distributed in more than 2,000 copies. Since August 1 no issue of the paper appeared due to a financial crisis that paralyzed the work." The purpose of the report was to urge all CLA branches to reorganize the financing and distribution of this valuable Trotskyist publication. Unfortunately, the size and organizational structure of the CLA in those days precluded the fulfillment of this obligation. But Sylvia always remembered her work on the editorial board of *Unser Kampf* as one of her most rewarding undertakings, and in the last year of her life she arranged for microfilm copies to be made available at New York University's Tamiment Library and Yivo Institute for Jewish Research archives, both in New York City.

An abrasive factional struggle between Cannon and Shachtman impinged upon the CLA's work in the mass movement in the 1932-34 period. Sylvia sided with Shachtman. In a 1933 letter to Arne Swabeck who was then in Europe discussing the internal situation in the CLA with Trotsky, Cannon wrote as follows about an incident at a Stalinist-controlled united front unemployment conference in Chicago: "In the *Daily Worker* of January 27 (city edition) there was a culmination, primarily against the 'demagogic' Cannon. . . . And to that there is a still more interesting sequel. At the second meeting of the united front conference, where I again appeared as the leader of our delegates, the Stalinist steering committee nominated Comrade Bleeker as a member of the permanent executive committee of fifteen. I also stood as a candidate, with the following result: I received twelve votes—the same twelve votes that were cast for our resolution; Bleeker received the unanimous vote of the conference, following the lead of the Stalinist steering committee. What does such an incident signify from a political point of view?"

This question remained unanswered because the motives of the Stalinists were unclear and the response of independent delegates who knew Sylvia as a former union leader in the left wing guaranteed a large vote for her.

Messages and Recollections

from her comrades of younger generations

Ruth Harer: "Almost 50 years ago I came to New York from San Francisco—a 22-year-old, recruited in San Francisco by Jim Cannon in the days of our entry into the Socialist Party. Life in our movement in New York in those days was very exciting. One of my most memorable recollections of that time was attending a meeting and listening to a Trotskyist speech—in Yiddish! The speaker was Sylvia Bleeker and I shall never forget her. I had grown up in Los Angeles with Jewish anarchist parents and I had heard anarchist, Socialist, Communist party speeches, all in Yiddish. But never before had I heard my ideas in a language other than English. Suddenly I was part of an international movement and I was very proud of it. Sylvia made me feel this. She was a wonderful comrade, a fine person."

Jean Tussey: "I have the deepest appreciation for the lasting confidence and pride Sylvia inspired in my generation—in the capacity of the working class to emancipate itself."

Rita Shaw: "You and Sylvia were 'role models' and family for me in my younger years. This was true both politically and personally. Over the years I frequently thought of you both and found myself wishing I lived closer and could have been in contact with you."

from her contemporaries

Charles Curtiss: "My thoughts go back 55 years to our headquarters on Third Avenue and you and Sylvia in that dingy loft of an office-workshop and our comradeship in the cause of socialism then and through the decades. Her, and your, record in the service of that cause is one of valor and steadfastness. I felt that she had a warmth and a caring for others; and given the rigors and setbacks we met (and meet) that warmth and caring were healing and strengthening of the spirit."

Tybie and Milton Genechin: "The passage of time has not dimmed our picture and appreciation of Sylvia as an effective fighter in the cause of socialism, and as a person of beauty and character."

Bernard and Pauline Goodman and their daughter Jaimey (who thought of Sylvia as her second mother): "For us she was a bright and shining star in the movement. She was the one we would turn to for understanding and sympathy. She radiated warmth and friendship. Where there was anger and confusion, hers was the voice of reason and clarity. Yet Sylvia was firm in her conviction and in her desire to help lift humanity to a high level. Fiercely independent, dedicated, and tireless, filled with human kindness, Sylvia, for us, was the best example of the kind of person our movement developed over the past half century."

Dot and Ted Selander: "We have been sadly separated by years and distance so the news of Sylvia's death has just reached us. Truly saddened by the loss of her gifted and bright spirit, we remember the many years she and you were among the standard-bearers of a world to come, a saner more righteous world for all of us who struggle just to survive. She and you gave us courage and hope and for this we honor and remember her today."

from those who knew her in more recent years

Sarah Lovell: "I knew and admired Sylvia as a relative neophyte in the Trotskyist movement and had the good fortune to meet her again as a student at the Trotsky School in 1956. But it was in later years I knew her best and she became an important part of my life. Since it wasn't possible to see each other often, we kept in close touch by phone. Sylvia would call to alert me about a particular article or book review; to talk about the film on Rosa Luxemburg, or a play celebrating the Cafe Royale that had been a center for Yiddish theater people and which she knew so well, or the best place to buy organic food; sometimes to complain about the travails of old age. She was bitter about the terrible fate that befell the Socialist Workers Party. She was very excited about the changes taking place in the Soviet Union and elated at the possibility that Leon Trotsky would be vindicated and his works published there. Sylvia was a realistic and courageous woman and she faced her death with the same realism and courage with which she had faced all the momentous events of her life."

Debby Ginsburg: "I first met Sylvia and Morris at a New Year's Day party at George Weissman's house almost nine years ago. They were so delighted to meet new comrades and so charming and friendly. For me it was like finding long lost relatives. They even looked and sounded like relatives. Sylvia, with her lovely white hair pulled back from her face and her Yiddish accent, reminded me of my own grandmother. Lucky for me, we became friends. She and Morris treated their friends as they did each other—with great kindness, respect, and interest. Sylvia and I spoke on the phone quite regularly after that. We would speak of the small everyday things that made up much of our lives. When I had a child she was as interested in him as a grandmother and as solicitous of me. When I learned that Sylvia had died I felt as though something—some species—was now extinct. This Jewish-Russian revolutionary American socialist, worker, humanitarian woman, this friend who was twice my age was gone and I miss her."

These are among many messages received, some too late for publication.

The struggle in the CLA eventually subsided, partly as a result of Trotsky's intervention in the interest of greater political clarification.

The CLA was the forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party. And in some respects the 1933 factional struggle in the CLA was an anticipation of the 1939-40 division within the SWP over the class character of the Soviet Union and its defense in World War II against imperialist aggression, especially during the Stalin-Hitler pact. By this time Sylvia Bleeker had become one of the leaders in the Cannon-Trotsky faction against Shachtman-Burnham.

She was a constant agitator, always on the side of the underdog. This was her role both inside and outside the party, and she carried favor with no one. A popular street corner speaker in the years before World War II, she became especially well known in the Jewish communities where she spoke in Yiddish. She was a small woman with bright red hair and a freckled face, and she could be sad or glad to suit the occasion. But on the speaker's stand she was full of fire and quick with an answer to all questions put to her.

At the outbreak of war Sylvia was manager of Pioneer Publishers, the SWP publishing house which in those years specialized in Trotskyist literature. Later during the war years Sylvia served as an alternate member of the SWP National Committee and was active in defense work of the party, making use of her wide acquaintanceship and personal connections in the New York labor movement. After the indictment of the SWP leaders and Minneapolis Teamster officials and supporters in 1941, their defense against the spurious charges of "seditious conspiracy" became the most urgent work of the party. And after the trial and conviction of 18 of the accused this defense work required greater effort. They were found guilty of "conspiracy to overthrow the government" under the infamous Smith "Gag" Act, a law designed to make thinking and expression of opinion a federal crime. When all appeals were exhausted and the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case and the Trotskyists were imprisoned on New Year's Eve, December 31, 1943, for their outspoken opposition to World War II, Sylvia worked as a member of the Civil Rights Defense Committee to publicize their case and help secure their early release.

During this same period, with Cannon and other leaders of the SWP in jail, Morris Stein was the acting national secretary of the party. After the Smith Act victims were released in January 1945 Stein became the national organizational secretary. Stein was the party name of Morris Lewit.

In 1946 Sylvia and Morris went to Mexico to visit and help reorganize the household at Coyoacan, and during the few months of their stay Sylvia developed a close personal friendship with Natalya Sedova, Trotsky's widow, which endured despite later political differences. They returned for another visit with Natalya in 1949.

After returning from the first trip to Mexico Morris was assigned to try and help reestablish ideological ties with the survivors of the war and Nazi terror. In 1947-48 he and Sylvia spent about a year in Europe on this assignment. And when they returned to the United States Morris resumed his duties as part of the central leadership of the SWP; Sylvia took on leadership responsibilities in the New York local.

In 1956 Sylvia attended the party's *Trotsky School* at Mountain Spring Camp in New Jersey. After 40 years in the radical labor movement, she was still quite sure that there was much she could learn. Her vast experience had taught her this. She firmly believed then and for all the remaining years of her life that those who stop learning stop living, one of her favorite themes. But by the end of the decade both she and Morris were suffering from ill health and began to withdraw from active party work.

For the remaining quarter century of her life, from the early 1960s until she died, Sylvia was a constant supporter of the Trotskyist movement and the Socialist Workers Party. True to the convictions of her youth she was an outspoken supporter of the Trotskyists who were purged from the SWP in 1984, and especially outraged by the calumny against her close friends and comrades of many years, George Breitman and George Weissman. She endorsed and supported the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* from the first issue five years ago, and everyone connected with this publication and the efforts of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency to rebuild a Trotskyist party in this country will miss Sylvia's constant encouragement and warmhearted support. We most gratefully appreciate the help she gave us. ●

November 27, 1988

Glasnost and Perestroika – The USSR Today

Panel Discussion

On October 15, as part of a weekend of activities in New York City to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International, a panel discussion took place concerning recent developments in the USSR. We are printing here the edited text of the presentations made by the speakers on that panel.

Marilyn Vogt-Downey is cochair of the Moscow Trials Campaign Committee in the United States and is also the translator and editor of Notebooks for the Grandchildren—the memoirs of Mikhail Baitalsky, a Russian oppositionist in the 1920s and '30s. Gerry Foley is editor of the magazine International Viewpoint, an English-language journal of news and Marxist analysis which is published in Paris. Esteban Volkov is the grandson of Leon Trotsky and is currently the curator of the Leon Trotsky Museum in Coyoacan, Mexico. With the exception of the talk by Marilyn Vogt-Downey, this text has not been reviewed by the speakers.

Chair: The first panel we will have today is “Glasnost and Perestroika, the USSR Today.” It is fitting that we begin our Saturday session with this subject because what became the Trotskyist movement, the struggle for the continuity of revolutionary Marxism in our time, began within the Soviet Union. It was within the Soviet Communist Party that Trotsky and the Russian Left Opposition began their struggle against the bureaucratic degeneration that Stalin and his supporters were beginning to embody. Trotsky’s struggle culminated in 1938 in the founding of the Fourth International, whose fiftieth anniversary we are here to celebrate today.

As we celebrate, as we discuss our politics, as we argue and debate amongst ourselves what strategies and tactics are best to further the fight for revolutionary socialism, we see

Marilyn Vogt-Downey: As our chair was saying, this meeting represents something very important in the world. The Fourth International is a living world party of workers for a socialist revolution. It is a lasting legacy of Leon Trotsky to the world workers’ movement. It was established to replace the Comintern that became politically bankrupt under the leadership of Stalin and the bureaucratic caste that had come to power in the USSR. The Bolshevik party and the Comintern had been transformed from parties of revolution into institutions to defend the privileged interests of the Soviet bureaucratic apparatus against the interests of the workers in the USSR and everywhere else.

The Fourth International is based on an internationalist program like the Communist International was when it was founded under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party in 1919. This international program is a Marxist program. It is founded on the objective reality that the fight for socialism is an international struggle because capitalism is an international system. And it is only when capitalism has been abolished on a world scale and the road has been cleared of this obstacle to human progress that the workers of the world can begin to build socialism.

The formation of the Fourth International represents the culmination of an earlier struggle, begun in 1923 by the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky—who defended a policy of creating a strong workers’ movement in the Soviet Union, of strengthening and guaranteeing workers’ control in the

tremendous changes taking place in the Soviet Union under the Gorbachev regime. At the same time we see tremendous struggles, tremendous upheavals amongst the workers in Eastern Europe, in Poland, in Hungary, in Yugoslavia. The speakers today will talk about these changes in the Soviet Union, in Eastern Europe, within the different national regions of the USSR, and discuss what they mean for further developments there and how the Trotskyist movement can utilize them to further the struggle for political revolution and rejuvenation of socialist democracy and revolutionary internationalism.

Gerry Foley: I think there are few things in our times that have aroused as much hope in countries all over the world as glasnost and perestroika. It is a very interesting USSR by building up the Soviet Union’s industrial base and thus increasing the numeric and political strength of the proletariat. The program of the Left Opposition opposed the anti-working class and petty-bourgeois orientation being advanced by the growing bureaucracy which promoted policies directed toward appeasing the NEPmen, those who were profiting by the petty capitalist and market mechanisms introduced as a result of the New Economic Policy. Moreover, beginning in 1923—and then after Lenin’s death in 1924—Trotsky’s policies represented a continuation of the struggle begun by Lenin against the rising bureaucracy in the last two years of his life to undercut this social layer’s influence on the party and in the government and to undo some of its retrograde effects.

We’re very fortunate that we have the documents of this period and that they have been collected in the three-volume series, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition*, with a rich introduction by Naomi Allen explaining the history in detail.

What happened to this Opposition? Even in 1923 and 1924 its ideas were dangerous to the interests of the rising bureaucracy that was developing under the conditions in which the USSR found itself after the defeat of the counterrevolutionary invasions, the destruction of many revolutionary proletarian cadres during the civil war, as well as the destruction of industry. One-third of the cities lost as much as half of their population. People fled to the countryside looking for food. There was famine and the economy was at a virtual standstill.

Then came the isolation of the Russian Revolution with the defeat of the hopes for revolution in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. After the Bolshevik leadership introduced the NEP in an effort to get the economy functioning, there was economic growth for a time, but serious new problems began to arise. A schism began to develop between the cities and the countryside. There was a generalized "goods famine" and the goods available were too expensive. The peasants had no incentive to sell their produce which led to serious food shortages in the cities. Trade was breaking down and with it the alliance of interests between workers and peasants was breaking down too. All of this strengthened the bureaucracy—which thrives under conditions of scarcity—and weakened the proletarian leadership.

Campaign of Lies and Slanders

Beginning simply as a campaign of slander and intimidation, the attacks against the Opposition escalated to repression in 1927, 1928, and 1929. Then came the expulsion, arrest, and exile of Left Opposition supporters and Trotsky's own deportation and exile in 1929 from the Soviet Union.

Falsifications and slanders against Trotsky and the Left Opposition were initiated in those early years to avoid political discussion of the vital issues. Zinoviev and Kamenev admitted in 1926—after they broke temporarily with Stalin and the bureaucracy and joined with the Opposition—that they had actually fabricated "Trotskyism" as a part of this falsification effort by taking quotes from Lenin out of context to create the false impression that Lenin had consistently opposed and distrusted Trotsky. Such vile methods were buttressed by outright lies while the Opposition's efforts to respond were repressed. One of the biggest lies, which is still around today unfortunately, is that Trotsky "underestimated the peasantry." Even though Zinoviev and Kamenev acknowledged this charge was groundless and only invented to discredit Trotsky, it is still echoed today by those who don't know any better or, worse, who still hope to discredit the Marxist critics of the bureaucratic degeneration.

The Fourth International has its roots in the Marxist-Leninist Opposition to the growing stranglehold of the bureaucratic apparatus and the bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution represented by Joseph Stalin in the 1920's. The Opposition defended the program of the Bolshevik revolution. This included three basic points: the need for workers' democracy and party democracy, power to the workers' councils, and strengthening of the proletariat. The objective was for the workers to actually run the economy and the country and to use the state power under their own control to strengthen the struggles of workers internationally against capitalism.

Moscow Trials

Slander, falsification, expulsion, suppression, exile, imprisonment, and mass execution—these are the methods to which the bureaucracy had to resort to try to consolidate its power. The culmination of this were those monstrous Moscow trials from 1936 to 1938. There were millions and millions of victims of these trials—far beyond the top Bolshevik

leaders who were specifically framed up and shot. The fact that there had to be such a bloody repression, such a thoroughgoing totalitarian rule in the USSR before the bureaucracy could consolidate its control testifies in a negative way to the depth of the revolutionary sentiment that existed in the Soviet Union among the workers and the peasants. (By the way, this very quickly refutes those who try to attribute the triumph of totalitarian rule under Stalin to the passivity of the peoples of the old Russian empire. The people of the Soviet Union were only driven from power at gunpoint, through an unprecedented system of terror, that took millions of lives.)

The Soviet bureaucracy feared then and fears now, hated then and hates now, Trotsky's ideas with a deadly fear and hatred. That is true because Trotsky never gave up the defense of Marxism—of revolutionary ideas and the program of the Russian Revolution. He therefore articulated deeply felt sentiments inside Soviet society, and even this unparalleled repression, including the assassination of Trotsky and his son and others of their supporters abroad, could not erase those sentiments. They are still present today as the emerging voices and movements testify.

Trotsky alone continued to expose the bureaucracy's crimes against the revolution, such as the Moscow show trials. Meanwhile the bureaucracy's heinous deeds were carried out under the banner of Marxism, Leninism, and communism. The Stalinists did untold damage to the cause of socialism in this way, and the false consciousness which they fostered continues to plague us even until today.

We in the Fourth International are the continuation of Bolshevism and Marxism in our times. The Left Opposition and Trotsky, after working for reform of the Communist Party for ten years from 1923 until 1933, concluded after the Comintern's ultra-left policy allowed Hitler to come to power virtually without a fight by the massive German workers' movement that the Communist Party was no longer reformable, that it had become the political institution through which a hardened bureaucratic caste maintained political power in the USSR and defended its privileges against the needs and interests of the workers in the USSR and abroad.

The only way forward toward socialism in the USSR was through a political revolution in which the workers would overthrow the bureaucracy. This political revolution would have to be organized by the workers to allow them to take back the power, which the bureaucrats had usurped, and use that power in their own class interests. The Fourth International when it was founded was based on this assessment of the need for an antibureaucratic political revolution in the USSR. The fifty years that have passed since then have proven the correctness of that assessment a thousand times over.

Gorbachev's New Policies

So what about the new policies today being pursued by the bureaucracy? What is happening in the Soviet Union today? And what does it mean for workers?

For one thing these developments are a sign of an intensified, severe crisis, a social and economic crisis caused by

antidemocratic and bureaucratic rule. It just gets worse and worse. What are the key problems? It is interesting to sum them up from the point of view of the workers in the USSR. It is really very simple: There are severe shortages of food, clothing, and shelter, the basic items for human survival. We get persistent reports on this. "The shelves are empty" people shouted out at Gorbachev, "where is the food?" There is rationing of basic products like meat. Only very small amounts are available and they are usually of poor quality. Meanwhile, the bureaucrats shop in special stores where goods are plentiful and of a high quality such as workers never see.

In a sense, there is another goods famine in the USSR like there was in the 1920's. This is true partly because there are not enough funds being directed into production of consumer goods and partly a problem of the poor quality of what is produced; and this poor quality is also due to a myriad of distortions that result from an antidemocratic, bureaucratic method of rule. There is a severe housing shortage. People have to wait as long as five years for an apartment. The shortage is highlighted by the fact that the 27th Party Congress resolved that there will be a house or an apartment for every family by the year 2000. Many people live their lives in conditions of severe overcrowding.

The head of the Communist Party of Armenia, when he was addressing the 19th Party Conference held in Moscow in June, spoke about the problems in the Armenian Republic. Of course you all know there have been massive protests in Armenia, for the right at least in part to control their own republic. Undoubtedly, the Union-wide crises also play a key role in the social unrest there. The Armenian party head stated that "our socialist conditions are very bad. They are worse than the norm for the USSR." He said in fact that "many of the people in our cities in Armenia live in substandard housing." Most families live in what he called "dilapidated, emergency housing or in basements."

Then there is the problem of the deteriorating state of health care. It used to be, you may remember years ago, that you could say that even though you knew there were certain problems with Soviet health care, especially with regard to lack of modern technology and the unavailability of many necessary medications, their infant mortality rate was one of the lowest in the world. This fact was testimony to what could be accomplished with a nationalized health care system free and accessible to everybody. Well, the minister of health in the USSR was also a delegate to the 19th Party Conference and what he said was shocking. He said that the Soviet Union is now ranked fiftieth in the world in infant mortality rate! That is a tremendous drop. In terms of longevity the USSR now ranks 37th! And if you think about it, the rest of the world hasn't improved their health care programs; quite the opposite has occurred. The Soviet Union's health care has declined dramatically.

Nuclear power has finally become a major source of popular discontent in the USSR since the Chernobyl nuclear disaster of 1986. Discontent that was bubbling beneath the surface has now emerged into public protests. One of the key Soviet nuclear specialists who supervised the efforts to bring the catastrophe under control and assessed the extent of the damage at Chernobyl, Valery Legasov, committed suicide on

the second anniversary of Chernobyl this year. An article he had written about the terrible conditions at the plant and the complete lack of concern over safety in the Soviet nuclear establishment was printed in *Pravda*. There was a report about pervasive anti-nuclear sentiment in the USSR published in the *New York Times* this week. Six thousand people demonstrated in Lithuania in mid-September against a nuclear power plant twenty miles from the capital of their republic. It looks as if plans to push ahead with the expansion of nuclear power have had to be modified due to massive public opposition. However, the bureaucracy is trying to reverse this totally justifiable anti-nuke sentiment, which it cynically calls "radiophobia," as if it were a mental disorder.

The bureaucracy wants to overcome the problems that it has created not by surrendering power to the working people so they can make decisions about how to improve conditions in their own interests. Under Gorbachev's leadership, the bureaucracy is endeavoring to surrender power to the marketplace, to the law of value. They are interested in seeing what the "invisible hand" can do for the Soviet economy. And to accomplish this they are making inroads against key lasting gains of the October revolution. They are making inroads against the collectivized ownership of the means of production, the planned economy, and the monopoly of foreign trade. These three basic institutions are prerequisites to socialized production and are the institutions that have made it possible for the Soviet Union to become a major world industrial power despite over sixty years of bureaucratic misrule.

Of course, the USSR is not alone in reverting to the market. It is happening in China and it's happening all over Eastern Europe. But it is ironic that the bureaucracy is resorting to these market systems—that they are moving backwards in order to try to get out of their crises—at the very time when the world capitalist economy is in a marked decline. What we see around us is increased impoverishment of the masses in the capitalist world, concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands, unemployment, underemployment, hunger, malnutrition, homelessness, and famine. The Soviet bureaucracy is seeking to "learn from the West." That's what their new ideological leader Vadim Medvedev said last week. "To learn from the West" is what Gorbachev says they need to do in his book, *Perestroika*—proclaiming, in addition, that they have no intention of "disturbing the relationship of forces in the capitalist world," that is, assisting those struggles to overthrow the imperialist yoke.

Perestroika

What are the policies of perestroika, or restructuring? There is perestroika of all kinds. One is a political perestroika, which means fiddling around with the apparatus, closing one ministry and opening up another one. The recent constitutional changes are instituting a different system for the election of a parliament, erroneously equating the product of these elections with the original workers' councils, the soviets, that were formed by the workers and that served as the basis of the revolutionary government. But I want to discuss the economic side of perestroika. That is the side which is most critical to people's lives.

One aspect of this is a decentralization of decision-making. One of Gorbachev's key advisors, Abel Aganbegyan, has said that by 1991 only 25 percent of production will be determined by the ministries. That means in three years the plan will affect only one-quarter of the production in the Soviet Union. This decentralization of decision-making turns power over to elected factory managers, or so they say. Elected managers here and there will make decisions, not the centralized ministry.

The imposition of self-accounting, or *khozraschyot*, is another central component of the economic restructuring. Self-accounting means that an enterprise is on its own. If it intends to survive, it must "stand on its own two feet," or be profitable. It means that instead of providing subsidies to enterprises and industries, the state is going to provide loans and demand that they be paid back. If a company isn't profitable and it can't pay back its loans, then it will have a limited amount of time before it is declared bankrupt and closed down. Several companies have already been declared bankrupt and another 31 are on the verge of bankruptcy. So far the bureaucracy has been very cautious about carrying through on plant closing because they know that this could cause a very serious social backlash. But that's what is being projected. They are trying to encourage firms to compete with one another, "may the best man win" and so forth. And if a factory loses out in this competition, it will have to close and the workers will be out of a job.

This concept is even being applied to banks. Instead of a centralized financial system, there are now banks dealing with various sectors, that is, a construction bank, a food processing bank, etc., dispersing financial operations. All such changes are a turn toward "anarchy of production" and the "uncertainty of the market" of which a central historic victim has been the working class.

Another aspect of the decentralization of decision-making is the encouragement of production teams or brigades, decollectivizing the production process. The idea is to get people competing against each other in groups, to have them work harder to make ends meet, nourishing a "dog-eat-dog" mentality. Families are being encouraged to leave their collective farm and lease plots of the collective's land to set up an independent production unit. Gorbachev is calling for the implementation of this system over the entire Soviet Union. Let's "get man back to the land," he says.

One of the new initiatives has to do with people who lose their jobs — there have already been hundreds of thousands who have lost jobs and millions more are expected to do so. They are being encouraged to go to work for some of the privately established operations. Many of these are small family enterprises — approximately 150,000 exist so far. Individuals are registering to open up little private businesses to provide necessary public services that the state should be funding and guaranteeing for all.

Another big problem is quality control. According to official figures for 1985 and 1986, only 26 percent of the consumer goods that were produced during that period met basic quality standards.

I just want to tell two brief stories which illustrate what's going on in the Soviet Union. People in the Soviet Union know not to buy any consumer goods if the production date

shows the item was produced after the 23rd of the month. The reason is that the materials needed for production usually don't reach the production site until around the last week of the month. So there is a week to actually reach their production target for the entire month. So everybody works overtime, and they inevitably must therefore work in a slipshod way. Martin Walker in his book *The Waking Giant* has this anecdote: He was talking with a worker in a television factory, and the worker informed him that he and his coworkers never use a screwdriver during the last week of the month; they just hammer those screws in.

You can imagine what kind of production results from such circumstances. But, of course, it's not the fault of the workers. The problem is the bureaucratic attempt to manage an economy without either the workers or consumers having anything to say about it. Now there are more quality control inspectors being sent out to the factories to reject substandard products. Since this lowers the output figures for a plant, this means that workers may not get their bonuses. A plant could end up being closed if, as a result of these inspection measures, the plant proves "unprofitable" and is ordered to close down. Such "quality control" measures are a serious threat to a worker because workers in an enterprise rarely have any control over the quality of raw materials their plant receives or the availability of such materials or the numerous logistics associated with deliveries.

Inroads are also being made against the monopoly of foreign trade. By last summer, 77 ministries and around 25 enterprises had the right to deal directly on the international market, thus removing from the state the advantage of being in control of export and import decisions and all the attending circumstances. Joint ventures with foreign capitalists are being pursued as a shortcut to solutions to some problems despite the implications that arise with the reintroduction of capitalist exploitation of the Soviet working class. U.S. capitalists are generally holding out for terms more favorable to them.

And, finally, there is the reform most critical to the bureaucracy and to the workers as well: price reform, or allowing the market to determine prices. Some perestroika economists see eye to eye with the International Monetary Fund on the importance of cutting subsidies and other "waste" from the budget, that is budget items that keep food prices, rents, and prices of other necessities down. Such measures have been attempted on minor goods but severe reductions of subsidies and the resulting price rises for basic products, for example, promise to be extremely unpopular.

The present leaders of the USSR counterpose what they are doing to the "stagnation" of the Brezhnev years. You hear a lot about that, the Brezhnev years, 1964 to 1982. Perestroika is presented as something new. But it isn't really totally new. Under the New Economic Policy in the early 1920s similar policies were employed with some beneficial effects for a brief period, but under totally different objective, historic circumstances. The *Right* Opposition wanted to deepen and extend these policies, while the *Left* Opposition warned about the dangers that were threatening. Stalin backed the deepening of the NEP reforms and Bukharin's orientation toward the richer peasants. But when it became obvious that this economic approach was undermining the

workers' state on which Stalin and the bureaucracy rested, he made a sharp left turn, carrying out a caricatured version of the proposals which had been made by Trotsky and the Left Opposition years earlier and under different conditions. This rapid about-face actually served to dislocate the economy even more. The USSR is still suffering from this disastrous economic flip-flop of the Stalin era.

The central planks of the economic perestroika are characteristic of the proposals made by the Right Opposition during the 1920s. That is the reason why Bukharin was the first of Stalin's victims to be rehabilitated by the bureaucracy. Gorbachev has sought to use Bukharin and the Right Opposition as the inspiration for the perestroika reforms and to lend the reforms revolutionary legitimacy, a positive aspect from the bureaucracy's point of view to the rehabilitation of victims of the Moscow trials. Like Bukharin and the Right Opposition of the 1920s, Gorbachev and his team seek to inspire the peasantry to aspire to "enrich themselves" even at the expense of the consumers.

But their appeals are finding an encouraging response among the Soviet people. The Soviet workers have found a name for those who are setting up restaurants in order to enrich themselves by charging exorbitant prices. They are called "money grubbers." I think this testifies to the depth of the egalitarian thinking that still survives from the revolutionary period.

Nor are the economic proposals a notable departure from the policies of the "years of stagnation." Both *khozraschyot*, or self-accounting, and the brigades system were first implemented under Brezhnev and Kosygin in the 1960s and 1970s. So the process had started even before Gorbachev came to power. By 1982, 50 to 60 percent of the industrial workforce was affected. The final conclusion we would have to draw is that this approach doesn't work. It hasn't worked; it isn't working; and it won't work. This fact was essentially acknowledged by Leonid Abalkin, who is director of the Economic Institute, when he spoke as a delegate to the 19th Party Conference. Abalkin said:

"There has been under perestroika no radical breakthrough in the economy and it still remains in a state of stagnation. In the last two years, national income rates were lower than those of the stagnation years, targets were not met, the state of the consumer market has worsened, the gap from the world levels is increasing and assuming ominous proportions."

The policies of perestroika threaten to eliminate basic concessions the bureaucracy has made to the working class since the Stalin era. One is a guaranteed job. Article 40 of the Soviet constitution guarantees everybody a job. If you don't have a job, in fact, you may technically be regarded as a "parasite," according to the criminal code. That is one of the ways the bureaucracy used to punish dissidents. Protestors lost their jobs. They then got arrested for being parasites and were sent to prison. Jobs are already being threatened. Between 1967 and 1975 reforms of the perestroika variety wiped out over a million jobs.

A common practice which is also threatened is the collaboration between workers and manager to falsify production data to make sure workers' incomes remain at a stable level. The new quality control threatens that. Perestroika

also threatens to diminish the social wage. In 1965 workers got roughly 46 kopeks worth of state subsidized goods and social services for every ruble earned. By 1984 it was 69 kopeks. That was an impressive increase, especially considering these were the "years of stagnation." Decreased state subsidies and price reforms that mean increased prices for basic goods and services, reliance on the market and the anarchy of private profit motives for the provision of basic goods and services that should be guaranteed through a plan—such measures point toward lowering of the general standard of living for masses of working people.

Importance of Glasnost

Glasnost, however, is different from perestroika. That's what we're all excited about. Glasnost means the open airing of views and it has dramatically changed the intellectual environment in the Soviet Union. There is a tremendous liberalization of the press. It is actually interesting to read now. There are public discussions, an admission of problems of all kinds—social, economic, and even political.

Interestingly enough it took the sociologists talking to the bureaucrats for this to start. I guess the bureaucrats got so involved in their own world that they did not know what was going on and were never in the streets to see the problems. Tatyana Zaslavskaya, one of the leading sociologists who has been doing polls and thinking about social problems over the years, learned about the depth of the various crises and came to a conclusion about what was needed and presented it to the bureaucrats at some top level meeting in 1983: "Without open discussion about the most painful social problems, nothing can be solved."

This hardly seems profound to us in this room. It evidently was to some powerful people present in the room where she was speaking. This approach appears to be motivating the current initiative to loosen up the stifling atmosphere generally present since Stalin's time. The censorship, locked-up statistics, closed borders, falsified scholarship of all sorts killed innovation and crippled the society. To these obstacles must be added the devastation caused by Stalin's purges of the intellectual establishment which virtually eliminated a generation of productive intelligentsia.

The stranglehold of the bureaucracy had to be loosened if the intelligentsia could be expected to become truly productive. Now the bureaucracy hopes to get this social layer behind its policies by providing it with more democracy, more rights for international discussions and travel, a greater latitude to take up serious problems like the dangers posed by nuclear power plants and the destruction of the environment, also at an advanced stage in the Soviet Union.

Since the founding of the Left Opposition in 1923, the movement for democracy in the USSR has always been linked to our political perspectives. Trotsky's fight was based on demands for basic democratic rights, and the program of the Fourth International continues to be based on that. In the USSR it is only workers' control, democratic control of the planned economy, that can guarantee economic productivity and democratic rights to the workers. Such basic democratic rights are essential for human progress: the right to freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right to or-

ganize political parties, the right to organize unions and to strike, and, of course, the right to national self-determination. Human progress cannot take place without all these basic democratic rights.

The demand for democratic rights has been behind every single opposition and dissident movement in the USSR since 1923. The fight for basic democratic rights will undoubtedly be a fundamental issue in the antibureaucratic political revolution. The bureaucracy must find a way to allow some democracy without allowing so much that people can organize to overthrow it. In this the bureaucracy has a serious problem—and we've seen that mass movements have already begun to emerge through the little democratic openings that have been allowed so far. This is only the beginning of things to come. While the bureaucracy may be able for a short time to co-opt some of the movements—like it is trying to do in the Baltic Republics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) with the popular fronts they are involved in there; and while it might be able to try to sidetrack some of the movements for some of the time, the nomenclatured privileged caste of rulers isn't going to be able to hold back the entire movement. Because in their overwhelming majority the Russian and non-Russian workers are against bureaucratic power and privilege and also against individualistic anti-socialist solutions to their problems. That sentiment constitutes a direct challenge to bureaucratic power.

I would like to conclude with one of the most important aspects of glasnost, a point which is of great concern to revolutionaries throughout the world: the rehabilitation of the victims of the Moscow trials. This is one of the most important and promising developments in the USSR today. As we know the falsification of history is a terrible skeleton in the bureaucratic closet. History exams had to be canceled in the USSR this year for secondary school students. It was a shameful thing, because the authorities had to admit that the textbooks were filled with lies! The authorities told the students "We admit we were teaching you lies but you don't have to learn them anymore. We're rewriting history right now, and we'll have something for you in the fall."

Fatal Contradiction of Bureaucracy

If the bureaucratic caste expected to open up society enough so that it could get its computer chips and all the things it's after, it could not avoid confronting the reality of its history—which means revealing the source of its own position of power and its privileges in the bloody political counterrevolution of the Stalin era from whence the ruling bureaucracy authentically derives its historic continuity. So the call by Gorbachev in 1987 to fill in the blank pages of history provides an historic opportunity. How can the bureaucratic caste hold onto their power after historic truth reveals their power is illegitimate? Therein lies the rulers'

profound dilemma and an historic opportunity for revolutionary renewal.

Since the initiation of the glasnost campaign we have seen the consequences of this contradiction unfold: movements have emerged from below in the Soviet Union demanding the rehabilitation of Stalin's victims, memorials to them, and the right to read and discuss history and political ideas. The repression of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s lives on in people's memories even though history textbooks erased these events. Since the beginning of the glasnost campaign many of the victims of the Moscow trials have been rehabilitated, as most of you know. The exceptions are Trotsky's son Sedov and of course Leon Trotsky himself, the two chief defendants in absentia.

We are currently pursuing a campaign to demand Trotsky's rehabilitation. We want you all to participate in this, to publicize this historic process internationally and to bring international pressure from all who support civil rights and of the entire workers' movement to bear on the bureaucracy for a simple historic truth; to demand that historic truth be acknowledged in the USSR.

There is a very important article that has been translated from the Soviet press and printed in the current issue of *International Viewpoint*. I recommend it to everyone. It shows the extent of the changes in the intellectual atmosphere of special interest to us. For the first time the Fourth International is mentioned in the Soviet press in a more-or-less neutral manner. The *Bulletin of the Opposition* is mentioned. A lot of previously taboo topics are mentioned there. It shows that there is pressure from below to discuss Leon Trotsky's real role and it represents the attempt to develop a new line on Trotsky. Still, I counted approximately 85 places where old Stalinist falsifications and slanders about Trotsky were included, taking advantage of the fact that Trotsky's works are unavailable to people in the USSR and people can't check to see what Trotsky really had to say.

We are trying to help pressure the Soviet rulers to rehabilitate Trotsky and publish his writings and all the other banned writings from the 1920s and 1930s in the USSR so that they will be available to everybody—peasants, workers, students, intellectuals. People in the Soviet Union should be able to read them, discuss them, and begin to use them as they do what we know they will do—begin to organize, inspired by the ideas of Marxism again as they were in 1917. This time the mobilization of the Russian and non-Russian workers will lead to the overthrow of the parasitic bureaucratic caste. And in accomplishing this the Soviet workers will be aided by the ideas of Leon Trotsky and by the ideas of the Fourth International that he founded, and they will also be writing their own, new chapter in the rich history of the revolutionary workers' movement that the FI has maintained for these 50 years. ●

Coming Next Month in the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism:

"Conversations in the USSR," by David Seppo

The diary of a trip to the Soviet Union in the Spring of 1988

Gerry Foley: I think there are few things in our times that have aroused as much hope in countries all over the world as glasnost and perestroika. It is a very interesting phenomenon. The hopes in glasnost and perestroika represent the fact that people have been quick to give the Russian leadership the benefit of the doubt. It shows two things: first of all, what a big barrier Stalinism has been to the advance of socialism in the world. And secondly, how strong the aspirations of people are for a rational democratic order.

These are the reasons for the hopes. If this enormous, powerful country were to do away with undemocratic practices, were to democratize, the world would very quickly be a better place. The hope of a rational democratic order on a global scale would seem to be much more realizable. People are prepared to give them the benefit of the doubt, despite generations of anticommunist propaganda and Reagan's talk about the evil empire and all the rest of it. Suddenly the spokespeople of the right who continue to say these things look like a small minority. They are marginalized.

Changes Resulting from Crisis

That is, objectively, a very hopeful thing. It makes clear some of the realities of politics that people have lost sight of. But it is also very important to see where this comes from. It is not something that comes from the intentions of the Russian leadership. It is something that comes from a very deep-going crisis. Such a deep-going and dramatic crisis that the lucid layers of this bureaucracy realize that they couldn't continue to go on in the same way anymore. And, Trotsky insisted on this point, bureaucrats are by their nature a very stupid breed of humanity. They are very stupid; they are very slow; they move, they change only when they have no choice but to change, when they find themselves in a desperate situation.

One of the things that is hopeful in this change on the part of the bureaucrats, also, is that they had to recognize that you cannot build socialism without democracy. For a long time many people were tempted to think that, "Okay, we need democracy. Democracy is for the future. Democracy is a nice thing. But the important thing now is that we've got to solve these material problems and if we have to solve them without democracy, then so much the worse. Democracy will come later." I think many members of the mass Communist movement believed that. The repressive sides of Stalinism were not something that they liked or identified with. They thought they were something that would be overcome naturally through growth, as a result of the growth of the economy, as the result of advances in the struggle and so forth. But this leadership now is obliged to recognize that you can't build socialism without democracy. It won't work without democracy.

Now the problem is that if there were really democracy they wouldn't be leading society, which is a very big problem — despite the fact that they talk a lot about the need for democracy, and it is very concrete talk in many senses. Their idea of the need of democracy is that they need statistics that are real. When there was no democracy, no possibility to question anything, they had a completely false idea of the economy. They didn't know what they actually

produced. And they couldn't identify corruption, because nobody was able to say, "so and so has his hand in the till; this factory manager has his hand in the till; this factory manager has a private business; these Communist Party leaders in Uzbekistan have palaces like the emirs of Bukhara in the Middle Ages."

When nobody can say things like that, the system begins to break down in the bureaucracies' own terms: It becomes corrupt, inefficient, loses its credibility. People lose the ability to discuss politically. Even under Khrushchev, they used to have that right. We have to relearn the art of polemics. Relearn the way to discuss, the way our forefathers did at the time of Lenin. Otherwise nobody will believe us.

Glasnost and perestroika has this openness, this need to have enough democracy so that you can at least tell what is going on in society. It began to a certain extent around sociology and around the press. There are two important documents on the press in particular that were published around the time of the April 1985 Communist Party plenum. That is really the date of the beginning of perestroika and glasnost.

You can see what their idea of more democracy is. There is one pamphlet or booklet called *The Origins of the Soviet Press*, which has Lenin's picture on it and supposedly Lenin is the example of what the Soviet press should be. But all of the stress in this pamphlet is on a defense of the basic bureaucratic, antidemocratic conception of the press. That is, you can't have pluralism in the press; the suppression of pluralism in the press was correct, and so forth. But on the other hand the pamphlet explains that Lenin insisted on a workmanlike attitude toward the press — connections with the people, the workers' and peasants' correspondents who really knew what was going on in the factories and the villages, the use of the press for scientific education, and so forth. That is the concept for democratizing the press.

There is another booklet called *The Press and Public Opinion* in which they say: we've had this idea that public opinion had no relation to truth, that it was an epiphenomenon, something superficial. In order to know what people think or should think, you had to know what their class interest was. Then you could tell what they should think — which might not necessarily be what they do think. Some so-called social scientists of the Stalin era wouldn't have to go out to talk to anybody or examine anybody's experience. They could sit in their office and on the basis of some dogma determine what people really thought. That is the principle that they followed for a whole period.

The problem is that their whole picture of reality — and any government or administration has to function on the basis of reality — became completely distorted. They found themselves dangerously out of touch with reality.

Intervention of the Masses

When glasnost began it began also as a process from the top — which is not normally how democracy develops. It has to develop from the bottom with mobilizations, with a leadership that represents the masses. But I think we already passed a decisive stage in glasnost. It is no longer something that the bureaucracy controls, or a wing of the bureaucracy controls, and it no longer comes strictly from the top down.

We've begun to see mass mobilizations in the Soviet Union for the first time since the revolutionary period — mobilizations of up to one-third of the Armenian nation, one-third of the Estonian nation, an independent formation in Latvia that has 100,000 members, and even some mass demonstrations of 50,000 people in Lviv. They demanded, among other things, the truth about the Ukrainian resistance to Stalin, the guerrilla war that was waged in the western Ukraine against KGB troops at the end of the 1940s. Mass demonstrations have also even taken place in some Russian provincial centers against some particularly corrupt bureaucrats.

The phase of mass mobilization has begun. What is the relationship of that to perestroika? This is not something that the leadership of perestroika wanted, that the Soviet leadership wanted. In fact they argue that this is an obstacle to perestroika. The argument to the Ukrainian people is: don't demonstrate because that makes our economic tasks more difficult. It makes it harder for us to give you what you want. Really we would like to give you something, at least, of what you want. But if you demonstrate it makes it harder and particularly it interferes with production, which is the object of the whole thing.

So these mass movements are not something that they want. They've given concessions to national movements — not so much to the Armenians, because that's a bit more complicated, with conflicting interests. They have given some concessions to the Baltic peoples in particular: the right to display their traditional symbols, the right to talk about the national oppression that they have suffered, the right to demonstrate.

I don't think that that means the movement in the Baltic has been co-opted. I think that would be an error if you look at the way it has developed. You could make that argument about any movement that wins concessions. People argue in a similar vein about the trade union movement in this country (that it was basically wrong to organize trade unions because look what happened: we organized trade unions, got some concessions, and that conservatized people). That is always a problem. The alternative to it, however, is to step outside into the real world. People want real concessions now.

If you look at the development in the Baltic republics, Gorbachev opposed all of these things. He did a tour about a year ago in the Baltic republics, basically preaching the beauties of the Soviet Union as it was, the centralized Union as it was, to try and convince people of their dependence on this centralized Soviet system. Since then they have made enormous concessions to allow people to demonstrate, to allow people to demand, in effect, economic home rule in the case of Estonia. This Estonian demonstration demanded economic home rule, and they made promises in that regard. The same was done with regard to some of the other republics also. But it is not something that they wanted.

People can also say, and this illustrates another problem, that there is a layer of the Communist Party involved in this. Is the Communist Party a stable social formation totally separated from the masses? Our argument has always been that it is not. It is a caste, an economic caste, something that has existed specifically in a period of crisis. It has no future and no social roots, and yet it is a mass organization. There are millions of people in the bureaucracy. When the people

begin to mobilize, this totalitarian control begins to break down. Things change very quickly.

It is not like the United States, for example, or another capitalist country where it is difficult to get people moving because there is such a complicated layer of institutions between authority and the people. Once people begin to move in a bureaucratized society like the USSR, this layer breaks down very fast and sections of it go over to the people — either directly or halfway. We've seen this process occur in an explosive way in a whole number of situations. It is a regular pattern in the crisis of Stalinism, and we argued again in 1953 that the bureaucracy would break down. In the case of the Hungarian revolution, for example, the bureaucracy collapsed in a matter of weeks.

In this period we have a different problem. I think it is something we have to address ourselves to. In the first rebellions against Stalinism the achievements of the socialization of the East European economies were still very much in the forefront of people's minds, even when the Stalinist oppression and material deprivation were much more severe than they are now. The reconstruction of these countries after the war, the ending of illiteracy, mass education, mass industrialization, that was on people's minds. So the first rebellions against the bureaucracy immediately took a left communist form for workers' power, for carrying forward the socialist revolution. They don't necessarily do that anymore.

Now they start out from the experience of decades of relative stagnation, decades of deprivation of liberty, decades of grayness; and the people make the comparison with the West and their first tendency is that they want to say that "we should be more like them, because they are better off than we are." But as they go into struggle they learn that this leads them in the wrong direction. We've seen that in Poland. In the first period of Solidarnosc the predominant attitude was: we need market reforms. The workers supported that. And then they began to see what market reforms would mean. They would mean higher prices. There would be more privatization of housing. The only way you could get a house was to enter a cooperative and pay a lot of money down, and all of that. It would mean unemployment. That is, it is the program of the bureaucracy and that is what we don't want. So the reaction to this experience was to call for self-management by the working class, in effect to call for carrying the socialist revolution forward.

Importance of National Struggles

There have been some setbacks in Poland because there was demobilization after martial law, and so forth. But that, I think, is the process, the dynamic. These struggles that have begun, the mass struggle so far, are basically national struggles. I think that was predictable and I don't think it is something we should have any fear of, because there were terrible cases of national oppression in the Soviet Union such as the forced integration of the Baltic peoples.

I remember there was a very dramatic picture that has been republished in a number of magazines, showing a Soviet official speaking from a platform in one of the capitals of the Baltic republics — supposedly speaking to the masses who

were hailing this republic joining the Soviet Union. And even he turned away with a cynical smirk on his face because they were integrated by force with total denial of their rights. The integration was imposed by mass deportations. In some of the Baltic republics the farm collectivization even had the effect of creating something like the “strategic hamlets” the U.S. introduced in Vietnam. It was carried out in a very brutal way to deny the guerrillas a base. That is one of the reasons why it was so extreme. It was not just a question of nationalizing some of the land, but nationalizing things right down to the individual chicken. That doesn’t make any sense economically, but it does make sense politically from a bureaucratic point of view.

There is also the case of the Armenian people, who were deprived of the majority of their land. The Soviet authorities didn’t even allow them during Stalin’s time to commemorate the genocide. The forms of repression were particularly raw in Armenia—to the extent that one of the Armenian secretaries was shot by Beria directly in his office. It was like a scene out of a wild west movie. The purges were bad enough in the rest of the country, but they didn’t take such crude form anywhere else. These are running sores that have been suppressed. When this dictatorship loosens, these are the first things that are going to come to the surface—these ancient resentments, these long-standing resentments.

The other thing is that maintaining a national identity is relatively easy for people. Even where all political organization and workers’ organization have been crushed, the national identification is one thing that can’t be wiped out. You don’t have to know a lot about socialist theory. You basically just have to know who you are, what language you speak, a little bit of the history of your own people, maybe a few literary works. It is relatively easy. And it becomes the first direction that people move in.

But what these mass national struggles do is open up the path for the Russian working class also to organize. They disorganize the system of totalitarian repression. They give an example of mass mobilization. What they are doing in effect is opening up a path for the Soviet working class as a whole to mobilize and to organize and to reorganize the society and the economy—not just to reorganize the political structure by changing the hierarchy of power or the formal relationship between the various republics.

Once again this may take a violent form, the form of conflict. But this is a regime where extreme deformations, extreme deprivation of liberties, and resentments have been building up for seventy years. The breakdown of this system cannot be easy; it cannot be linear. It’s just like those brawls in western movies where people fight it out in the bar and all the furniture and all the bottles are broken. If you are in a life-and-death struggle you can’t be worried about breaking furniture. If demands are raised, for example, for independence—going beyond autonomy—I don’t think that is something we necessarily have to be afraid of. Because this system has been based on national oppression for seventy years, when it breaks down there will be a rebellion against that. That must lead to a complete reorganization within the Soviet Union of the relations among the nationalities on a democratic basis. This is a fundamental part of the transformation, the democratic transformation, of the Soviet Union:

to transform the relations among the peoples in the Soviet Union on a democratic basis. That involves democracy on an all-Union level as well as democracy within the various nationalities.

Opportunities for Revolutionists

This process has dangers. Any political process has dangers. Marilyn pointed to a lot of the dangers. There is also a problem, a bit, especially within our ranks, especially since the revolutionary socialist movement in the United States in the past period has taken some bad defeats. The danger is that we will think, okay, basically Gorbachev is carrying out our program. We can just sit back and he will solve it. Things are fundamentally going in the right way in the Soviet Union. There is no need for a revolutionary program; there is no need for our politics. History has solved this problem.

History has opened up an opportunity. History never solves anything by itself. It creates opportunities that are linked to dangers. But it creates an opportunity specifically for the Fourth International because it shows that Stalinism cannot last. This system cannot last. It has to be replaced by something else. We’ve had a problem over the last seventy years when Trotskyists have said that this system can’t last; it’s a specific phenomena of crisis, a transitional thing; it can’t last. But how could something like this have been around for seventy years? How could you say it is temporary?

All the things that have come out by glasnost show that it is temporary. This problem of low productivity of the workers, that is expressed in the workers’ slogan: “they pretend to pay us, we pretend to work.” What that reflects is a compromise. Political power was taken away from the workers, but they didn’t accept it. So there has been this compromise between the bureaucracy and the workers for the last seventy years. That is something that can’t last. It paralyzes the development of productivity. It is now breaking down. What fundamentally keeps the Trotskyist movement small is that it has had to fight on two fronts: first against the apparent development of prosperity in the advanced capitalist countries, against the idea that natural capitalist development will solve problems; and then, for people who don’t believe that, the alternative has been the Soviet Union, although undemocratic with many unlovely features. If we are to beat the people who oppress us, the pro-Soviet wing would argue, we must ally ourselves with the USSR and accept its faults.

Fundamentally there are two possible developments that will open up the way for the mass growth of a revolutionary socialist movement, for the regeneration of revolutionary Marxism as a mass movement. One is a revolution in an advanced capitalist country and the other one is the breakdown of Stalinism. When it becomes absolutely clear that this Stalinist system can’t last, that anyone who is looking for allies has to look at what’s happening in the Soviet Union and ally themselves with the rising forces and not with the bureaucracy, when that happens the whole relationship of forces in the world changes. And I think that is what is happening now. ●

Esteban Volkov: All the problems we are facing have to do with the material interests of the bureaucracy. It is really a strange social group. It has not yet reached the status of a social class. Maybe it could be called a pseudo-class. It has no definite character. It's really a parasitic group which came out from the cellar of history. This phenomenon has been very serious, very tragic in the case of the Russian Revolution.

In the case of Russia after the revolution, the inability to achieve socialism, the defeat of Marxism, the void of political power for a time after the revolution, enabled the bureaucracy to fill all the spaces of Russian life. This layer merged its interests perfectly with the very ambitious and unscrupulous man, Stalin. They got on the same train very easily, very amicably. The bureaucracy was strengthened each time things seemed more mixed up, each time there was more disorder, or more backwardness. That's really the fertile ground for its counterrevolution.

But progress, advances in science, technology, human activities of all kinds, the level of life push exactly in the opposite direction, against the consolidation and growth of the bureaucracy. The stronger this bureaucracy was, the less progress was possible, and the more backward were all the fields of human activities.

Without being fully conscious of it, the bureaucracy and Stalin developed an omnipotent power such as has never been seen before in history. They controlled absolutely all phases of Russian life to such a degree that after 50, 60, 70 years Russia and the Communist Party recognized that it is on a street without any outlet. The economy is absolutely in shambles; the process is absolutely in bankruptcy; and this has forced the actual leader of society—the legions of the Soviet bureaucracy—to try to introduce some changes. But the changes we are seeing don't go in the direction of real socialism, toward building the kind of society that Marxism

is supposed to be leading toward. They are rather trying to incorporate themselves into the pattern of the capitalist economy, of the capitalist system.

This is actually one of the proofs of the great failure of bureaucratic leadership, of the Stalinist direction of the Russian economy. They haven't been able to produce the fruits that you should be able to from a real socialist economy, where you would have the cooperation of the working class, the collaboration and enthusiasm of all sectors of the population in every field of human activity.

So the present attempt is really a great proof of the bureaucracy's total failure. The problems that face the bureaucracy cannot be solved by them in a socialist direction. Because, as the others have said, that would mean a total loss of their power and of their control of the country. We are seeing the contradiction that has no outlet. In order to survive, they are forced to start these changes even though they don't really want to.

Concerning the rehabilitation of the followers of Leon Trotsky, we aren't even asking for political rehabilitation, just an acknowledgment that the criminal charges were without foundation. We don't feel that the bureaucracy has any moral or legal right to judge the politics of Leon Trotsky. The Soviet working class will have to come to its own verdict. And that is very difficult without the right to read Trotsky's own words.

We are now waiting with interest to see what will be the final result of the Gorbachev reforms. We don't have too much expectation that he will succeed to any great extent. But the ignition of a movement, of a waking up of the working class and the opening up of information—of truth instead of the Stalinist lies—undoubtedly will start a much more substantial movement that will have much more substantial results. ●

Klan (Continued from page 15)

United Front and social democrats who counterposed a pro-Dukakis electoral rally to direct action against the Klan.

Despite the relatively small attendance, the November 5 mobilization forced government officials, such as the Park

Service superintendent, to retract the violence-baiting and affirm the peaceful intent of the rally's organizers. A victory was won. The November 5 mobilization forced the cancellation of the racist action in Philadelphia. ●

Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

27. At the Brickworks

What could Grisha and I have talked about that warm summer Sunday sitting on the shore of the Yun-Yaga river next to the brickworks about thirty kilometers from Vorkuta? The factory consisted of three low sheds dug deeply into the ground with primitive ovens inside them for the drying and baking. The bricks were shaped by hand inside the middle shed and hauled in handcarts from there to the ovens.

The clay was not softened with our feet, as was done by our very distant ancestors, since the climate at Vorkuta was a great deal different than that of Egypt; but with a very contemporary machine, built in the form of a great wooden drum with a shaft, and to the drum were affixed four paddles. A beam was attached to the shaft. Harnessed to it in teams of five, we walked in a circle and brought advanced technology into motion.

The people who supervised the building of the Pyramids had not yet realized that overseers with whips could be replaced by norms, for the nonfulfillment of which you received a penalty ration of 300 grams of bread and a ladle of bad soup for the whole day. But the more difficult the norm, the more strongly it induces artful evasion, especially if it is assigned to criminals. The timber cutters would make piles of logs that were empty inside. In construction, you manage to get by building barracks without any insulation in the walls. What's the point, since tomorrow they'll just move prisoners like those in there? They would dig one trench and pass it off as two jobs.

In camp language this was called "tufta" [big lies].

"You know, Misha, I hate tufta. The most disgusting tufta is the literary one. I will pave roadways my whole life, but I will never lie!"

Our conversation turned from literature to the hunger

In our next issue:

On November 21, the Soviet government newspaper Izvestia announced that the Supreme Soviet had "rehabilitated" Leon Trotsky's and Natalya Sedov's son Sergei L. Sedov. Not involved or interested in politics and very much involved in scientific work, Sergei had chosen to remain in the USSR when Trotsky was deported in 1929. Sergei was arrested in 1935 during the intensified attacks on Stalin's opponents following the Kirov assassination and was shot on false charges in 1937. Sergei, with whom his parents had lost contact following his arrest, had been shipped to Vorkuta and participated in the hunger strike organized by the Trotskyists there from October 1936 to February 1937. Baitalsky, also there at that time, discusses that strike in this chapter of his memoirs.

Sergei spoke about the experience to Joseph Berger, founder of the Communist Party of Palestine, during a chance meeting of a few hours in a waiting area at Lyublyanka Prison in Moscow where they were both briefly held in early 1937. Berger's account of this meeting, which also provides other information from Sergei concerning his experiences, will appear in our next issue.

strike. Grisha had not yet recovered from it. His cheeks were sunken and his eyes had an unhealthy shine about them.

In the first years of Stalinist reprisals, people who had not yet broken the habit of thinking that they were human beings tried to protest. The local officialdom did not even want to hear the protests and could hardly do anything about them

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.

anyway. So their advice to the prisoners was: "Write a statement, but don't let it be a collective thing. A collective effort gets a more severe punishment." But we have heard, Mr. Official, that they use these statements to light the fire in the stove of the office of the Special Section.

But all the same, you do write.

In short, this meant: They won't punish you for writing, but they will for protesting. But you don't get anything either way.

The Vorkuta hunger strike, as far as I can learn, was the most persistent and sustained of all the attempts to affirm our human dignity. Its main demand was for the right to work in separate brigades from the criminals and their *tuftas*. On the face of it, the demand does not seem serious enough to die for. But for the authorities, to accede to it meant to acknowledge the concept of "political prisoner." And we have none of those in our country. Consequently, the demand was counterrevolutionary and the hunger strike anti-Soviet.

It lasted a long time. Abrasha Fainberg died, a veteran of the Odessa Young Communist League. And he was not the only one. Finally, the officials agreed to separate brigades; but so that this would not appear to be a concession, they did it like this: A non-social criminal is appointed brigade leader (for example, Baglyuk was appointed to the builders) and then he selects for his crew whoever he wants, the officials didn't care who. The sheep will be safe and the wolves will be full. But the vengeful wolves recorded the names of all the recalcitrant sheep and this list formed the basis for all the subsequent work of the Special Section.

While the hunger strike was going on, the criminals were incited to pick on the Trotskyists. Until that time, they hadn't been called anything else, but from then on "Trotskyist," in the mouths of the recidivists, became the most disparaging term one could use. "Yes, a Trotskyist is worse than I am. I killed my wife. But she was mine. They, however, killed Kirov. Now, who gave them that right?"

The expression "Trotskyite gang," used in all its grammatical forms on the radio and in the press, was something the criminal elements could understand. In their minds, they pictured it something like this: At Trotsky's hideout, or perhaps Bukharin's (later on it became the "Trotskyite-Bukharinite gang") all their gang was gathered together. They were brainstorming about what to do with Kirov. Most likely, they played a game of cards for his head, as it's done among thieves. And Nikolaev drew the losing card. He then went out and shot Kirov. Consequently, the others who were playing cards with him are just as guilty as he is but they were lucky and Nikolaev was not. Understand? They all have to be crushed.

The criminals were widely involved in the force-feeding of the hunger strikers. Let the honest, hardworking people see how good we must be to feed these monstrous human beings, for no other reason than that the head official is so kind-hearted. Of course, the attendant himself got to fill up his fat belly but this had no influence on the principle involved: Just crush those Trotskyists!

In the Stalinist system of correction and punishment it was considered that the least dangerous criminals were the hooligans, the rapists, the chaste pickpockets—these officially called the "socially close" elements. They could be trusted; they should become the accounting clerks, brigade

leaders, and educators. But the hereditary miner Baglyuk was a socially distant element.

Once the hunger strike of the Trotskyists had displeased the officials, it also displeased the thieves socially close to the officials. Being at the brickworks, I knew how the strike was going. The convicts who arrived from the mines to join our penal crew talked about it, the majority of them with malice and hatred, asking: Why were the hunger-strikers moved to special permanent shelters? Why were they given milk to drink? I could not begin to make them understand about Fainberg. This was agitation. And, moreover, it was fruitless.

I did not end up at the brickworks as a punishment, but as a great specialist. My Kharkov friend Arkady arranged it. He thought it up as a way of getting me out of the mines. His service record, which accompanied him from the Chirchik construction project, said that he was a construction specialist. He had been sent to the brickworks as a construction superintendent, and he demanded that I be sent there as the best metalworker he knew of.

The person sent to head the brickworks was a prisoner, but one who was socially close. This former militiaman, convicted for some common crime, was a person with a good heart; where he could he helped his prisoner subordinates. He did not torment them and even tried not to put anyone on penalty rations. He did not interfere with Arkady's scheme. He would conduct the roll call, issue some orders; and then sit all day in his dugout, in the warmth, with his prisoner mistress. She played tirelessly on the guitar. Arkady occupied the other half of the dugout and I often visited him in the evenings and heard from the other side of the plank partition one and the same song, with Finnish words to a Russian melody. The official's mistress was listed as a brick maker.

She was envied. There were no fewer officials who wanted a little love than there were women prisoners prepared to sleep with them in a warm mud hut.

At the mines, at first, before the barbed wire was brought in, the women lived not in separate zones but simply in separate huts. I knew a few, some of them politicals. They behaved exceptionally well. In the special women's camps, it was incomparably worse. But at Vorkuta, in the first years, these criminals, arrogant and scornful, were able to give a well-deserved rebuff to any official who made a pass at them.

At the brickworks, I didn't see a single woman political prisoner. There were plenty of women criminals. They were a bargain. They succumbed out of comradeship or more often through losing at cards. I am speaking about camp morality not for the sake of eroticism, but to show the circumstances that were prescribed as "corrective" for us, who were not long ago Communist Party members, and for hundreds of thousands of ordinary workers who were sent to the camps as a result of an edict, or ukaze, on the protection of socialist property. They were simply called ukazniks, or edict violators.

The criminal leaders, *pakans*, were moved from one penal duty to another but they never had to work. It was not our basic food, putrid, foul-smelling salted cod, that the *pakans* devoured. The criminal-cooks sent the *pakans* the very best they could prepare from the available fat and meat, doled out in microscopic doses to the prisoners, with one hundred

portions going to the *pakan*. This he was able to eat. And wherever they transferred the *pakan*, there too was moved his boy. They ate from the same mess tin and slept on the same mattress. Enemies of the people and their wives were ordered held in separate camps at least five thousand kilometers apart and were not even allowed to write letters to each other. But it was considered inhuman to separate a criminal leader from his boy-wife. It was impermissible to infringe upon the human dignity of the leaders of those who are socially close.

The reeducation of criminals — in the form it took in those years when I could observe it — was converted into a genuine *tufta*, deceiving even people abroad. The incidence of crime did not diminish, not even of so-called common crime. Here is the simplest indicator, evident to all, no matter how much they concealed statistics on crime: name one city which closed down its prison because it was no longer needed. “Prisons and churches we will raze to the ground.” Both processes got quite out of step with the times.

During Stalin’s time, the application of laws of the Criminal Code and the observance of laws of morality not only ceased to coincide, but came gradually into direct conflict. They corrected an anti-social propensity for an unearned living, but in its place, inculcated habits of *tufta* and false fronts. Those who had stumbled one time were made lame for life. The officials waged a battle against moral defects; while boys living in the front lines of the struggle, right in plain view of their enlighteners, became victims of pederasts, and girls became prostitutes.

To deny that there are “political criminals” is a dishonest and hypocritical method favored also, incidentally, by South American dictators. Its consequences, despite the intentions of its inventor, go significantly farther than the inventor supposed: they deepen the gulf between the laws of the state and the morality of the society. The camps earlier had little in common with the work communes of Markarenko,¹ but after they began to reeducate miners and metalworkers through work, they became a symbol of Stalinist hypocrisy before the whole world.

Administrative measures can in certain instances release a social machine. But the same type of measure cannot stop it. So the starter can get the motor going but is unable to influence its subsequent course.

* * *

So, the winter passed and Grisha and I sat on the shore of the Yun-Yaga, throwing stones into the water and talking about literature, the hunger strike, and other topics of mutual interest to two monsters.

“I see now,” said Grisha, “that the hunger strike is no good for us; it was a Western thing. Oh, the suffragists can go on a hunger strike! ‘Oh, the cruel government!’ people say. A pack of reporters come running. For the newspapers, it’s a sensation. But here, not even the whole camp heard about it. Most likely, not even everyone on that shore over there knows about it. And outside the camp, they may find out about it in ten years time!”

Grisha was wrong. More than thirty years have passed and there are still only a few people surviving who know about

the Vorkuta hunger strike, although the exact number of those who participated is not known even to us. It was approximately three to four hundred. If I am mistaken, let the historians sift through the archives and correct me.

“Do you know, Misha, what the official of the Special Section said to me? A hunger strike is the worst counterrevolution. There can be no hunger strikes in a Soviet prison. If you don’t work, you are on strike. You are not refusing to take your ration of bread from the state; you are sabotaging state work. You have a right to present a statement, of course. We wrote them and almost right in front of us they used it for toilet paper.”

“They’ll pin something on you, Grisha.”

“Of course, they will. But I could not refuse to go to the negotiations out of fear once the comrades had sent me.”

Grisha talked simply, as if we didn’t both understand what the case smelled of. We could not foresee the coming rivers of blood, but we did not doubt that Stalin’s people would get their revenge.

The prisoners were reshuffled. Some were hauled here, others there. And the next day, again: “Kamenetsky, Deineka, Lipenzon — take your things!” Somewhere on high, the next measures are being readied, but you sit on your plank bed and chew your rations anxiously, sensing that possibly this very minute on one of those innumerable lists, they will tick off your name, meaning a trip to the devil knows what faraway place, or a small cross; we still did not know that it will be the only cross over the grave of a person at that minute being condemned to death. And for thirty years now, I have lived with the feeling that I am on that list.

Kamenetsky, Lipenzon, Deineka . . . Deineka, it seems to me his name was Vanya, slept next to me for a few weeks. He was a student, as I remember, from Kharkov. A sweet, cordial, quiet lad. Coming back from work, he would immediately hit the books. It could be that besides me, no one will remember this quiet youth, who had the courage to say (when he would speak up) what was on his mind.

The Yun-Yaga flowed by our feet. White clouds flew in the sky.

“How right Lenin was in his Testament!” Grisha said. “Of course, the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be mild as a lamb. It is a sword, but a double-edged sword. I’ve been thinking a lot about this in recent months.

“How long has it been since we saw each other? Half a year? More?”

“Only a little more. Oh, Grisha, I missed your red mug!”

Declarations of love between men do not go over well. Grisha laughed.

“It is clear to me. The officials do not like protests. And here it was a mass one. ‘The common criminals may yet learn something; heaven help us if that were to happen.’ But they are afraid for nothing. The *urkas* [common criminals] won’t learn from this. When an *urka* wants to get out of work, he chops off a finger. The *urkas* don’t protest, they try to get out of work and one can do that only individually. It is not for nothing that one word of protest is punished more severely than a half year of trying to get out of work. That is in itself a kind of strike, but the common criminals are not punished for it.”

This time, after many months’ separation, I noticed that

Grisha had become somehow sadder. And he became somehow cold toward me. Perhaps I was jealous. He had become very close with Matvei Kamenetsky, an old Komsomol member from Donetsk and our long-time common friend. When we were harnessed to the log of the clay-softening machine, Grisha went on the outside and Matvei between us.

They brought Grisha to the brick factory in a large group of politicals. Among them were old party members, elderly people well known for their revolutionary past. Grisha was only thirty-two years old and had joined the party not so long ago. But he was respected like no one else was. This was not expressed in verbal testimonials but in conversations about him in his absence, in the nuances of relationships and in the fact that they were proud of him for his fearless defense of the truth. This incident was related to me. He and the other comrades were transported from the mountain regions of Shora to Arkhangelsk in a freight car, with little windows right under the roof covered with barbed wire. The car stopped at a large station with guards alongside it. The people passed by and a voice said: "Look, they're transporting thieves." Then Grisha scrambled onto the shoulders of the comrades and began to shout through the little windows just what kind of thieves these were. The guards threatened him and clanked on the bolted doors; but Grisha said everything he wanted to until he was finished.

I would like to note further that the poems I have quoted in the epigraphs were written by Grisha when none of us could have conceived of such a future, in 1927. He felt that he would not die in bed. He knew.

Grisha spent a month or a month and a half at the brickworks and then he was again taken away to the mine, apparently, for the next interrogation. The investigation into the matter of the hunger strike had begun. Prisoners were taken away and brought back, taken away and again brought back. Among those who arrived I always met old friends. First Sema Lipenzon, then Maksimchik, who in 1922, during the torchlight procession, had broken the glass in the window of a NEPman's restaurant with the heel of his boot. I was not surprised to see him. Maksimchik could not have ended up anywhere else.

Sema Lipenzon did not get around to telling me why he had been sent to the brick factory. Much later, others told me. He had worked as a *kapter*—second in command after the chief engineer—a position to which no matter how fond they may have been of the socially close, it was impossible to assign an *urka*. The *urka* would steal the *kapter's* supplies. Even if he did not want to, others would see to it that he did. They have their own rules of the jungle, also called laws. The law says "Thou shalt steal and supply the *pakan*." The *pakan* is not a post one gets elected to, but one that is attained exactly as it would be in a pack of animals: the strongest, cruelest cutthroat makes himself (or is made) the leader of the pack.

The person sent by the *pakan* came to Sema and demanded he be given one thing or another: lard, butter, sugar. Sema refused. He did not steal for himself or for anyone else. They came again, and this time made threats. Sema did not yield. So they followed the newest practice, that is, they mastered the side of politics that was closest to them. It is possible to get a fellow out of the way without getting

your hands dirty. They went wherever they had to with a statement that *kapter* Lipenzon was agitating and also had torn down a portrait of our leader. It worked like a charm. Sema was taken from work and sent to the brickworks, and later several times summoned here and there, and then sent back to the brickworks.

The brickworks, a penal duty, a prison within a prison, also had its own prison, a sort of triple degree of confinement: the so-called isolator. That is where refusers were sent (that is, those who refused to work). You could get sent there for other offenses as well. As a location, they designated the only barrack for the crew, with a sturdy door and bars. For living quarters, they built dugouts. The isolator stood alone, directly under the guard's watchtower.

Once they brought to the brickworks a young fellow I had known before in Kharkov, from Elizavetsky. Such an inconspicuous, quiet lad he was. He didn't participate in the opposition but ended up, like Buleev-Chapai and many thousands of others, as filler, like sand in cement.

And suddenly, while in the camp, he became a believer and joined the religious sects. There was a big group of them at Vorkuta (no matter where I ended up in camp, I never failed to find the religious sects there; possibly, in 1919, the religious society near Moscow had been a bit hasty in sending vegetables to the Council of People's Commissariats; but they were only a sect and not prophets).

A young man, a city lad, and on top of that a Jew—in an Orthodox sect. Some found it surprising, others found it amusing. But he remained serious about it. He let a little scraggly, reddish beard grow on his pale face. All the sect members wore beards. And with a straight face, he began to try to convert us to his faith by his evangelical example: attending to the sick, enduring insults in silence, calling recidivists "my brothers," and voluntarily doing the dirtiest work. But he refused to work in the office of the officials or in the mines. The sect members considered that coal served the anti-Christ. With it, the bars of the isolator windows were forged. In truth, these semiliterate peasants were able to think more consistently than some scholars. Their refusal to work may not materially harm the anti-Christ. Thousands of others may be found who will consent to help in their place. But they still won't do it!

The officials tried to provoke the "old men," as everyone called them, with leading questions like this: "Maybe God doesn't want you to sow grain either." The officials wanted to implicate the sect members in agitation against the campaign to collectivize agriculture. They answered:

"God said to sow grain for all to eat. It is you who are starving us, and we could never do that. We give good in return for evil."

And they still would not go into the mines, for which they were sent to the brick factory; and with them was sent the young old man from Elizavetsky. He received a cross, but not the cross of a sect.

* * *

Changes began to take place in the regimen of the brick factory. All of us—uncommon criminals—who had earlier lived in the dugouts were locked up in the isolator. During

the days, they continued to lead us to work, and as before, we unloaded freight cars full of timber and supplies and kept the clay-softening machine turning. The narrow-gauge railroad line passed about two kilometers from the brick factory and we carried the logs and bags on our shoulders; there was as yet no other form of transport at Vorkuta. They brought in horses after people had done the lion's share of the work, in 1940.

While Grisha was at the brick factory, we stuck together — he, Kamenetsky, and I. And then Maksimchik undertook to teach me how to carry a sack on my shoulder. The son of an Odessa stevedore and a stevedore himself, he carried sacks easily and with grace and walked under their weight with a springy gait. I was envious.

"Mishya," he shouted. "Learn while I'm alive to teach you." After "sh" he put a "ya" — "Mishya." And after an "r" he said "i" — krishya — Odessa style.

Everyone said he was out of his mind and considered him evil. But what a warmhearted lad he was! I had a hernia and it wasn't until right before the war that I had an operation. It would fall down when I carried heavy loads. Maksimchik never forgot about my ailment, trying to substitute his shoulder for mine. He would not give me sacks of flour but only sacks of finely ground barley would he push my way; they were a little lighter. Finely ground barley chaff was the mainstay of the prison camp diet from Vorkuta to Magadan.

Once we unloaded sacks of peas, a gourmet delight for a prisoner. They gave us pea soup only very rarely. In one of the sacks we found a little tear and we stopped it up with grass, but before that we stole as much as we could get into our pockets. Before you judge us, put yourself in our place. My father would not steal even four little pieces of sugar, and here I was stealing peas. And my father was also hungry. I will explain but not repent.

My father's thinking went as follows: stealing four pieces of sugar is no different than stealing four sacks. It was based not on the material dimension of the loss but on the moral dimension. They trust you, so live up to their trust. But I was not trusted at all, not a bit. Where there is trust, there will always be less theft than where there is none, although we have difficulty imagining how it is possible not to do an inventory in a store every month.

They locked us up in the isolator at night. By the light of a primitive oil lamp, we recited poems aloud, from memory. One comrade, a student, recited superbly; best of all, he managed "The Bronze Horseman." This ruler, who built his capitol on the bones of the serfs, frightened the people even after his death. His terror survived him.

The winter and summer of my stay at Vorkuta passed. They left in me a troubled sense of impending danger.

Prisoners must forever tremble. Fear of prompt execution better than anything else softens the human clay, which the officials of the economic institutions knead, mix, and sift as we kneaded clay and molded the bricks to create socialist industry in the untamed reaches of Vorkuta.

Somehow, on high, they produced the next round of sifting in our ranks, and one nasty autumn morning, the door of the isolator opened and several people were summoned. I grabbed my sack and took leave from Arkady, Maksimchik, and other friends. And at that very hour, a new convoy of prisoners was being moved from the narrow-gauge railroad to the brick factory. We came together at the ford across the Yun-Yaga. All those same people in the filth and soot of that camp isolator!

"Grisha, are you here again? From where?"

"From Usa, and where are you going?"

"I don't know."

Those in charge of the convoy turned out to be nice guys. They did not try to hurry us. Under the pretext of the perennial need to light up, we stood together for several minutes.

"A second time at the brick factory. This doesn't happen by chance. Misha, let me kiss you."

Many years have passed since that cold morning, but I can still see the broad-shouldered figure of Grisha before me. He wasn't lugging along a sack like everyone else, but a square reed basket, which more readily held books. He seized me firmly by the head and pressed his rough, bristly cheek to my face.

The convoys were moved off, each in its own direction. I looked back and was able to make out Grisha in the crowd of people, one after another jumping from one stone to another. The Yun-Yaga had begun to freeze over and the stones had become slippery. Grisha slipped and evidently got his foot wet. There was a break in the movement of the line.

When they all reached the opposite shore, I could no longer distinguish anyone. Grisha! Grisha!

As a secret grave, you are renowned.

Stop! Yun-Yaga, little river of tears.

Tell me, where should I place the slab of granite

I have carried in my heart for all these years.

Note

1. A.B. Markarenko (1888-1939), Soviet pedagogue and writer best known for his educational experiments in the 1920s to redeem homeless youthful criminals through collective educational processes.

[Next Month: "The Tents for Those Condemned to Death."]

Some Reasons for the Degeneration of the SWP

Tom Barrett's review of recent F.I.T. publications (*BIDOM*, No. 55: "Reclaiming the Truth") raises some important questions. I think I can begin to provide an answer to one of them — namely, to explain "the relative ease with which the leadership [of the Socialist Workers Party] brought the overwhelming majority of the active party members around to its anti-Trotskyist politics."

I believe that for years the national leadership and many branch leaderships failed to provide an adequate education for their membership — an education that would enable them to think independently.

I was a member of the SWP for 12 years (expelled in 1984). I remember one of our branch organizers being asked by a comrade how we should answer questions from the public about some recent event. I cannot now remember what that event was, but that is irrelevant. The organizer's reply was that we *must* wait until we got the next issue of the *Militant* and found out what it said — i.e., until then we had *no* answer for outside questioners!

Learning to think independently is not easy: it has to be encouraged. It involves: (1) Finding the time to read and learn as much as possible about the facts. (2) Not taking anything for granted. Marx was for "a ruthless criticism of everything that exists." "If ever you surrender your right to criticism, you're dead," Tom Kerry said. (3) Finding the time to think about the facts and evaluate different interpretations of the facts that may be available so as to come to one's own conclusions.

Even so, the conclusions one comes to will depend on one's premises. So members of a Marxist organization need to be grounded in some fundamental premises — ideas as basic, for instance, as historical materialism, class struggle, and the nature of the state. And these premises, too, should be arrived at critically.

Soon after I joined the party we listened to a tape of Bea Hansen's class on the Organizational Principles of the SWP. We learned about democratic centralism and the rights of tendencies and factions. Soon after, the party (and the Fourth International as a whole) was divided on the subject of guerrilla warfare. We all had firsthand experience of the organization of a tendency discussion and the decisive power of the party convention.

During my last years in the SWP, education for new recruits had settled into a routine: *The Communist Manifesto* and *The Transitional Program*. The newer, and therefore mostly younger, recruits were not educated in the norms of the party and the meaning of democratic centralism. They had not been involved directly in a struggle between tendencies or factions, nor were they informed about the development and resolution of previous struggles within the party. The majority had nothing to prepare them for the breach of discipline perpetrated by Jack Barnes when he introduced (at the 1981 YSA conven-

tion in Chicago) a new line that had not been approved, or even discussed, at a party convention.

The educational nadir was achieved by the "Lenin classes" started after 1981 party convention. In my branch, after we had read a criticism of Trotsky by Lenin, I suggested that the class should read Trotsky's initial statement and his response to Lenin's criticism. The branch leadership conceded that comrades could do this reading if they wanted, but it would not be *required* reading, nor would photocopies of the texts be provided to comrades, who must provide themselves with the original texts at much greater expense if they wanted to do the reading.

So much for the opportunity of comrades to evaluate the opinions and actions of Lenin and Trotsky. What a difference from the education comrades were receiving when I joined the party in the early '70s! So when Barnes laid down the new law in a one-and-a-half-hour speech at the YSA convention and followed up with an article in *New Internationalist*, it was no wonder that there was only a minority to criticize it and to question his violation of democratic centralism.

I think that the same conditions have a bearing on a second question raised by Tom Barrett as to why hundreds of dedicated activists left the party, "unwilling to fight for the ideas which they once defended so passionately."

Most of the party veterans did defend the program of the Fourth International and were therefore expelled. But many younger activists had joined the party seeing it as the most efficient medium for fighting for their objectives. They were not educated and prepared for, and therefore had not reckoned with, internal faction fights — especially one carried on in violation of party norms, as was the Barnes anti-Trotskyist coup. They were dismayed to learn of one expulsion after another (and eventually a mass expulsion). They had joined the party for action in the class struggle and were not prepared to deal with methods of procedure approximating those of Stalinism. Their neglected education had no doubt failed to show them the crucial importance of the revolutionary party. They opted, therefore, to wash their hands of internal "squabbles" and disregard of democratic centralism and to find some other arena for their activities.

I hope an appreciable number of them will find their way into the F.I.T.!

Eileen Gersh
London

Logjam

For the duration of World War II, the auto workers, as well as most segments of organized labor, confined themselves pretty much to the class collaborationist policy of the labor bureaucracy. Yet, upon the war's ending the organized workers broke from this conditioned stance, much to the disturbance of the labor leaders, to a policy of class

struggle—the policy that gave birth to the unions in the first place.

As one of those militant workers from the very beginning it is my reasoned opinion that the principal “logjam” that has prevented the further progress of the labor movement and has caused its noticeable deterioration is the class collaborationist policy pursued in politics.

The refusal of the labor bureaucracy to break politically with the Democratic and/or Republican parties is to maintain the bureaucracy’s continued existence.

Unfortunately, the non-class conscious organized working class cannot generalize the struggle beyond their immediate trade union needs. This task, therefore, becomes the task of the class conscious members, usually socialist, within the labor movement to introduce at every favorable opportunity the idea of a labor party.

Just as a worker would not vote for his boss to be his shop steward, so too he should not vote for the boss’s parties to solve any of his problems.

This, then, is the next big hurdle that organized labor must take. Once this “logjam” is broken, watch out bureaucracy!

F. Valle
Detroit

A Response to Dave Riehle

I feel compelled to respond to the article by Dave Riehle (BIDOM, No. 57) on the negativism and abstentionism advocated (and practiced) by most leftist groups these days vis-à-vis the labor movement and the working class in general. Having recently resigned from a “Leninist” party over just this issue, and being involved in a trade union, this subject is of special importance to me.

The assertion that economic decline automatically leads to a rise in the combativeness of the working class is especially dangerous I feel, but, as the article states, many groups do take this point of view. In actual fact, the initial stages of a depression are usually characterized by attacks on the worker’s living standards and working conditions by the bosses. The response to this, especially if there is no revolutionary socialist alternative for people to look to, is a retreat by workers and their organizations.

These are times when the bosses look forward to taking back gains won in previous years, evening up old scores against union militants, and beating down political resistance. When the layoffs and unilateral wage cuts are first implemented there is naturally a lot of disorientation and diffusion within the class. The lack of an anticapitalist program and organization which is independent of the ruling class that people could look to and participate in only aggravates the condition and makes it more unlikely that when people finally are beaten down to the satisfaction of a lot of these groups, they will look to a revolutionary alternative.

Later in a depression, when the situation has deteriorated to the point that most people have given up on individual solutions, there is a move towards a collective solution. This turn is governed by the presence of a

revolutionary alternative both in its timing and its quality. If the left continues to abstain from struggle during this turn, the solutions themselves will be controlled by reformist and opportunist elements, usually (if the country is the United States) of a populist nature. These organizations have occurred throughout U.S. history (the most important example being the Non-Partisan League) and have not led to a permanent working class organization and have brought only transitory gains.

Another danger of this mentality described by Riehle can develop in periods of severe economic crisis when the capitalist class decides it has no alternative but to back a fascist movement. It is during such periods that the vacuum created by the left takes its greatest toll. Whether or not capitalism is heading toward this severe a crisis is problematical, but I believe socialists should be concerned about it, instead of retreating into the type of thinking that characterized the CP’s “third period” in the 1930s (and which assisted the Nazis into power).

The organization I left recently adopted a political resolution that is quite enamored of the ruling class in that the conscious role played by the ruling class and individual actors within the class are seen as the motor force of history and the working class is reduced to merely reacting (and not too intelligently at that), to attacks on its living standards. From these attacks it is hoped, by the resolution, that the ignorant louts will eventually turn to the left (and this organization in particular) for guidance. In the meantime, however, all initiative is to be left in the hands of the ruling class (those great actors on the stage of history) to lead and indoctrinate the workers.

Because of the lack of internal democracy and simple consideration I encountered when I tried to argue against this position I decided to resign. I also decided, upon consideration later, that I could not do trade union work and still be a member of an organization that thought this way. I recently told a friend of mine who’s in the UAW about this experience and my work within my union, especially this contract we just negotiated. He told me that what I was doing now was far more important than this “revolutionary party.” Maybe, but no one on the left can fail to be dissatisfied with the fragmented nature of the work that we end up doing, especially in light of the developing situation.

In other parts of Riehle’s article, I couldn’t fail to notice that he had no real alternatives to suggest beyond shedding this superior mentality that many left organizations seem to have (which would be no small improvement). On his discussion of P-9, he doesn’t say what should have been done assuming the tactic of mass pickets could no longer be pursued (a conclusion I don’t agree with based on my participation in that strike). We have got to start thinking more clearly on subjects like this since it is apparent that the actions of Hormel are not isolated, but form a centerpiece of many capitalists’ actions against their workforce.

Linda Shannon Kellam
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