

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

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Who We Are

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

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

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

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

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Historic April 9 March Shows Way Forward for Women's Movement

by Mary Scully

The April 9 march in Washington D.C. for abortion rights was magnificent and historic, both in its size and in its character. With nearly 600,000 participants, it was the largest women's rights action ever held in this country. The majority of the women who came—old and young, grandmothers, mothers, and daughters—were participating in a political demonstration for the first time. One thing that was obvious to all observers was that there were a lot more men than at previous marches. And large numbers of families with children participated as well. In many respects, the action represented a genuine cross section of the U.S. population (though it was noticeably weak in Black participation and the reasons for this require some discussion by movement activists).

The march not only showed the breadth and potential strength that can be mobilized by the women's movement, but also registered a dramatically different character to that movement than it had 20 years ago. It is now far broader. There were contingents from all 50 states, numerous religious groups (including Mormons and Catholics), and gay and lesbian rights organizations. Most striking, however, were the thousands of working class women marching under their union banners, and contingent after contingent of high school and college students.

Waiting for the Call to Action

This shows that there has been a great advance in the participation of working class women in the movement, a result of the impact feminist ideas have had on union women. It also represents a growing influence of women in general within their unions.

Another thing that was conclusively proven on April 9 is that young women today are more than ready to take to the streets in defense of their right to choose. This debunks a myth perpetrated for some time by the conservative leadership of the women's movement. They have claimed that the lack of action in defense of abortion rights was due to the complacency of young women. They wanted to avoid taking responsibility themselves, since the lack of any concerted mobilization against the right-wing anti-abortion offensive has actually been due to the unwillingness of groups like NOW—prior to the call for April 9—to build a genuine movement. The real situation should now be clear, however. All that was lacking was an authoritative call to action. Once that was forthcoming, all else followed.

Students in all parts of the country held meetings to build the march, formed new groups, organized buses, and marched in their own contingents. In Boston, where I was

able to observe events firsthand, there were no functioning women's groups on any campuses prior to the call for the march. But ad hoc formations emerged to build for it on more than 25 campuses.

One high school student from Boston who organized a contingent of 70 from her school also convinced her mother to come by explaining the importance of mass protest. According to her mother, this proponent of mass action was nurtured on the lessons of the anti-Vietnam war and civil rights movements—a perspective her mother had long since abandoned. When this high school leader said at a rally, "We are the future of the fight for women's rights," she was expressing not only the historic power of mass action, but also the promise of these new, young fighters, "all outrage and energy," as her mother described them.

April 9 was also an international demonstration. It is significant that abortion was outlawed in most countries at about the same time—during the last half of the 19th century. It was also legalized in many countries in roughly the same period—some hundred years later. The importance of this has not escaped the notice of women internationally. A French speaker at the rally reported the presence of international contingents from France, Canada, Mexico, Eritrea, Namibia, and other countries. She pointed out that if American women lose legal abortion it threatens the rights of all women around the world. There were also solidarity rallies on April 9 at U.S. embassies in several European countries.

Impact of the March

To really appreciate the importance of the D.C. demonstration for the women's movement one must remember what things were like before it was called. Only a matter of months ago, activities around abortion or any other women's issues had declined to the point where almost nothing was being done. The traditional leadership of the women's movement had hitched its fortunes to the Democratic Party and were expending their energy exclusively on lobbying and stop-gap legal efforts. They remained indifferent, and even opposed, to building a movement to defend abortion, despite the repeated assaults and restrictions on abortion rights—especially for poor women.

But the increasing aggressiveness and relentless disruptions of the anti-abortionists were grabbing headlines and creating a false impression that there was a groundswell of opposition to a woman's right to choose. When the Reagan administration intervened last November and petitioned the Supreme Court to reconsider and overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the

leadership of NOW and other established women's organizations was finally roused to call for a mass response to the attacks.

Prior to the march, the media did its best to ignore the women's movement in reporting on the abortion debate. Instead there were quotes and appearances by doctors, or ministers, to present the pro-choice side. This usually meant that abortion was argued on the basis of religious freedom, or mental health, and not as a matter of women's right to reproductive liberty. This attempt to ignore women's claims to abortion rights also characterizes the handling of the Missouri case now before the Supreme Court. The legal debate so far has focused on the constitutional right to privacy versus fetal personhood. With the April 9 march, however, the women's movement barged back into the debate and took center stage.

Since April 9, the media—in particular the *New York Times*—has attempted to undercut the significance of the action by extensive, front page articles reporting new polls showing a nation sharply divided on abortion rights. They are trying to prove that neither side in the abortion controversy can claim a majority. There is certainly ambivalence about abortion among many Americans, but ample evidence exists to show that the majority clearly favors a woman's right to make the decision for herself. And efforts at journalistic sleight of hand cannot hide the fact that while the anti-abortionists have for years been hell-bent on building a movement to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, they have only managed to gather some 50,000 in their best national effort—one of their annual demonstrations in Washington on the anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision. On the other hand, the pro-choice movement rallied 600,000 within a matter of months, as a result of a genuine groundswell.

Many of the speakers at the April 9 rally quite rightly argued that the Supreme Court, despite its theoretical blindness, is not immune to mass political pressure. In many ways, the myth that the court is above politics has been called into question not just by April 9, but by the whole abortion issue. President Reagan made no bones about the fact that he was looking to put justices on the court who would be more inclined to make rulings to deny abortion rights. The present justices, however, are no doubt aware of the social crisis that is likely to result if they do actually overturn the *Roe v. Wade* decision. And April 9 was a sharp reminder of this reality.

Strategy for the Movement

For now the focus of attention by the women's movement is correctly on the Supreme Court. A decision in the Missouri case is not expected until June or July. That gives the movement some time yet to keep up the pressure on the court and to keep women's right to reproductive freedom at the center of this debate. The picket lines held on April 26, the day that the court heard arguments in the Missouri case, drew thousands of women in several cities.

But it is important to remember that even if this battle is won hands down, and the court throws out the Missouri

statute in its entirety, substantial restrictions have already been imposed by various states (parental consent laws, denial of Medicaid funds, etc.) through legislation that has already been upheld by the courts. Quite possibly, the court will also sustain some aspect of the Missouri law which will further restrict women's reproductive freedom.

One way or another, the struggle will not end when this particular battle is over. It is absolutely vital to deepen and extend the fight for choice now that we have the initiative. Like any democratic right in capitalist society, the struggle to maintain a woman's right to choose can only be defended if masses of people maintain their vigilance and their willingness to fight for it. And we will be even more effective if we fight not just to maintain this right but to extend it, and to gain new rights for women and other oppressed groups in our society.

Developing a women's movement with that kind of fighting spirit is now the order of the day. Because of the seriousness of the threat to abortion and the power of April 9, all women's and abortion-rights organizations (especially NOW and NARAL) have recorded huge increases in their memberships. These groups are faced with the problem of what to do with the women who are swelling their ranks. Their usual political strategy of lobbying state and national legislatures will be unable to utilize these new forces, and will certainly not be attractive enough to hold them. A large number of these women have considerably less faith in or affinity with the Democratic Party than the established leadership of the women's movement has. If these new activists are unable to find a place in the movement, or are given nothing to do besides writing letters to Congress, they will quickly be lost. A great opportunity will have been frittered away.

Socialists have an important role to play in the necessary process of discussion and reorientation for the women's movement, since we are the most conscious, outspoken, and articulate proponents of mass action. After the impact of April 9 many more women will now be open to proposals for continued speak-outs, picket lines, rallies, demonstrations, and other manifestations of a coordinated public response to Operation Rescue's disruptions. We will have to involve new layers—especially among students and in our unions—and we can only do that if every activist feels that she has a voice in deciding what the movement is to do next. This, in turn, will require genuine democratic structures, and a leadership which is much closer to the needs of the average activist than it is to the ruling layers of this society which have been instrumental in sabotaging women's rights on all fronts. Socialists understand how to build that kind of movement, and we are likely to find a sympathetic ear from new activists who are looking for a way forward.

April 9 turned the tables on the so-called right-to-lifers. Up to now they have had the wind in their sails. Now it is the women's movement that is on the offensive, and activists have a new sense of their collective power. This provides an opportunity to agitate for further mass action to move the struggle for women's reproductive freedom and women's liberation forward. ●

City University of New York — Students Fight Tuition Raise and Cutbacks

by Michael Frank

The New York State budget for the City University of New York (CUNY) this year called for a \$200 tuition increase to make up for financial deficits. Students throughout the system, however, had their own ideas. They organized a militant struggle against the state budget, insisting that there be no increased tuition; that a \$750 per year raise already levied on foreign students be rescinded; and that no cutbacks in faculty or staff be imposed as an alternative means of resolving the budget crisis.

In fact, the students went even further. They called for: a return to *free* tuition; expansion of day care centers on all CUNY campuses; extension of the SEEK program (designed to help students who are academically less well prepared); expansion of the Center for Worker Education; the establishment of Ph.D. programs in Latin American, Caribbean, African, and Asian studies; evaluation of faculty by a board of students and faculty; an ethnic composition of tenured faculty that matches the ethnic composition of the college; the election of the Board of Trustees — which is currently appointed by the governor of New York — by the students, faculty, and staff of CUNY; and the implementation of a “people’s budget” to improve all social services.

History of Struggle

There is an interesting parallel with events that took place some twenty years ago. In February 1969, state officials also announced that cutbacks were necessary because of a budget crisis. In March of that year some 13,000 students descended on Albany for mass lobbying and demonstrations demanding increased funding from the state government. On April 22, 100 Black and Puerto Rican students chained the gates of City College — the CUNY campus located in Harlem but at the time 95 percent white in its student composition — and began a two-week occupation.

The day after this occupation ended the City College newspaper announced that the budget crisis was over, that the SEEK program would not be eliminated, and that regular admissions would not be frozen — as had previously been projected. One of the demands in 1969 was that the composition of the incoming freshman class reflect the composition of the city as a whole. This was the beginning of the struggle that eventually led to the policy of open admissions — which insures that every graduate of a New York City high school has a right to attend the City University, regardless of academic average.

In the wake of the 1969 City College takeover, three community colleges were set up: Hostos in the Bronx, Medgar Evers in Brooklyn, and LaGuardia in Queens. These were

located in areas where they could absorb Black and Hispanic students. The intent was to keep the four-year colleges white. It was also expected that the dropout rate in the community colleges would be high, and indeed, LaGuardia Community College retains only 25 percent of its incoming freshman class.

The 1969 protesters at City College also won a program in Black and Puerto Rican studies, and a commitment by the administration to hire Black and Puerto Rican faculty.

Direct Link to Current Protests

On April 14, 1989, in the face of the renewed threat of severe budget cuts, a “Legacy of Struggle” conference was organized at City College to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the 1969 occupation. Participants in the ’69 events came to speak about their experiences and the impact of their struggle. Throughout the day, some 600 students poured in and out of the conference.

Ten days later, on April 24, a group of City College students seized and occupied the administration building to fight against the new round of threatened budget cuts and tuition hikes. They used the same organizational forms — collective leadership, committee structure, and process of decision making by consensus — as those participating in the ’69 occupation.

This act triggered a wave of occupations, demonstrations, and rallies at 15 other CUNY campuses. A layer of students had already tried more mild forms of protest — a letter writing campaign to the state legislature, mass lobbying and demonstrations in Albany, and a rally in front of Governor Cuomo’s office at the World Trade Center. They came to the conclusion that stronger kinds of actions were necessary.

A Case Study

At LaGuardia Community College in Long Island City, where this writer is a faculty member, students occupied the main building. In response, the administration relocated classes. There were spirited rallies in front of the main building, but student leaders were dissatisfied because most classes were still being held. At one point they decided to try and shut down the other two buildings, and called for volunteers from the crowd. “We need five people to go into the classrooms in the Van Dam building, explain what this fight’s all about, and bring the students out. Who’s got the courage?” Five students raised their hands and came forward shouting. They were given a bullhorn and set off. “We

need five people to go into the 'C' building." Another group came forward.

Fifteen minutes later chanting could be heard down the street: "Students united will never be defeated!" A stream of students from the Van Dam building, with signs and fists in the air, headed toward the main rally. A few minutes later, from the opposite end of the street, the scene was replayed as the "C" building emptied.

The crowd now swelled and the energy became more intense. Students were amazed to find out from a speaker that for 130 years, from 1847-1976, tuition was *free* at the City University. This was never taught to them at LaGuardia. Speaker after speaker condemned the budget cuts as racist and anti-working class. Impassioned speeches were made in Greek, Spanish, and Creole, exhorting and pleading with those undecided students who were observing from across the street to join the protest. Cheers erupted every time a group came over. The main building was plastered with signs in Urdu, Arabic, and Korean.

Students with a reputation for being quiet in the classroom seized the microphone and poured out their feelings, shocking friends and teachers. Drivers in passing tractor-trailers blasted their horns in solidarity. The crowd was now beginning to spill into the street. For most of the students — Blacks, Hispanics, third world, and white working class youth in their late teens and early twenties — this was their first taste of collective power.

Suddenly a group split off and occupied Thomson Avenue, blocking traffic in both directions. Students were chanting and holding up their signs. A bus tried to slowly force its way through the crowd, but the driver's vision was blocked by signs put on the windshield and the students sat down in the street. Police in a patrol car stalled by the sit-down finally screwed up the courage to beep their horn. Immediately the students rose and surrounded the car, shouting "No Tuition, No Tuition!" The two young white cops were visibly shaken. A faculty member tried to calm them down.

The demonstration was now split — half the students on the sidewalk watching, the other half in the street. After a period of intense debate between the leaders and those engaged in the street-blocking, the latter agreed to return to the sidewalk. Behind the leaders' insistence that this was necessary was the idea that any such action needs to be discussed and planned by the entire movement. One of the students participating in the occupation of the Main Building at La-

Guardia explained: "I'm not a radical. Two months ago I wouldn't have believed that I'd do such a thing."

It appears that the initial CUNY-wide leadership that organized the first mass lobbying trip to Albany and the World Trade Center demonstration has been displaced, and a new one has emerged as a result of the building occupations. While the protests were taking place on the individual CUNY campuses, a mass demonstration in lower Manhattan was called. Some 10,000 students and supporting faculty turned out, marching to the governor's office in the World Trade Center, the mayor's office at City Hall, and Wall Street. Students' speeches about corporate wealth and the lack of funding for education of Black, Hispanic, third world, and working class youth in general echoed off the buildings in the financial district.

On May 2 Governor Cuomo vetoed legislation that would have permitted the \$200 tuition increase. The first round in the fight had been won. But most of the protesters understood that this was just the beginning, and they couldn't let down their guard — even as the building occupations came to an end. "We've got Cuomo against the ropes," said a LaGuardia student leader. "His legs are wobbling. Now we have to take him out."

The struggle in CUNY has had repercussions on campuses across the country. From Oregon, California, and Massachusetts, from the State University of New York, Columbia University, Long Island University, and the New School for Social Research have come messages of solidarity and reports of struggles stimulated by the movement of the CUNY students. Only time will tell whether these events have opened up a genuine new wave of student activism in the United States. But in any event they demonstrate once again the overwhelming power of popular mass action.

When the 180,000 students of CUNY actively insert themselves into the political arena as a collective force, when they insist that they have a right to a measure of control over their own lives and they won't cede that right to the governor or the state legislature, when they raise demands which echo the needs of working people and other oppressed layers of society so that the struggle has the potential to broaden out still further, then the state and city governments, the banks and corporations are forced to take notice and adjust their perspectives. Every struggle like this makes it that much more difficult for the rich and seemingly all-powerful to rule this country in the manner to which they have become accustomed. ●

Polish Solidarity Gains Legal Status

by Tom Barrett

On April 17, 1989, Chief Judge Danuta Widawska issued an order legalizing the Polish trade union Solidarity, eight years after that organization was banned by the Polish government. The court decision formally confirmed the agreement reached between the government and Solidarity leadership after two months of negotiations. Solidarity leader Lech Walesa and Polish interior minister Czeslaw Kiszczak announced the agreement on April 5, the provisions of which are as follows:

- Solidarity and its sister organizations, Rural Solidarity and the Independent Student Association, are to be legalized.
- In June elections will be held to a bicameral parliament (the *Sejm*). In the lower house 35 percent of the 460 seats will be reserved for the opposition, that is, Solidarity and its supporters; 38 percent will be reserved for the Communist Party; and the rest will be allotted to smaller parties which have in the past allied themselves with the CP. The upper house, which had been abolished in the 1940s, will be restored. It will have 100 seats, which will be chosen in "free and open elections." The upper house will have veto power over lower-house decisions.
- The office of President of the Republic will be reinstated. The president is to be elected by the Sejm for a six-year term. The president will have the power to dissolve parliament and to veto legislative decisions, though the parliament may override the president's veto with a two-thirds majority, as in the United States.
- Press censorship is to be eased, though not abolished. Solidarity will get one-half hour per week on state television and one hour per week on state radio to broadcast its ideas to the Polish people.
- Sweeping economic reforms will take effect, including periodic wage increases amounting to 80 percent of the inflation rate.
- Solidarity agrees to refrain from strikes until a congress of the union's members approves new procedures for arbitration and job actions.

Power of the Working Class

There is no doubt that Solidarity and the Polish working class have won a significant victory. Walesa commented, "Our suffering, toil, and struggle did not go in vain. We have defended our democratic rights, and we are now moving toward a fully democratic and sovereign Poland." He warned, however, that "the time of our success comes in a difficult period. . . . The Polish nation will have to face tasks that are far more difficult than those that faced it in 1980."

Solidarity's victory proves—if anyone still had doubts—the decisive power of the working class in contemporary society.

For eight years bourgeois "experts" have been predicting an inevitable Soviet invasion of Poland or the disintegration of Solidarity under the pressure of martial law. However, in spite of the serious threat of Soviet invasion before Jaruzelski's coup, in spite of police violence against strikers, and in spite of the difficulty of functioning underground, Solidarity has not only survived, it has now won the right to function as a legal organization and to play a formal role in the Polish workers' state. Poland, which has a crushing foreign debt to banks in the imperialist financial centers, cannot afford any interruption of its industrial production. The working class, especially now, has gained a sense of its own power.

As we pointed out in a previous article ("New Challenge for Polish Working Class," *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* No. 61), the Polish bureaucracy's decision to negotiate Solidarity's legalization is a direct result of the spring '88 strike wave. The strikers' determination to hold out in many of the struck workplaces, even against the "voices of moderation" within Solidarity itself, was decisive. The police broke up some of the strikes. Others ended without the workers winning their shop-floor demands. Very few resulted in immediate victory for the strikers, and there was some demoralization afterward among militants. It took time for the true dimensions of the workers' victory to become clear.

Bureaucracy's Maneuvering

The Soviet bureaucracy's attitude has changed as well. There should be no misunderstanding: Gorbachev, as the bureaucracy's leader, has no more interest in true workers' democracy than his predecessors did; he has, however, come to the realization that naked police repression will not, in the long run, help the bureaucracy retain its power. If anything, the Polish experience shows that "the long run" has now arrived. Working people in the degenerated and deformed workers' states are extremely dissatisfied and less easily intimidated than before. Gorbachev and his fellow reform-minded bureaucrats recognize that the police methods of Stalin and Brezhnev amount to fighting fire with gasoline.

The legalization of Solidarity and planned elections in Poland—just as the Soviet glasnost policies and the relatively open vote which included opposition candidates in the USSR—are a genuine victory for working people; what anti-bureaucratic militants will now have to determine is how to best take advantage of that victory to build the movements

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Student Revolt in China

by Tom Barrett

In China today—as in the Soviet Union and Poland—workers, peasants, and students are taking big steps in the direction of political revolution. They are confronting the bureaucrats who rule their country with demands for democracy and for an end to official corruption. The funeral of ousted reformist leader Hu Yaobang on April 22 was the occasion for mass student demonstrations; on Thursday, April 27, about 150,000 students, supported by industrial workers, overwhelmed the police and army by the sheer weight of their numbers and were able to hold an illegal demonstration without interference. The government's failure to negotiate with student leaders led on May 4 to massive demonstrations throughout China, marking the anniversary of the anti-imperialist demonstrations which began the revolutionary process in China 70 years ago. The students are facing the bureaucrats with a new level of strength and confidence. It will take a lot to intimidate them.

The Political Issues

The demands which the Chinese students are raising are not qualitatively different than those being raised in Poland, the USSR, or Yugoslavia. The Chinese struggle has been going on somewhat longer without serious interruption, and the bureaucratic dictatorship has been especially severe in China. It should be remembered that the Chinese bureaucracy still proudly considers itself “Stalinist”—it refused to condemn Stalin after the Khrushchev revelations of 1956, and it maintained an obscene personality cult around Mao Zedong until his death in 1976. The Chinese parallel to the Khrushchev revelations—the downfall and trial of the “Gang of Four”—was a tremendous boost to the popular struggle for democracy and economic reform which had already begun shortly before Mao's death. It took place within the lifetimes of the students who are radicalizing today, and for their parents and teachers the memory is still fresh. The process of change has been going on throughout their entire conscious lives. It is not a dim and distant memory, and, more importantly, the movement for democracy and reform has not suffered a crushing defeat in the nearly fourteen years of its existence.

The demand which the students are most frequently and enthusiastically raising is for “democracy,” even though there is no clear consensus as to what democracy really means. Many diverse things fall under this heading, from civil liberties to honest government to economic reforms. The seeming confusion on the real meaning of democracy, in any event, means taking power away from the Communist Party bureaucrats.

None of the leaders in the current round of protest demonstrations—at least as far as has been reported in

Western media—has as yet presented a full-blown revolutionary strategy for accomplishing this. But the idea that power must be transferred from the bureaucracy to the workers, peasants, and students is the essence of what they are calling for, and it is also the essence of *political revolution*. That is the objective necessity in China today. The students have also corrected one widely held misconception: that they are simply interested in their own careers and in “getting rich.”

The bureaucracy has attempted many different reform measures since Deng Xiaoping gained undisputed power (regardless of his official position) within the Chinese CP and state. It is important for revolutionists, both within China and in other countries, not to become entangled in a debate over the tactics which the bureaucrats have been using in their attempt to solve China's economic and political problems. For example, there is no use arguing whether “market mechanisms” are “right” or “wrong.” The relaxation of state control over trade in the early 1980s proved to be beneficial to the peasantry and, for a brief period, to the entire population. Its continuation into the late 1980s, however, has led to inflation, unemployment, and official corruption—difficulties with which workers in bourgeois-ruled countries are quite familiar.

One question which is not involved is that of a departure from “socialism.” The conquest of state power by the Chinese working class never exempted China from the laws of the capitalist world economy in which it must survive. Mao, copying Stalin's ideology of “socialism in one country,” may have thought that China could be self-sufficient and establish a completely socialist society within China's borders. But he was mistaken. China's economic problems are rooted in the continued domination of the world economy by the imperialist bourgeoisie, from their offices in New York, Tokyo, Frankfurt, London, Zurich, and other centers of power.

Of course, the inevitable problems have been compounded by bureaucratic mismanagement. In the context of trying to make the best of a bad situation, free-market measures in themselves are not wrong—so long as they are designed to benefit workers and peasants in the short term. But problems arise when the decisions are made not by the people who are directly affected, but by overpaid careerists sitting behind desks. Their primary motivation is the maintenance of their own authority and standard of living. The student protesters recognize that these types should not be trusted with decisions which affect the living standards of China's millions.

Whereas Mikhail Gorbachev has—for his own purposes—encouraged freer expression in the Soviet Union, Deng Xiaoping has been far less favorable to it. In 1986 student demonstrations spread from the provinces to Beijing, rais-

ing much the same demands that they are raising now. Deng accused Hu Yaobang, the reform-minded CP chairman at that time, of not doing enough to prevent the outpouring of dissent, and engineered his ouster. A crackdown ensued, during which a number of Chinese intellectuals and professors lost their jobs; some were jailed. Hu, probably undeservedly, took on something of a martyr's status in the many students' minds.

Workers and Students Unite Against the Bureaucracy

Chinese culture places a great deal of importance on a prominent person's death or even its anniversary. The groundswell which led to the fall of the "Gang of Four" and the current struggle for democracy began on the occasion of Zhou Enlai's death in 1976. Hu Yaobang died on April 15 of this year. The 1989 student demonstrations began almost immediately afterward. 100,000 marched in the streets of Beijing on the occasion of his funeral on April 22. Five days later, 150,000 students took to the streets of Beijing, supported this time by industrial workers, who not only endorsed the students' demands for democracy and an end to official corruption, but raised their own demands for wage increases and against inflation, which is running at about 27 percent a year. Instead of joining the march, however, workers stood between the demonstrators and the police, preventing any interference with the student protest.

On May 4 pro-democracy demonstrations were held in cities throughout China. The largest was in Beijing, where

100,000 marched, again without police interference. About 20,000 marched in Shanghai in the second-largest protest. Between 8,000 and 10,000 demonstrated in Changsha, and about 2,000 in Dalian. Protest actions were held in many other cities as well. It should be recalled that only 3,000 participated in the original May 4 protest in 1919, which to the Chinese has a significance similar to that of the Boston Tea Party in U.S. history. In Beijing the workers joined the march on May 4 and actually outnumbered the students.

At this stage, the workers have not formed any organizations of their own and are essentially following the students' political lead. The reason is partly fear of reprisal — especially of losing their jobs — and partly not having a clearly thought-out agenda. The events of the past two weeks have shown, however, that workers in united action are stronger than the police, and the new climate of political discussion made possible by the success of the demonstrations will make it possible for the working class to formulate and raise its own demands for democracy and improved living standards.

The events of the past two weeks have registered spectacular victories for the Chinese anti-bureaucratic movement. In the weeks ahead it can be expected that students and workers will be consolidating their alliance and assessing the gains they have made. They will need to discuss the next steps so that they can transform their struggle from a protest against the bureaucracy into a genuine revolution aimed at taking power into their own hands. ●

May 5, 1989

Kutcher Memorial Meeting

Eighty persons attended the James Kutcher memorial meeting in New York City on April 22. (For an account of James Kutcher's life see *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* #62.) Speakers included: Dorothea Breitman, who knew Jimmy for more than 50 years; Frank Lovell, who spoke about the significance of Jimmy's successful campaign to win reinstatement to his Veteran's Administration job after being fired for his membership in the Socialist Workers Party; Myra Tanner Weiss, former leader of the SWP, spoke about Kutcher's trips to the West Coast during his ten-year-long defense campaign; Carl Finamore, representing Socialist Action; Kit Wainer, representing Solidarity; and Jimmy's brother, Max Kutcher. Steve Bloom chaired the event.

Kutcher was a member of the SWP from its founding in 1938 until he was

bureaucratically expelled in 1983. Unfortunately, the SWP did not acknowledge invitations to participate in the meeting in any capacity nor were any SWP members present.

Many organizations and individuals sent messages to the meeting including: the United Secretariat of the Fourth International; Gauche Socialiste/Socialist Challenge, sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in the Canadian state; the Newark Teachers Union, one of many unions that supported Kutcher's fight for reinstatement to his VA job; Joseph Rauh, Jimmy's attorney in his fight against the government; Freedom Socialist Party; Howard Petrick; Adam Shils; the Chicago branch of Solidarity; Della Rossa; Nat Weinstein and Jeff Mackler, co-national secretaries of Socialist Action; Melissa Singler; Dave Cooper; Evelyn Sell; numerous Local Organizing

Committees of the F.I.T.; and many others. It was also reported that a Veterans for Peace chapter in Tallahassee, Florida, is considering naming their chapter after Kutcher.

The meeting also featured a screening of Howard Petrick's prize-winning documentary film about Kutcher's civil rights victory, *The Case of the Legless Veteran*.

Jimmy Kutcher had been a generous financial supporter of the F.I.T.'s publication projects. More than 400 dollars was contributed at the meeting in Jimmy's name to the F.I.T. Publications Fund. Donations in Kutcher's memory can be sent to: F.I.T., c/o Dorothea Breitman, PO Box 1947, New York, NY 10009.

The Signature Campaigns for the Release of Political Prisoners in China

by Xiao Dian

This article appeared in the March/April 1989 issue of October Review, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong. It has been abridged for publication here.

Since the beginning of this year, there have been a series of signature campaigns in mainland China demanding the release of jailed dissidents and political prisoners. There were also widespread signature campaigns in Hong Kong and abroad in support of the campaigns in China, most of which went beyond the initial demands in China.

During this period, two incidents occurred and attracted international attention on the way the Chinese regime handled the events.

What appear to be relatively small-scale and mild signature campaigns and stupid behavior by some Chinese bureaucrats in creating the incidents, they in fact mark a turning point in the attitudes of intellectuals in China and, to some extent, in Hong Kong and abroad, and highlight the acuteness of the social, economic, political, and ideological crises in China.

The series of signature campaigns actually first appeared in a Hong Kong magazine, *Cheng Ming*. In a small corner in its January '89 issue, it published an appeal by itself and five other organizations and groups in Hong Kong and France to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the arrest of Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng on March 29, 1989, and demand the release of Wei Jingsheng, Liu Qing, Xu Wenli, Wang Xizhe, and all other political prisoners.

At about the same time, on January 6, 1989, Chinese dissident scientist Fang Lizhi wrote an open letter to Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping suggesting a general amnesty in China, especially the release of Wei Jingsheng and all political prisoners alike on humanitarian grounds in this year of the 40th anniversary of the People's Republic of China, the 70th anniversary of the May 4th Movement, and the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution.

On February 13 in Beijing, 33 well-known intellectuals, writers, poets, and artists wrote an open letter in support of Fang Lizhi's open letter. Then, on February 19, one of the signatories and an activist in the Beijing Spring democracy movement 10 years ago, Chen Jun, collected another 30 signatures among artists and democracy movement activists in support of that open letter. He also issued an open appeal to collect more signatures in China and called for solidarity from abroad. An "Amnesty 89" working group was also formed.

These bold initiatives and actions from within China immediately aroused broad support in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and overseas. Signature campaigns were started among intellectual circles with varying demands ranging from: calls

for human rights, democratic elections, democratic rights; concerns for democratic futures and links among China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan; calls for attention to human rights situation of Taiwan and Hong Kong residents jailed for political reasons in both mainland China and Taiwan; appeals to Western governments to intervene in the human rights issues in China, and objections to foreign government intervention using "human rights diplomacy" as a means; calls to deepen the pro-capitalistic reforms in China, and, on the contrary, calls for political and economic control by the working masses.

In mainland China, the signatories and the signature campaigns were subjected to strong pressure from the Chinese regime. Individuals were harassed; the Justice Ministry came out with allegations of "influencing judiciary independence in the Wei Jingsheng case" (ten years after the "trial"!). Despite that, two significant signature campaigns were subsequently organized; one received the support of 42 elder scientists, professors, and intellectuals and another 43 mainly middle-aged and younger intellectuals and journalists.

Outside mainland China, most of the campaigns were centered around intellectual circles, overseas scholars, well-known figures, etc., although they also received some support from the masses through publicity. The campaign initiated by *Cheng Ming* magazine obtained over 3,400 signatures in some 30 countries and territories. Another campaign initiated mainly from among Hong Kong intellectual and professional circles obtained over 1,200 signatures.

With the idea of promoting concerns for democracy and linking the democratic future of Hong Kong to democracy in mainland China, activists from the Action April 5th group organized signature campaigns in urban centers and workers' districts to approach the masses. They also promoted signature campaigns in post-secondary colleges. Altogether they distributed over 40,000 leaflets and collected over 12,800 signatures, among which about 1,000 were from students.

The Hong Kong Federation of Students and student organizations in colleges and universities in Hong Kong also organized independently and collected over 6,500 signatures among students.

In Taiwan, over 5,000 signatures were collected among university students in support of human rights and democratization in mainland China. On the other hand, declarations from progressive circles drawing attention to the

abuse of human rights and democratic freedoms in Taiwan itself aroused controversies in the newspapers.

On February 26, Chinese police prevented Fang Lizhi and his companion from attending the farewell dinner organized by U.S. president Bush in Beijing, thereby creating an incident that attracted much international attention.

The end of March saw another incident that has even greater impact in Hong Kong. On March 28, a seven-member delegation from Hong Kong went to Beijing to present the over 24,000 signatures collected in Hong Kong and overseas to the National People's Congress, then in session in Beijing. Upon arriving in nearby Tianjin, the signatures and press release material were held by Chinese Customs officials and a member of the delegation, a reporter from *Cheng Ming* was refused entry. The remaining six delegates went on to Beijing and were subjected to constant surveillance and harassment. Widely reported by the Hong Kong and international reporters, who were themselves also harassed, the two-day incident aroused deep feelings in Hong Kong and, to an unknown extent, in China because the incident was questioned openly in the National People's Congress with live coverage by Chinese TV. The question of political prisoners, human rights, and democratic rights in China once again came into national and international focus.

One feature of the wave of signature campaigns is the large number of campaigns and various demands that appeared.

The first wave of campaigns in mainland China focused their demands on the release of Wei Jingsheng and other political prisoners of mainland China, and they requested an amnesty on humanitarian grounds. Subsequent campaigns inside mainland China were mostly in support of the initial campaigns.

While the campaign led by *Cheng Ming* focused on the demand for the release of political prisoners of mainland China, the other major signature campaigns initiated in Hong Kong also included the demand for the release of Hong Kong resident Liu Shanqing who was arrested when he visited relatives of jailed Chinese democracy activists in mainland China in 1981 and sentenced to ten years. The heading of the leaflet distributed by the Action April 5th group was: "Only with a democratic China can there be a democratic future for Hong Kong!"

The signature campaigns that originated from Taiwan also revealed different perspectives. While some advocate the abolition of the communist system in mainland China, there is still a minority voice that calls for unification of mainland China and Taiwan based on democracy, freedom, and human rights, and the upsurge of the people from both sides to change the social and economic situation.

While the outspoken, pro-Western dissident scientist Fang Lizhi attracted much attention in the various events, especially outside of mainland China, the real significance of the signature campaigns inside China lies in the changing attitude of broad layers of intellectuals as partially reflected in the series of signature campaigns despite strong pressure from the regime. It is the result of the culmination of severe social, economic, political, ideological, and cultural crises in China. Facing such severe crises, intellectuals feel particularly disappointed and desperate. They feel a strong urge to speak out, to discuss, and to find a way out. With the severe

political repression in China in mind, their initial focus is directed towards the fate of dissident democracy fighters who have been jailed for almost a decade and from whom they have maintained some distance until now. That explains the concern for the release of all political prisoners in China, already widespread among intellectuals abroad, but particularly deeply felt among intellectuals inside China. The depth of the crises is shown by the fact that signatories included many long-time Communist intellectuals who have been party members for over half a century and who overcame the fear arising from forty years of campaigns of repression.

Explosive Situation Underlying the Incidents

However, it is precisely the series of incidents related to the signature campaigns that brought the acuteness of the situation in China into the open.

The further development of wide and deep crises have come together and created an explosive situation, as shown by:

- The rapid rise in prices, run on the banks, waves of panic-buying, and widespread discontent in the second half of last year have forced the Chinese regime to suspend some aspects of the economic reform and to cut many capital investments, housing and building construction, loans to village enterprises, and to reduce consumer spending, etc. An immediate effect of these austerity measures is the surfacing of an excess labor force, estimated to be over 100 million. Because a lot of rural land has been contracted out, many of the excess labor force cannot return to the land and wander from place to place in search of work, creating the grave situation of unprecedented "blind flow."
- As a result of reduction in grain production since 1985 and partly as a result of shortage of foreign reserve limiting the ability to import grain, the supply of grain has been tense since the beginning of this year.
- The majority of city workers have been hit by rising prices, cuts and halts in production and enterprise reforms, and have been responding by widespread slowdowns and strikes.
- Long-time Han chauvinism and bureaucratic rule have created an explosive situation among national minorities, exploding around March 10 in Tibet into large scale riots and forcing the Chinese regime to impose curfew measures.
- Although the long-time discontent and disappointment among students and intellectuals have been prevented by repression from exploding on a large scale so far, under the impact of signature campaigns, the May 4 anniversary, and other events, they may explode at any time. The prospect of linking up of students and intellectuals with workers and other social layers is more than a nightmare for the regime.

At the same time, the many problems arising from the economic reforms have focused the attention of people onto

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Soviet Elections – Rumblings Below the Surface

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

The March 26 elections in the USSR were an important milestone in the political events that have been taking place in that country: 172,840,130 of 192,575,165 eligible voters participated. There were 2,950 candidates running for 1,500 parliamentary posts.¹ And *all* the voters in this election at least had a choice, which hasn't been true in the USSR since the 1920s. One quarter of them could only cross out the name of the sole candidate; but this simple process brought defeat to many of the 31 local party chiefs who failed in their electoral bids. The other voters, who had more than one candidate to choose from, could reject all those listed, or all but one of them.

In the Armenian Republic and Nagorno-Karabagh, where martial law prevails and popular leaders have been arrested, the nationalist movement called for a boycott of the elections.² Numerous bureaucrats, including the Kremlin-appointed special administrator Arkady Volsky, still managed to get elected, though Armenian activists have charged the apparatus with fraud. They stated that not more than 30 percent – insufficient to elect anyone – rather than the official figure of over 50 percent of the eligible voters cast ballots in Yerevan.³ In fact, Armenian organizers had asked voters to retain their ballots to prove they did not cast them. They may, therefore, be able to prove their case. If less than 50 percent of the voters actually cast ballots, there will have to be a new election.

There must have been considerable pride and a feeling of collective power among millions of voters when they realized that by performing the simple act of crossing names off a ballot, and doing so all at the same time, they could defeat unpopular and corrupt mayors (Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev), city party chiefs (Perm, Tomsk, Ivanovo, Khabarovsk, Arkhangelsk, and Frunze), previously untouchable top-level military commanders (Leningrad, Yaroslavl, and Khabarovsk), and an arrogant nonvoting member of the Politburo in Leningrad like Yuri Solovyev.⁴ They had never done anything like this before.

The entire election process was worked out by the party's previous Politburo and presented as part of the constitutional amendments to the Nineteenth Party Conference in June 1988. There it was approved, and it was then presented to the "rubber-stamp" Supreme Soviet in December 1988 where it was also approved. The vote was designed to fill out the 2,250-member Congress of People's Deputies. Already designated were 750 deputies apportioned to and elected by the Communist Party, its associated organizations, or officially recognized organizations like the Academy of Sciences and Writers' Union where the CP has control.⁵

The newly elected people's deputies will soon get together to choose a 542-member Supreme Soviet, which will then meet for several months each spring and fall to make legis-

lative and administrative decisions. The people's deputies will also elect a president of the USSR, who will propose measures in all areas of finance, administration, legislation, and defense – in consultation with the Council of Ministers and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. That president, chosen by secret ballot, is expected to be Mikhail Gorbachev if all goes as planned.

Gorbachev and Lenin

This entire electoral scheme is part of Gorbachev's effort at political perestroika, or restructuring, through which the ruling bureaucratic caste that rules the USSR hopes to rid itself of some of its more unsavory elements, widen its base of support, restore some political credibility, and revitalize its stagnant cadre.

The constitutional amendments governing these elections are a far cry from the first, transitional, Soviet constitution of July 1918, aimed at "crushing the bourgeoisie, abolishing exploitation, and establishing socialism." The July constitution guaranteed a preponderance of representation from the urban proletariat, with one delegate to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets for every 25,000 electors or workers in their soviets, while in the rural areas, there was to be one delegate for every 125,000 inhabitants. Lenin, in the party program of 1919, justified such a policy stating: "Our Soviet constitution retained a certain preference for the industrial proletariat in comparison with the more dispersed petty-bourgeois masses of the country."⁶

The ruling bureaucracy today, by comparison, is concerned to guarantee a "certain preference" for the trusted petty-bourgeois apparatus. For example the 19-million-member Communist Party was allocated 100 deputies, the same number as was allocated to the 142-million-member All-Union Central Trade Union Council. Despite the increased room for political activity under glasnost in some regions, the apparatus still has the upper hand in most parts of the USSR. In such areas it was no simple task to be nominated without the bureaucracy's support. Assuming individuals got nominated for the election by their constituency, they then had to be ratified by a 500-person assembly from the district. Such gatherings were stacked with predetermined supporters of local apparatchiks. And even if they made it through this stage, candidates still had to be approved by an election commission that was appointed by the local bureaucrats – in all cases where more than two candidates were advanced.

In some areas like the Baltic republics, where the mass movements were very strong, these rules were bypassed to one degree or another. But in most parts of the country, they worked well to weed out candidates who expressed views un-

friendly or unfamiliar to the ruling bureaucracy. So the call "All Power to the Soviets" (meaning, of course, the new Supreme Soviet and local soviets that will also be constituted based on elections) raised by official banners in the period leading up to the elections does not have the same meaning it did when it was raised by the Bolsheviks during the Russian Revolution.

The word "soviets" in Russian simply means "councils." The Bolsheviks were calling for all power to go to the workers and soldiers councils or *soviets of self-rule by the masses* that had developed in the course of the popular struggles of 1917. These councils were shattered during the civil war against the White counterrevolutionary armies in 1919-21, and never recovered. And whatever remnants of workers' democracy that did remain became the first targets of the rising Soviet bureaucracy in the 1920s as it sought to consolidate its economic privileges and the political control necessary to guarantee those privileges. By contrast to the soviets of 1917, the Supreme Soviet (or council) that will emerge from the March elections to the Congress of People's Deputies will not be an organ of workers' self-rule. It will remain a tool in the hands of the bureaucracy, and is not intended to have much power at all.

Changing Soviet Reality

However, despite all the obstacles, the election results show that there is considerable change and new openings in the Soviet Union, with a potential for much more.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been mobilized in one way or another around these elections, in either opposing the constitutional amendments from which they emerged, in attending rallies for deputy candidates, in attending the delegate meetings—some of which were 12-15 hours long—fighting for specific candidates, or in open, public meetings where specific candidates spoke. Struggle and participation in politics of this nature change people.

In the Russian Republic, 20,000 demonstrated on the eve of the elections for Boris Yeltsin, the maverick Communist Party official who bucked the tops and won 5.1 million votes out of 6.7 million—or 89 percent.⁷ His popularity was based on strong attacks against the material privileges enjoyed by the bureaucracy and on his proposals for discussions about a multi-party system. But most of all he won the support he did because the CP's leaders expelled him from the Politburo and were considering expelling him from the party for his remarks. This endeared him to millions.

In the non-Russian republics of the Baltic and Caucasus Mountain regions, there have been massive ongoing struggles against various aspects of the constitutional amendments as well as against the suppression of national rights.

People are surely discussing and digesting the experiences they have gained through this electoral process to be better prepared for the fall elections for local governing councils (soviets). In those elections, issues are closer to home and so is the power. Major power struggles are already developing. One example is in the Baltic republics, where the local mass-based radical democratic-nationalist popular fronts were the big winners in the March elections. Local governing bodies have already vetoed national legislation which, by law,

they were supposed to approve. And calls for independence have also been advanced.⁸

Meanwhile, economic perestroika has failed to improve the economic situation and shortages have gotten worse. While there are drastic crises in areas of health care, housing, environmental pollution and pollution-induced health damage, industrial accidents, and food shortages, and while some stop-gap measures have been recently implemented in an effort to alleviate shortages, official economists predict no major improvements for two to three years.

The regime has already shown its teeth against the Armenian movement in the Caucasus with military force and the arrest of the 11-member Karabagh Committee since the earthquake of December 7. On April 9 in Tbilisi, capital of the Georgian Republic, troops were sent against thousands of striking students and workers demanding a greater measure of independence. At least 20 demonstrators were killed. Such dramatic events are the backdrop for the elections, and indicate the depth of the problems which the rulers of the USSR face.

Composition of the Congress

The newly elected Congress includes some of the legendary figures of the democratic opposition of the 1970s along with the most prominent radical reformers of the Gorbachev era. Physicist Andrei Sakharov, internationally renowned as a defender of dissidents in the 1970s and himself exiled to Gorky in 1979, will now be a deputy representing the Academy of Sciences. His nomination was at first rejected by the Academy's old guard apparatus despite massive support from rank-and-file institutions. It came only after Sakharov stood firm and demanded that the Academy tops honor the demands from below. Along with Sakharov, the Academy announced April 21 that other "reform-minded" figures had been elected to fill deputy vacancies reserved for the Academy in the Congress.⁹

Also in the Congress will be Roy Medvedev, foremost historian of the repression of the Stalin years whose works until this year were banned in the Soviet Union. Other deputies include Yuri Afanasyev, head of the Historical Archives Institute and a prominent figure in the Memorial Group—which is fighting for the creation of a memorial to the victims of Stalin's repression (see "Current Events in the Soviet Union," *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* No. 61). Afanasyev has called for the rehabilitation of Leon Trotsky and the publication of his and all the other banned writings.

Another member is Tatyana Zaslavskaya, a sociologist whose research documenting the dire social crises resulting from bureaucratic rule in the USSR was one factor motivating the latest reform efforts. Overall, according to the government newspaper *Izvestia's* summation of the election results on April 5, the new Congress contains 334 women (17.1 percent), 365 workers (18.6 percent), and 219 collective farm workers (11.2 percent); 1,716 deputies are Communist Party members (87.6 percent). The percentage of women and "worker" delegates is about half what it was to the previous Supreme Soviet where quotas were imposed, and reflects more realistically the alienation from power of

both groups. Only 71.4 percent of the previous Supreme Soviet were CP members.¹⁰

Dozens of "reform-minded" candidates, many of them CP members from the ranks, defeated old-time apparatchiks who are held responsible for the continuing crises. It is worth noting that these reform candidates had very similar platforms — whether they were party members or not. In fact, one Moscow newspaper complained that it couldn't tell one program from another.

Those considered most "radical," like Sakharov and Yeltsin, had a reputation as fighters against the bureaucrats. Sakharov had massive backing, with thousands demonstrating outside the Academy in support of his nomination. Sakharov's platform, published in *Moscow News*, however, demonstrates the limitations inherent in those who come from an intellectual milieu, with no attachment to the working class. On the political side he wants to deepen glasnost: free and rehabilitate prisoners of conscience, including the Karabagh Committee; return to Lenin's position on the nationalities question; protect the rights of individuals, openness, and freedom of political beliefs; provide freedom to live where one chooses; abolish the passport system; open the files on Stalin and the KGB repression. But economically, Sakharov calls for a free market in labor, raw materials, and the means of production; immediate abolition of inefficient farms; reduction of industrial capital investment; retaining nuclear power but burying the plants underground; and placing no limits on income.¹¹

In short, Sakharov reflects in intensified form both the positive and the negative aspects of Mikhail Gorbachev's own program. Where that program has led to positive developments — with the creation of a relatively free political atmosphere — Sakharov wants to deepen and extend it, no doubt much more than Gorbachev himself is willing to do. But on the economic front, where Gorbachev has nothing positive to propose and turns vainly to blind bourgeois economic forces, Sakharov has nothing to counterpose, and once again can only demand a deepening of Gorbachev's policies, a process that can only have negative consequences for the average Soviet citizen. However, Sakharov's persistent resistance to Stalinist repression has earned him massive respect and his election is considered a victory for the popular movements.

Others considered "radical reformers" who are now on the inside — like Gavril Popov, editor of *Economic Questions* — call for a few sops to the workers, but are also fundamentally in favor of more market economy and private ownership, at a faster pace than the regime has so far been able to go. This is what is "radical" about them.

Popov's program is typical of these layers: he is for the renting, long-term leasing, and stock sharing of state-owned facilities; prices regulated by the market; a ruble convertible on international monetary exchanges; state orders limited to basic necessities. To sweeten his plan, which by itself leaves the masses open to the whimsy of the market, he demands that there be no increase in the price of milk and meat, one-year's severance pay and job placement for laid-off workers, the right for everyone to use a country estate (*dacha*) within one-half hour of town, for 25 days each year, supervision by

environmental groups of laboratory tests of potentially harmful chemical agents.¹²

Academician Roald Sagdeev wants to put all the ministries on a self-accounting basis and reduce them to organs of information rather than planning; he proposes to put all health care on a self-accounting basis; he supports Gorbachev's foreign policy; and like many others he calls for a volunteer professional army. His proposals for progressive reforms include calling for a return to Lenin's position on the nationalities question (which neither he nor Sakharov give any indication of really understanding), devoting more construction funds to housing, informing the public about who proposes each law and amendment, and putting ecological issues under the control of environmental groups.¹³

Nikolai Shmelov, the Milton Friedman of the Kremlin, who was one of the "radicals" nominated by the Academy of Sciences on April 12, has not even offered a crumb or two to the workers. All the things the workers need (or are entitled to), he asserts, should trickle down to them if a true market economy is introduced.¹⁴

Boris Yeltsin, and others, gained popularity for criticizing the privileged food stores, limousines, clinics, and housing for the bureaucrats in power, and by raising the idea of a multi-party system. His record as a whole, however, does not offer a great deal of hope. One can hardly blame the pensioner (who was shouted down) at the electors' meeting that nominated Yeltsin for pointing out that as a high official Yeltsin "must be held to blame for the dire shortage of housing and the sad condition of the economy."¹⁵ Yeltsin was Moscow party chief since 1985 and has been a deputy in the ailing construction ministry since his demotion from the Politburo in November 1987.¹⁶

Others, like Leonid Abalkin, head of the USSR Economics Institute, were among the "golden 100" deputies. They were the 100 deputies chosen by the 12-member CP Central Committee Politburo from 31,500 candidates nominated from the CP ranks; these 100 are considered "golden" because they did not have to stand for popular election. Abalkin offers a program not so much different from Shmelov's: to drastically curtail the money supply and cut costly budgetary items (such formulations by the bureaucracy often mean subsidies for food and social services); to cease paying wages for artificial results; to have the 13th Five-Year Plan set only general parameters allowing the republics to make specific decisions; and to reduce state orders to enterprises.¹⁷

This is basically a more elaborated version of the Communist Party's own program published in *Pravda* January 13. That program simply offered perestroika and vague promises instead of solutions to every problem. For example, to tackle food production the party proposes to convert the peasant worker into master of the land, restore equality between the city and countryside, set aside a large number of resources to modernize light industry, and consider further actions at the up-coming plenum. On the environment, it pledged to take a serious look at the complicated problems.

Abalkin and the CP agree on the basics, but Abalkin specifies the types of drastic measures the official program only implies. So far the party has been unable to fully implement its economic program for fear of popular rebellion.

That fear accounts for the fact that within the party there are wide differences on the substance and velocity of the restructuring required and on the extent to which glasnost — open, more democratic discussion — should be allowed. The differences range from the Nikolai Shmelovs to the Yuri Afanasyevs, not to mention Yeltsin.

What is needed, however, is a political and economic program that goes in the opposite direction from that of the CP, which looks to the working class, not the bureaucracy, as the legitimate rulers of the USSR. The workers alone can solve the economic crisis of Soviet society through a process of democratic planning for human and social needs.

Revolutionary Marxist and Other Traditions

In *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*, the founding program of the Fourth International in 1938, Leon Trotsky explained the social dynamic at work in the USSR:

The public utterances of [top-level Kremlin bureaucrats] . . . irrefutably confirm in their own way that all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism to complete fascism. The revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy, only a small minority, reflect, passively it is true, the socialist interests of the proletariat. The fascist, counterrevolutionary elements, growing uninterruptedly, express with ever greater consistency the interests of world imperialism. These candidates for the role of compradors consider, not without reason, that the new ruling layer can insure their positions of privilege only through rejection of nationalization, collectivization and monopoly of foreign trade in the name of the assimilation of “Western civilization,” i.e., capitalism. Between these two poles, there are intermediate, diffused Menshevik-S.R.-liberal tendencies which gravitate toward bourgeois democracy.

Within the very ranks of that so-called “classless” society, there unquestionably exist groupings exactly similar to those in the bureaucracy, only less sharply expressed and in inverse proportions: conscious capitalist tendencies distinguish mainly the prosperous part of the collective farms and are characteristic of only a small minority of the population. But this layer provides itself with a wide base for petty-bourgeois tendencies of accumulating personal wealth at the expense of general poverty, and are consciously encouraged by the bureaucracy.¹⁸

This describes very well the situation today. Vyacheslav Gorbachev, deputy editor of *Molodaya Gvardia*, was a featured speaker at a recent rally in Moscow organized by truly reactionary forces of several varieties (the group called Pamyat, supporters of Stalin, and various Russian-nationalist organizations) to bemoan the loss of the old pre-revolutionary Russian culture, where pre-revolutionary flags and the tsar’s family tree were on display. In his speech he listed Jews in prominent positions, falsely posing his anti-Semitism as anti-Zionism.¹⁹

Among prominent personalities named as preferred deputies to the Congress by those attending a similar rally of the conservatives, reactionaries, and xenophobic fringe in Moscow February 26 was *Pravda* editor Victor Afanasyev, who was also among the “golden 100.”²⁰

While the genuinely proletarian revolutionary wing in the USSR is not so obvious as yet, those who take glasnost or political democratization seriously are. That has an important logic. A number of CP members who consider themselves democratic socialists were supported by the Moscow Popular Front, itself consisting of many such figures. One of its candidates, Sergei S. Stankevich, was elected in the run-off elections April 9.

But it is predominantly through concessions toward glasnost, not the market mechanisms of perestroika, that the bureaucracy hopes to both win over a broad layer of the intellectuals and raise the cultural level of the society, i.e., incorporate the highest levels of technology and industry into the production process. Totalitarian control and censorship kill progress, as the Stalinists have learned through their bitter experiences. Moreover, professionals, intellectuals, not to mention economic planners, require some measure of free discussion in order to effectively practice their trade. The bureaucracy hopes to win the increased cooperation, enthusiasm, and productivity of the intellectual layers by granting them more freedoms to read, discuss, travel, etc. Hence, the Stalinist dilemma: Democracy is anathema to the long-term survival of the bureaucratic caste, yet it is an absolute necessity for breaking out of the economic stagnation that represents an immediate threat to stability in the USSR.

The Marxist opposition to Stalinism, the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky, had its origins in opposing the bureaucracy’s suppression of workers’ democracy. As our movement has consistently maintained into contemporary times, the Stalinists cannot grant democracy to the intellectuals or scientists alone without opening up the political arena to everyone. That is why in the Socialist Workers Party in the 1970s we defended the fight for democratic rights by dissidents like Sakharov and Pyotr Grigorenko. As Socialist Workers Party leader George Novack used to put it, this small band of intellectuals was like an icebreaker, opening the way for the proletarian battleship.

Contradictory Reality

The Memorial Movement, the Popular Fronts in Moscow, the Moldavian, Ukrainian, and Baltic republics, and elsewhere — which have registered gains against the bureaucracy in the recent months — are led by the intelligentsia. So was the massive movement in Armenia. The 11-member Karabagh Committee is predominantly intellectuals. And in Moscow, the Baltics, and Ukraine the leadership of these movements include a large number of Communist Party members.

They are pushing open the cracks in totalitarian control resulting from glasnost. The result is to clear the way for the mobilization of workers and students around specific popular demands. While to date none of these movements appears to have directly challenged the basic premises which underlie the economic restructuring that is weakening the

foundations of the workers' state — and some have even advocated more drastic measures to dismantle those foundations — the movements remain contradictory. Being mass-based they will inevitably reflect the genuine needs of the masses as the results of the perestroika reforms become apparent and the struggle deepens.

'Progressives' Organize in the Congress

Already, 200-400 newly elected deputies who call themselves "progressive" and "democratic," including Yuri Afanasyev, have formed a grouping calling itself the March Coalition, after the March 26 elections, to act as a bloc within the Congress. According to the April 22 *New York Times* the deputies "consider themselves the true supporters of Mikhail S. Gorbachev . . . although their prescriptions often go beyond what he has explicitly endorsed."

The tasks this coalition has set for itself include pushing back recent decrees that limit freedoms of speech, assembly, and press; electoral reform to assure more rights to non-apparatus candidates; and establishing rules in the new Congress that protect the rights of minorities. A group of new deputies has already gone on a fact-finding mission to the Georgian Republic and returned with a report that the troop attack on demonstrators there was unprovoked.

Galina Starovoitova, a sociologist elected in a special election in Armenia, noted that about 30 percent of the Congress deputies appear to be firmly allied with "the Communist Party apparatus," about 20 percent are potential allies for this new bloc, and about 50 percent will be "the battleground of opinion and power." Gavril Popov, whose platform was one of those summarized above, is proposing that the new formation be registered as "part of a special congressional party chapter to liberate them from the directives of their local party bosses." Most of the new bloc members are members of the Communist Party "who say that reform is more important than party unity."

Although alternate political parties are prohibited by the Soviet constitution, the issue of the need for a multi-party system was, as already noted, raised by several candidates

who were elected — party and non-party — and certainly corresponds to the needs of the broad masses if they are to organize coherently around their specific conditions. It is not out of the question that the impetus for a new political party or parties may emerge from within the bureaucracy itself as fundamental differences within it widen. But no matter how such a development arises, and even if the basis for the new political organization were extremely modest and limited at first, it would provide further openings for workers to begin to put forth their *own* demands — beyond the framework of "perestroika" — for the type of restructuring that would further the needs of the masses rather than erode their historic social gains. ●

April 25, 1989

Notes

1. *Izvestia*, April 5, 1989.
2. *New York Times*, March 26, 1989.
3. *Moskovskie Novosti*, No. 7, February 12, 1989 and *Financial Times*, March 29, 1989.
4. *Financial Times*, March 29, 1989.
5. *International Viewpoint*, No. 160, April 3, 1989, p. 28.
6. See E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923*, Penguin Books, London, 1950, pp. 152-154.
7. *Financial Times*, March 28, 1989.
8. *New York Times*, March 10, 1989.
9. *New York Times*, April 22, 1989.
10. *Moscow News*, No. 7, February 19-26, 1989.
11. *Moscow News*, No. 6, February 12-19, 1989.
12. *Moskovskie Novosti*, No. 4, January 22, 1989.
13. Op. cit.
14. I have not seen Shmelov's platform, but he is well known as one of the most extreme advocates of strict reliance on the market.
15. *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 1988.
16. The speech that got him demoted has at last apparently been published in the March 1989 CPSU Central Committee News Bulletin containing the minutes of the October 1987 plenum.
17. *Moscow News*, No. 6, February 12-19, 1989.
18. *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, p. 103.
19. *New York Times*, February 22, 1989.
20. *New York Times*, February 27, 1988. V. Afanasyev is not responsible for who supports him; however, that such forces could support him indicates the direction of thought of this leading party editor.

The Attack on Soviet Georgia and Gorbachev's Policy on the National Question

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

The ruling caste in the USSR presented part of its long-promised "solution" to the exploding nationalities problem in a Decree of the Supreme Soviet passed April 8, 1989. It was couched as "Amendments and Additions to USSR Law 'On criminal responsibility for state crimes.'" The new law makes any militant activity of non-Russians against Russian domination punishable by prison terms of from three to ten years.

The specific "crime" involved is: "Deliberate activities directed toward provoking national or racial hostility or discord, degrading national honor and dignity, and either direct or indirect restriction of rights or establishing of direct or indirect preference to citizens depending on their race or nationality." That alone is punishable by a term of three years' imprisonment. If violence or threats are involved, the term is five years; and if a group is involved and lives are lost somehow in the process, the term is ten years.

This is only part of a larger packet of legal amendments published in the government newspaper *Izvestia*, April 10, 1989. Punishment of from three to seven years in prison is also set for publicly:

- criticizing the Soviet state or its bodies or state officials to one degree or another and organizing around such ideas;
- calling for the overthrow of the state and social system; or
- advocating a change in the state by means violating the USSR constitution or carrying out such actions "on instructions" from a foreign organization.

The editors of *Izvestia* published opposite the new laws an "opinion of a jurist," one G. Ni-Li, who heralds the new laws as much more progressive than those they replaced. In fact, however, they are different only in terminology. This apologist for the bureaucracy asserts that the revised statute is "still another step toward the construction of a state based on law," and as proof he cites the degree to which it "corresponds with the norms of world jurisprudence." He fails to explain, however, that the "world jurisprudence" in question is actually the catchall "antisubversion" laws adopted by capitalist states aimed at protecting bourgeois class rule against organized working class opposition. It is clear that the bureaucratic caste in the USSR has its eye on the same enemy.

The second part of the bureaucrats' solution to the nationalities question was manifested within hours of the decree.

The Nationalities Policy in Action

At about 4 a.m. on the morning of April 9, Ministry of Interior troops attacked a peaceful demonstration of several thousand Georgians who had stayed all night in the central square of Tbilisi, the capital of the Georgian Republic. Sixteen people were killed immediately and four others died in the aftermath. Hundreds were wounded. The demonstration represented the continuation of a week of protests and strikes by workers and students in the capital and surrounding areas. The protesters were calling for self-determination — with demands ranging from greater local control to secession. More than 100 had been on a hunger strike in the central square since April 3. (While there was some speculation that the protests were connected with the demand raised in Abkhazia, an autonomous region inside the Georgian Republic, for independence from Georgia, this issue does not seem to have been at the heart of the events of April 3-9.)

Strike committees had been set up by April 6, as people streamed into the capital from surrounding regions, according to a *New York Times* report of April 8. A general strike had been called for April 7. By then Ministry of Interior troops and tanks had been sent in, and around 100,000 protesters had gathered in the streets. Demonstrations were projected to continue until April 14, the anniversary of demonstrations in 1979 that had won reaffirmation of a clause in the Georgian constitution specifying that the republic's official language would be Georgian — in opposition to a new constitution inaugurated under Brezhnev which would have eliminated that provision.

The circumstances of the attack on the demonstration are still unclear, and published reports are contradictory. The official press initially stated that those killed were trampled when the troops tried to break up the protest. There were claims from officials that some of the demonstrators were armed with knives and began attacking troops. Although the area, according to recent regulations, was off limits to outside reporters (especially foreigners), the *New York Times* said that local doctors and nurses reported treating many wounded demonstrators with broken bones and severe cuts. Initial unofficial reports spoke of the demonstrators being attacked by troops with "sharpened shovels and clubs."

Moscow News of April 23 carried a report about *Literaturnaya Gazeta* photojournalist Yuri Rost, who had arrived in Tbilisi about 11 p.m. April 8 and had been beaten with a truncheon. His camera had been smashed as he tried to photograph the attack. When the Georgian newspaper *Molodezh Gruzii* (Russian for "The Youth of Georgia") tried

to print his photos and his story, government troops invaded the newspaper offices, shredding and burning copies of the report and smashed the plates. (*New York Times*, April 14) Upon appeal, however, the paper was allowed to print part of the photos that showed "women with gashes in their heads and blood on their clothes and faces lying on the city's cobble streets."

Although the troops were reportedly armed with rifles (the reason the attack was carried out in "moonlight" was because the troops had shot out the streetlights before the attack), it seemed that it was crudely armed troops who attacked the demonstrators and that they must have beaten the demonstrators to death.

Moscow officials rushed to Tbilisi and then came the report from Kremlin press secretary Genadi Gerasimov, saying that "none of the dead bore signs of wounds. Most died of asphyxiation." (*New York Times*, April 13) On April 19 *Izvestia* reported findings of an official medical commission which stated that some victims were poisoned by unidentified "chemical agents." Reports of government use of a "poison gas" against the demonstrators began to circulate. This report was confirmed by Irakly Menagarishvili, Georgian minister of health who identified one of the substances as an "atropine-like substance that acts as an irritant," but can cause death in large doses.

Pravda then reported an official admission that "tear gas" had been used. Many victims remained hospitalized, ill with the effects of other substances that the government refused to identify. (For this reason no antidote could be administered.) Soviet Ministry of Interior and Army officials admitted that gas canisters had been shot at the demonstrators but said that they contained only tear gas. (*Newsday*, April 25)

Efforts to Shift the Blame

Soviet foreign minister, Georgian Eduard Shevardnadze, was among those who rushed to the scene. He soon condemned the attack "on innocent people" and blamed local officials. The immediate scapegoats were Georgian CP head Dzhumber Patiashvili, Georgian premier Zurab A. Chkheidze, and president of the republic Otari Cherketia, who were forced to resign. Named as the new CP chief was Gigi G. Gumbaridze, former head of the Tbilisi Party Committee and former head of the Georgian KGB.

Top officials — like ideological minister Vadim Medvedev, and Gorbachev himself — are trying to disavow any responsibility for the massacre, claiming not to have known that troops were being sent against the crowd. Meanwhile, the new Georgian party chief is pointing the finger at a group within the Georgian CP which allegedly made the decision to attack peaceful demonstrators. According to *Moscow News* of April 23, Georgian Central Committee officials at a briefing claimed that the decision to attack was made "by the subunit commanders who participated in the operation." The same article reported that along with the 150 civilians hospitalized and 8 critically injured and in intensive care units, "some 20 soldiers, four severely wounded, were also taken to hospitals along with 34 Tbilisi militiamen, hurt while

trying to protect the protesters or carry the injured from the square."

But whoever made the formal decisions that led to this attack on peaceful demonstrators in Soviet Georgia, it is clear that the overall nationalities policy of the Kremlin is the primary source of the problem. That policy continues to impose a completely centralized control over all of the non-Russian republics, and pursues Stalin's policy of Russification — rather than an internationalist respect for the cultures and traditions of all the peoples of the USSR. All those in the apparatus who support that policy and who work to carry it out in any capacity (i.e., all those in the apparatus) must bear responsibility for what took place in Tbilisi.

Aftermath of the Attack

While the troops may have been in some ways crudely armed during the attack that was hardly the case after it. Just before 11 p.m. April 9, a curfew was declared in effect from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Giya Karsaladze, 25, was mortally wounded from submachine-gun fire when, unaware of the curfew, he ignored commands from troops to stop. (*Moscow News*, April 23)

While the officials were busy passing the blame for the deaths, the Ministry of Interior continued its work. By April 10, *Tass* reported that several "instigators of the unrest" had been detained. Among them are long-time Georgian activists Merab Kostava and Zviad Gamsakhurdia — a writer and scholar who has played a prominent role in the democratic opposition since the early 1970s. Gamsakhurdia is not only devoted to promoting Georgian literature, language, and history, but has exposed several cases of high-level corruption and serious criminal activity. (*Moscow News*, April 23)

Some of those arrested were sentenced two days later to jail terms at hasty trials without lawyers present. Hundreds of people were arrested for curfew violation. The streets were occupied by tanks and heavily armed troops. There were evidently plans for massive house-to-house searches because 66,000 registered firearms were being confiscated, according to government spokesman Gerasimov in a press briefing April 11. (*New York Times*, April 12)

Despite the curfew, however, thousands turned out for funeral marches on April 14 mourning the dead, condemning the attack, and demanding the withdrawal of the troops. Shevardnadze ordered the curfew lifted April 18. On April 25, 3,000 reportedly demonstrated, demanding the release of the five nationalist leaders. (*New York Times*, April 26)

It was not until the first week in May that officials revealed to Andrei Sakharov, who was in Tbilisi at the invitation of an official investigation commission, that a second gas had been used against the demonstrators. It is apparently another form of tear gas. At least 12 of the 20 deaths were due to its effects. According to the chief doctor in Tbilisi Hospital No. 2, around 96 victims of gas poisoning still remain bedridden, some of them with symptoms not associated with either gas so far acknowledged as having been used. (*New York Times*, May 5)

Ministry of Interior and military authorities—notably General Igor N. Rodinov, commander of the Transcaucasian Military District—are keeping their mouths shut about the matter, only reinforcing popular anger and the suspicion that additional gases were used. Ministry of Interior troops act on the orders of and with equipment supplied by the central government. The minister of interior is Viktor Chebrikov (former head of the KGB), who also heads the new Central Committee commission on legal reform and protection of human rights. But to date, everyone besides the central authorities are being officially held responsible for what took place.

Part of a Consistent Policy

It wasn't only in the Caucasus that the rulers were mobilizing military force against the popular national movements around this time. Tanks and armored vehicles were deployed through the streets of the Baltic cities of Riga (Latvia), Tallinn, and Tartu (both in Estonia), allegedly on "training exercises" during the week following the Georgian attack. On April 10 and 11, a "monstrous number of troops" from the central government were reported to have arrived in the capital of the Uzbek Republic after a meeting on national oppression was held there April 9. Although the curfew has been lifted in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia are apparently still under martial law.

Despite these conditions, however, more than 100,000 Armenians marched in Yerevan April 24 commemorating the 1915 massacre of 1.5 million Armenians by Turkish forces and demanding the release of the Karabagh Committee, according to the April 25 *New York Times*. (The entire leadership of the Karabagh Committee that organized the massive protests during most of 1988 for the reunification of the predominantly Armenian Nagorno-Karabagh Autonomous Region of Azerbaijan with the Armenian SSR are now under arrest. These arrests were admitted for the first time in the official press February 7 by Major General Nikolai Vasko of the Interior Ministry, whose troops are responsible for maintaining "law and order" in Armenia and Azerbaijan—*Financial Times*, Feb. 8.)

In Tbilisi, family and friends of victims of the gas poisoning conducted a hunger strike demanding that officials allow outside medical help for the victims. In response, authorities agreed in early May to allow specialists from the International Red Cross to help treat those still suffering from the effects of the gassing. On May 5, 2,000 protesters took to the streets demanding the authorities provide an antidote for the victims.

Glasnost Continues

The central press has reported the Georgian events, even if in an incomplete and distorted way so as to try to place the blame on the leaders of the unofficial movements—for fomenting unrest and abusing glasnost. *Moscow News*, however, carried a report from a delegation of newly elected

deputies to the People's Congress, including *Moscow News* editor Yegor Yakovlyev, which concluded that the attack was "sheer brutality." The report portrayed the chilling atmosphere following the attack:

We landed in Tbilisi when curfew was already in force. On our way from the airport to the hotel, our identity was checked at least a dozen times, with checkpoints sometimes literally 500 meters apart. . . . We felt intimidated, but we feared not for ourselves. . . . What happened in Tbilisi was to us a vision of the way perestroika can be cut short.

But it is really the limits of glasnost that are showing. The bureaucracy's itchy trigger finger shows how self-conscious it is of its fragile hold on power once the masses begin to take their democratic rights seriously.

The attacks on the non-Russian movements in the Caucasus are quite serious. At least 20 Georgians and 91 Armenians and Azeris are already dead as a result of the bureaucracy's policies. Furthermore, more than 105,000 of the 159,000 Armenian refugees who fled Azerbaijan in the last weeks of November and the first days of December have still not returned to their homes. Many were fired from their jobs and driven from their homes "with the connivance and frequently with the direct involvement of individual local party, government, and economic officials," according to a resolution signed by Gorbachev and Prime Minister Nikolai I. Rhyshkov condemning these "impermissible actions by local leaders in Azerbaijan and Armenia." The resolution was published in *Izvestia* December 6, 1988.

Of 141,000 Azeris who fled Armenia during that same period under similar circumstances, only 4,100 have returned home. These figures were made public in the same report by Major General Vasko of February 7. While there have been drastic purges of the Armenian and Azerbaijan Communist parties, no officials have faced criminal charges for these crimes.

The eleven members of the Karabagh Committee and the other Armenians arrested with them, like the Georgian activists who have been arrested since the April 9 attack, could be the first to be charged under the new criminal laws and could face 10-year prison terms.

Today, as in 1922 when Lenin broke with Stalin and his apparatus over "the Georgian question," the situation in the Caucasus is exposing the anti-democratic, counterrevolutionary nature of the ruling bureaucracy's policies. (See "Behind the Struggle in Nagorno-Karabagh," *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, No. 61.)

Supporters of workers' democracy and socialism, both in the USSR and internationally, need to organize movements demanding the immediate release of these activists and supporting the struggles for national self-determination that they are a part of. Such efforts will help expand the openings provided by glasnost and revive a genuine spirit of revolutionary internationalism in the USSR and around the world. ●

The Impact of Glasnost and Perestroika

Interview with Catherine Samary

Catherine Samary became active in the French workers' movement when she was 15. She teaches economics at the University of Paris. This interview was obtained by the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism while she was on a speaking tour of the United States last February.

BIDOM: First, why don't you give us a little background about yourself and your knowledge of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe?

SAMARY: I've been studying the experience of the Yugoslav revolution from a Marxist point of view, along with the post-revolution period in that country, professionally—the reforms introduced there, including self-management, different forms of market and planning, and opening up the economy to the world market. That was the focus of my doctoral thesis which was published as a book under the title *Market Gains, Self-Management—The Yugoslav Experience*.

And I have been working to compare the different types of market reforms in Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union today, clarifying them through some of the key lessons that can be drawn out of the Yugoslav experience itself, while recognizing that there are historical differences. Now I am specifically working on the social impact and reactions in the face of the ongoing reforms in the Soviet Union.

BIDOM: You have traveled in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe?

SAMARY: Yes, of course, in doing my work on Yugoslavia I have been there several times since 1968. I was also in Poland at the second part of the Congress of Solidarnosc, as an observer for my teachers union at the university. I was able to visit some factories there which were under the organization of workers' self-management committees. I have also been in Eastern Germany and in Czechoslovakia several times, and in the Soviet Union, of course. In the last two years I have spent about three months there in all.

BIDOM: In the United States the economic reforms which Gorbachev has been implementing are presented by the capitalist press as the victory of capitalism over socialism. How is this seen in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe? And could you say a few words about your own assessment of the situation?

SAMARY: First of all we must say that in the Soviet Union and East Europe, as in the rest of the world, there is not one people with a unanimous point of view on such an important question. So there are different outlooks, different feelings, and different points of view. The way that the question has been posed is misleading, on the one hand. On the other hand it does correspond with a part of the reality in a limited sense.

Why is it misleading? Because in general people in Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union know—and this

corresponds to the reality—that the reforms are not intended to restore capitalism there. Neither are they intended to restore real socialist democracy. Gorbachev and the bureaucracy which he represents are mainly political rulers. Some economic experts certainly hope for a capitalist restoration, or are willing to fight for it. But as far as the bureaucracy itself is concerned it is mainly interested in a political project, to create a new kind of management system which will enable it to keep on ruling the country politically. They only want to use a *partial* introduction of the market to try and solve the impasse brought about by bureaucratic planning.

Of course one has to make the concrete analysis of *objective* motion toward capitalist restoration—I did it precisely for the Yugoslav system at the end of the '60s. (And one has to do it *country by country* in its specific context.) Part of the bureaucracy can become real classical bourgeois and fight for capitalist restoration. But this is not the case for the whole apparatus which has something to lose in such a process. As far as the *political* part of the bureaucracy is concerned, it still finds in the *Soviet Union* its "legitimacy" in the October revolution and the working class. Social resistance from the workers to the market reform will lead to *pragmatical* turns against the market reform. Prices and employment are the key *political* problems in such a society.

They are introducing glasnost to try to find a political path that can make the market reforms more acceptable, especially to the workers. On the other hand they are introducing the market in order to divide the population. Through partial competition they hope to increase productivity.

Of course it is amazing to see how the ideology that is behind the market reform tends to praise the so-called benefits of the market—the so-called economic laws, or so-called "universal and objective laws of the market," which they say should be respected—and also aspects of capitalist society, at the very time when there is an ongoing crisis of that society in which one can see the result of the market in daily life. But people in Eastern Europe don't know very much about that, don't believe so much what they hear about life in the West because of their mistrust of the bureaucracy and because on trips abroad they only see the facade of that society, with plenty of food in the shops.

BIDOM: Have the market reforms had any effect in actually increasing the productivity of the Soviet economy?

SAMARY: No. For the moment no. The most recently announced results for agriculture are very bad, with a need to

increase imports. In general in the Soviet Union people stress precisely the fact that the material situation is even worse now than it was under Brezhnev at a certain point.

BIDOM: *Gorbachev is getting a great deal of opposition within the bureaucracy both from the left and the right. How strong are those oppositional currents? How much success has Gorbachev had in getting support for his policies within the bureaucracy?*

SAMARY: Well, it is very difficult to make a precise judgment on the relationship of forces within the bureaucracy. What one can say is that we have an indication about this from the last party conference which was held in June. There was a combined result.

Part of the conference delegates were still conservative and controlled by conservative bureaucrats. That provoked massive demonstrations in many parts of the country. People wanted to control their delegates and it was not really possible.

On the other hand there were real delegates at the conference as well. Interventions occurred which were really amazing — describing aspects of the ongoing crisis which had never been stated before. And all of this was publicized by the TV and the media. This reflects the possibility for the pro-Gorbachev layers to express themselves and to control a part of the press and the TV. Even during the conference it was possible for the responsible editor of *Ogonyok* — which is one of the most pro-Gorbachev journals — to say that among the delegates there were four members of the “Mafia,” which has been more and more presented recently as one of the most criminal parts of the bureaucracy.

There are conflicts still developing among the different points of view within the bureaucracy. Just after the conference, you will remember, Gorbachev was able to reinforce his position to some extent while purging the main leading figures of the conservative wing. And the pushing of Ligachev into a position as head of the agriculture sector was not a gift to him — especially if one knows that Ligachev is in disagreement with the ongoing line on agriculture. That was an indication of certain possible shifts in favor of Gorbachev within the bureaucracy. In the electoral changes, the introduction of “multi-candidates” is designed to consolidate the purge against that wing at all levels, using the pressure from “the society”: that is, a limited democratization aimed at a certain restructuring of the still-single and bureaucratic party system — a “party” dominated by mafiosi and corrupted people cannot control anything!

But more recently, again, there have been indications of a new offensive by the conservatives. And of course the more negative the material situation becomes, the more aggressive the conservatives will be. They have made a practical alliance with even very reactionary wings among Great Russian nationalist currents like the Pamyat. And they can use all these types of forces in trying to bring about a convergence against at least some aspects of the reforms.

So it is very difficult to determine what the result of all this is in terms of the relationship of forces. One especially has to check what the effects will be of the ongoing electoral process, which of course doesn't change things substantially because the right to run different candidates is very limited.

But a choice of candidates is still better than one nominee from above, and it permits some shifts to develop in the different layers of the bureaucracy. So we will have to wait and see what the result of all that will be.

BIDOM: *You mentioned the bureaucracy's approach to glasnost as an attempt to create a social base for its attempted market reforms. But the political reforms have a life of their own and maybe you can say a little bit about their impact on Soviet life and on Soviet working people.*

SAMARY: Yes of course we can give different examples of that. First I must say the big question to be watched is how the workers will use glasnost and the new rights which have been given to them, even though these still remain limited. But the official language of Gorbachev is to say to the workers that they must feel like masters in their own factories and must exercise self-management rights. We will see whether or not the workers are able to do so.

As far as concrete cases are concerned there is the example of the informal associations of the Baltic fronts, with similar forms in Armenian Nagorno-Karabagh at the very beginning. These groups used the official slogan for glasnost and perestroika to develop their own demands, even to the point of carrying portraits of Gorbachev at first in the Baltic republics. But in the very rapid development of those initiatives they come into conflict with the political limits of glasnost as conceived by Gorbachev, and even to the conception of an economic reform.

Gorbachev was ready (and is still ready) to give a positive answer to certain demands concerning language, along with some cultural and national demands. But there have been and will be severe conflicts over any concrete demand for real democratization of that system, any question of what the form of federation between the various republics in the USSR should be, and the content of that federation. Separatist currents can dramatically increase the conflicts, of course. Some demands have arisen from the Baltic that there should be a right of veto on certain federal laws when they consider it not in their interests to implement them. Such a proposal combines the fight for sovereignty and the democratization of the federation. In Yugoslavia such a right was introduced in the last constitution in the '70s.

The political conflicts will be combined with increasing conflicts on the economic front, because the logic of implementing self-financing at the level of the republics is of course used for more independence at the level of the republics. A complete control of their own resources is not on the agenda of the proposed reforms, which are a combination of the market, centralization, and self-financing at a certain level, but with the maintenance of control over key resources at the federal level. But the fight for control can be either a fight for democracy or a fight for an *expanded market*, especially in the richest republics.

Of course we can also see the dynamics of glasnost in other fields. Both on the historical front and in terms of a practical analysis of what is going on in Soviet society today, the debates in the Soviet press have been more and more oriented towards an assessment of the bureaucratic system. The origins of that bureaucratic system have been discussed.

So have all the questions of Stalinism and its nature and its link with socialism. All of this is now on the agenda.

You could see this and read it in the press — not the marginal press, but *Pravda* of last summer — where the Soviet historian Yuri Afanasyev stated that the Soviet Union and Stalinism were not socialist, not even a form of socialism. And he explained that this statement was an absolute necessity in order to find the resources, and strengths, and ideas to try to define a real road towards socialism, to transform perestroika into that.

There have also been articles written by the philosopher Anatoli Butenko which are really amazing. He states that Stalinism was a bureaucratic power imposed on the backs of the workers, and that the political reform which is necessary for restructuring has to turn the whole pyramid of power upside down — to put all control in the hands of the masses and implement a real popular power, rather than one which exists in name only, permitting the workers not only to have an opinion about what is taking place but to directly implement their own will. That is one of the dynamics of glasnost.

As far as this political side of the question is concerned, of course, we can also look at the dynamics of historical debates on Trotsky.

BIDOM: *The comment of Afanasyev that the USSR is not socialist, and that a real road to socialism is necessary, obviously leads into this whole question of the historical fight by Trotsky and the Left Opposition. The program which they presented would seem to have some answers to the questions that are being debated and discussed in the Soviet Union today. What is the memory and knowledge about Trotsky and his role in the Russian Revolution amongst various layers of the working class? the intelligentsia? the bureaucracy? And what do people know about his role in the fight against Stalin?*

SAMARY: Here again it is very difficult to have a complete view. One can say first that for many people, and especially for the workers and young people — especially the very young people — what they know is what they have learned in school under the official propaganda. And in the official propaganda Trotsky has been a “non-person” or an enemy for a long time. Either he disappeared from history or else he became only a spy who was killed in exile by his own people. That was all that many knew.

Of course there are still people alive who, through their immediate relations or their own knowledge, can testify directly about what actually happened in history. There have certainly been a number of intellectuals, and we discover them more and more, who have been able to work in the secret archives when their own jobs called for this, and who have attempted to find out directly what the positions of Trotsky were. And it is certain that now there is more and more interest in Trotsky’s writings and views — even if at first simply for moral reasons — because people increasingly understand that he was the only one, he and the Trotskyists, who fought Stalin from the very beginning.

The official press has stated this, though the way in which the official press has explained things until recently constitutes a new falsification of history. Afanasyev calls it “neoconservatism.” Events were explained in a very specific light designed to reduce the attractiveness of Trotsky as a vi-

able choice. Both for today and for the 1920s, the official view poses a similar alternative. Today one must accept, according to this official view, either the market (perestroika) or bureaucratic rule. In the 1920s it was either Bukharin and the New Economic Policy (that is, the market) or Stalin and forced collectivization.

So how was Trotsky shoehorned into such an alternative? At first as he was reintroduced into history he was simultaneously placed in the camp of Stalin. Trotsky, it is explained, did exist as a revolutionary, as a key figure in the history of October. (This is not a small concession.) But after 1924, they say, he underwent a degeneration, became anti-Soviet, anti-working class, and so on.

The main feature of this analysis is that Trotsky suffered from the same negative character traits as Stalin. So that his real fight against Stalin, which is praised, is immediately accompanied with the judgment that it was purely personal. It was a personal fight for personal power, not a political fight. According to this thesis Trotsky’s political and economic program was actually implemented by Stalin. And if Trotsky had been in power he would have done even worse things than Stalin did. So people were still faced only with the historical choice of either Bukharin under NEP or else Stalin/Trotsky as a single political entity.

But now the situation is changing. First there is the dynamics of glasnost itself, which pushes towards a break with these half-truths. People really want to have complete truth. Secondly, there is also the problem of the impasse which has been reached by the market reforms and the resistance to them. These create a certain dynamic in which people try and find a third road between these two types of caricatured alternatives.

There has been a new shift in the official presentation of Trotsky in the very recent period. Articles in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, written by a journalist who has up to now been in charge of writing pamphlets to explain Trotsky and Trotskyism in the world, state not only the fact that he was a key revolutionary figure, as popular as Lenin or second after Lenin, but also that his fight against Stalin was a fight against the system. This means that it was a political fight and not an individual fight.

It is noteworthy that these articles quote extensively from Trotsky’s writings — describing the bureaucratic system behind Stalin and stating that if one killed Stalin, for instance, the same system would still be in place with another leader such as Kaganovich, an example that Trotsky himself used. This takes place in the context of a situation where the Pamyat organization — an anti-Semitic and nationalist reactionary group — has focused its own anti-Semitic propaganda against Kaganovich, saying that as a Jew he was the main leading person during the Stalin regime, that he paved the way for Stalin, and was even more important than Stalin himself. To quote Trotsky, another Jew, against Kaganovich is of great importance today. So there has been an evolution even in the official viewpoint of Trotsky.

A last example of recent events is the whole development of the people involved in the Memorial affair. The Memorial results from a decision taken at the last party conference, after it received broad petitions from “informal clubs” demanding a memorial to the victims of Stalin. There is a

growing number of committees in defense of all of the victims of Stalin, whether they are known or unknown. And the people involved in these committees don't just want to build a monument, but desire an opening of the archives and a real debate which could permit a genuine *political* rehabilitation of the ideas of Stalin's victims.

Recently, the first meeting was organized in Moscow by those people in charge of the Memorial to take up Trotsky. (See "Current Events in the Soviet Union," *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* No. 61.) The grandchildren of the so-called enemies of the people were there to defend the ideas of their grandfathers and grandmothers. They occupied the three front rows of the meeting, which was attended by several hundred people. Many more wanted to attend but were unable to squeeze inside the room. Pierre Broué was there and presented the book he recently wrote on Trotsky. He gave it to the people at the meeting and to the Soviet population as a whole, so there could be a complete glasnost on their own history. There was a very striking enthusiasm in the whole room.

BIDOM: *You have mentioned the effect and the impact of the struggles of the oppressed nationalities in Armenia and the Baltic republics, and the impact that glasnost has had on them. What is your estimate of the relationship of the struggles of the oppressed nationalities to the fight of the Soviet working class to overthrow the bureaucracy?*

SAMARY: I want first to stress that any attempt to separate the national question from the whole context in which it is raised is misleading. It is misleading for an understanding of the dynamics of the national movements as well as a programmatic approach to them.

Of course, one must stress the key importance that the national questions have already had in the first mass movements of Soviet society today: the popular fronts in Armenia and in the Baltic republics were the first real involvement of those populations in mass activities for the purpose of controlling their past (that is, seeing a little glasnost about it), their present, and their future. But what is also amazing and *new* is the fact that all these movements did not develop only on the basis of a spontaneous revolt against the existing national oppression. They all began with portraits of Gorbachev. (And that is very similar to the impact of the Soviet reforms in the other Eastern European countries and probably Cuba, Vietnam, and China.)

The *general* situation is dramatically different from what it was at the time of the triumph of Stalinism. So the demands and the relationship of forces are different — and much more complex, by the way. Today you can read in *Pravda* or *Moscow News* articles from Djuba arguing in favor of a popular front in Ukraine, defending the Ukrainian language. That's the effect of glasnost — and it is why the movements began by supporting the *slogans* of glasnost and perestroika.

It is obvious that the general judgment we have on glasnost and perestroika must be consistent with our judgment of its effects on the national question: very contradictory.

The struggle against national oppression cannot but stimulate the workers' tendency to express their own point of view — and they represent now the majority of the active population of Soviet society. Up to now, in Armenia, where

workers' participation was massive, the central legitimate demand has been centered on Karabagh. In all the cases, and especially in the richest republics like the Baltic ones, social differentiation can appear quickly within the national movements because the context *is also that of the market reform*. And I'm not only speaking here of the Russian workers. Things can be very confused and mixed.

But the national movements will be organically combined with three types of conflicts:

First it can be an impressive part of the general fight for socialist democracy, and from that point of view become a key element of the anti-bureaucratic revolution. But that does not answer the question of what the concrete manner or slogan is through which the fight for sovereignty will be (and should be) expressed. That could mean separatism or, what seems more to be on the agenda, a combination of a fight for republican sovereignty *and* a fight for democratization of the federation. So the problem would focus on the concrete form of the federation, with power for *all* the republics on economic and political questions. As a rule one must stress that the national demands and movements can be part of the anti-bureaucratic revolution only if they are not subordinated to specific layers of the bureaucracy itself.

This leads to the second aspect of things. Obviously national demands can be used by the bureaucracy, or different wings within it, to increase their own power through mobilizing the population. This will weaken the democratic dynamic of the struggle in two ways — the encouragement of chauvinism and interethnic conflicts, on the one hand, and on the other the *market reform as a means to increase bureaucratic control of society through new rules*.

A third dynamic can interfere as well — pro-capitalist tendencies. The reform, as I said, is not to be identified with a project of capitalist restoration. But that does not mean that no force could use it in that sense. Separatism can be defended as a means to restore capitalism. Of course, that is not an argument to refuse separatism — which is a basic democratic right. But one should not have the illusion that in the bureaucratized workers' states separatism is *only* anti-bureaucratic. It can be anti-bureaucratic on a pro-capitalist basis. The judgment of the dominant dynamics in the movements is a matter for concrete analysis. Of course one does not have to wait for a "pure" movement to support firmly the legitimate national demands, including self-determination.

Finally, it is necessary to stress the fact that the question will be complicated by the composition of the republics. For instance, in Estonia, 40 percent of the labor force is composed of Russian workers. Unskilled Russian workers came there to find jobs. Of course this migration was supported financially from Moscow, and priority given to those workers for the distribution of apartments locally. These Russian workers do not have responsibility for this situation, but it is now a given fact, and it means that there is a possibility of a conflict in such a republic between workers' demands, if they also include the Russian-speaking workers' point of view (which can have a "Great Russian" negative content), and the Estonian national demands as such. These must be supported by internationalists, helping the workers to understand the crime of Stalin in carrying out the forced integration of that republic into the Soviet Union. The na-

tional movement must also be able to express social concerns and demands which can win the workers to their side to guarantee a process of free socialist democratization of the republic itself. For the moment those sorts of ideas haven't been clearly raised, so things have to be followed very carefully.

BIDOM: *During your tour of the U.S. one of the subjects you've been speaking on is the impact of glasnost on Soviet women. Maybe you could say a few words for us about the role that women have had in the USSR in the Stalin period and up to the time of the beginning of the recent reforms. How are the reforms affecting that role?*

SAMARY: The situation of women shows us the reality of society as a whole. The situation of Soviet women is both contradictory and paradoxical—as has been Soviet society in general after Stalin. Stalinism had a very contradictory effect for Soviet women. It was a big step backward in contrast to the ideology which was a dominant part of the Bolshevik program and which was the norm in education in the USSR at the beginning of the twenties. Stalinism meant a revival of the very traditional role of the family and of women's duties in it. This was combined with a pragmatic exploitation by the bureaucracy of certain aspects of the Bolshevik program, especially the idea that jobs and full employment should be given to women, which was the main point used to illustrate the so-called equality between men and women achieved under "socialism."

The reality is far from that, but the long-term effect of the post-Stalin period, as far as the situation of women is concerned, includes the positive effect of planning for full employment and in particular of full employment for women. More than 86 percent of women are employed on a full-time basis, and more than fifty-one percent of the labor force is female. But full employment does not mean good employment or nonalienated work—either for men or for women workers. And there is a very unequal distribution of income and of grades in jobs between men and women. This, in turn, has to be tied in with the maintenance of the dual day of work for women, the fact that there is little or no domestic machinery, a scarcity of different products linked to light industry, a lack of services (especially of good services) to care for the children.

Forty percent of the children under seven years of age can be cared for by preschool institutions. But taking into account the number of women who are working, taking into account the fact that the price for the child care is low, the demand for child care reflects real needs, which are very high, and we can see that this figure is totally inadequate. Child care is not a priority for bureaucratic planning, which has placed its main emphasis on industrial development. Not only are the services insufficient from a quantitative point of view, but from the point of view of their quality the situation is even worse. This means that for women it is extraordinarily difficult to live, to combine work, domestic tasks, and children's education.

The result has been that women, in general, have not been able to occupy posts of responsibility in the workplace. That's not an absolute judgment, but a general tendency. It's even true in the branches where women are dominant, like

medicine, where only 15 percent of the employees are men, but the majority of the highest grades are occupied by men. It's like that everywhere. So that women went where there was less competition with men, and they occupied in these branches—in the professions, in industry, in agriculture, in services—the lowest grades.

Now comes perestroika. One of the main declared objectives of perestroika is precisely to restructure industry in order to reduce the unskilled manual part of the labor force. That's why women workers have been in the forefront of those who fear the social effect of restructuring the labor force. Many letters in the press express this concern, and the fact that managers of factories often use the new laws, use the restructuring, to push women off the job. Eighty percent of the women, when they are asked whether or not they want to go back home, say that they prefer to keep their job. That is not because it is a satisfactory situation, it is a very difficult situation, but because their job at least gives them a certain limited possibility of choice in their personal lives.

There are still those 20 percent of women (and perhaps more) who would like to go back home, who would like to have the right to choose that option. This, in general, is precisely the result of the very difficult situation that women are confronted with and of the nature of the jobs which are offered to them. And women in the least skilled, the most difficult jobs, are those who have the largest percentage who favor returning to the home. This is also linked with dominant ideology which has been to praise the traditional "duties" of women, and it reflects the dominant reality in relationships between men and women at home as well.

Men often express the view that women who work cannot any longer be "real" women. The traditional image and tasks of women have long been praised by men, and this is now reinforced by the language of the Gorbachev reforms themselves. If you read his book you will find two and a half pages, among hundreds, devoted to women. These explain that the positive and heroic efforts to give women and men an equal role led the regime to underestimate the difficulty for women—in the context of full employment—to accomplish "their natural female duties." In the context of an ongoing moral crisis in society and among the youth, with the press speaking more and more about juvenile delinquency, it is explained that the crisis of the family and the fact that the women are not home enough is to blame; the second fact being the cause of the first. It's not the system which is responsible for the moral crisis, but women.

So there is growing pressure to push women back into the home. Of course this is not likely to be successful, because of the resistance of the women themselves and, secondly, because women's activity is needed in industry. But the campaign can further reinforce the very traditional role of women within the family, which has been a dominant feature of Soviet society.

BIDOM: *The depth of the upheaval in the USSR is reflected in cultural expressions as well as in political discussions—films, novels, etc. Could you tell us a little bit about what's happening in this sphere?*

SAMARY: The writers' organization was the first through which the new line of glasnost and the pressure towards free-

dom of expression expressed itself. Of course, the development of political ideas in the arts, in literature, and everywhere glasnost has had an impact doesn't mean just progressive ideas, progressive writers, and progressive historians. In every sector there are countervailing trends as well.

Take Glazunov, for instance, who is one of the main popular painters today. He is an explicit representative of the Great Russian, pro-religious, anti-Semitic, and anti-Communist orientation. And in literature, those who have been called "peasant writers," like Rasputin, can also develop their own works along similar lines. So you can see the development of points of view which go in very different directions.

There are also a great many novels expressing a reactionary Great Russian nationalist point of view which were published recently but which had been written in the period of the so-called stagnation (Brezhnev's time). One is called *The Sons of Arbat*, which is the name of a street in Moscow, written by Anatoli Ribakov. The novel is about the fate of different children from the Stalin era and the evolution they go through. It's an examination of the process of Stalinization, of Stalin's effect on psychology, and the different ways individuals reacted. Many people in the Soviet Union recognize themselves in that story.

But you also have a novel written by Vassili Grossmann, an extraordinary, really wonderful novel about the same period. The book is called *The Life and Fate* and it centers on the battle of Stalingrad. It analyzes both fascism and Stalinism without putting them crudely on the same plane, explains the political differences between them, and makes a very simple analysis of both ideologies and systems — while also stressing their similarities, as Trotsky did. Behind this, and other novels he wrote, there is a very deep emphasis on morality in human relationships which should not be considered in a narrow way as petty bourgeois or apolitical. Behind it is the problem of the violence of Stalinism.

There are now very important magazines, like *Novy Mir* and others which regularly publish such different types of novels as these, and people are rushing to read them. It is very difficult, because there is a scarcity, a political scarcity! But it corresponds also to the incredible demand for literature by the Soviet people. This is having a profound political effect on the consciousness which is developing.

I can add something on the question of cinema, though I am not a specialist on these matters and probably many other things could be said. This has to do with the contradictory effect of perestroika. Before the reforms, the main limitation on makers of motion pictures was censorship. Now the easing of censorship permits people inside the Soviet Union to see pictures which were made previously and which are often of very high quality, but which were previously banned. However, there is a new problem. Those who want to make pictures today are confronted with the question of money. Under the logic of the reform, less and less of a subsidy will be given to such fields. This means that the maker of quality films will be confronted with the necessity of finding financing for it, or making "profitable" films, which can have a negative effect on quality. It is a new aspect of the situation.

BIDOM: Finally, could you say a few words about how the Fourth International is relating to the present changes in the Soviet Union?

SAMARY: The history of Trotskyism is organically linked with the fate of the Soviet Union. There lies a part of its identity.

One aspect is of course the campaign for full rehabilitation of all the victims of Stalin. That is not only a Trotskyist fight, but also the fight of the Soviet people. We can understand the importance of this, the dynamic that it has unleashed. I stressed this before. It helps to break with the idea that the Soviet Union is really socialism, and also with the theory that socialism inevitably means Stalinism. If you want to fight against those ideas it is obviously more convincing if you can demonstrate that a socialist alternative actually existed and that there was a concrete left opposition to the counterrevolution that Stalinism represented. This is why it is so important to shed a full light on the past. It is something very stimulating for the present and for the future.

But of course the role of Trotskyists cannot be only to support glasnost about the past, and to fight for a political rehabilitation of historical figures. (By the way, the political rehabilitation that is needed is not one that we want the bureaucracy to implement, but one that will come about as a result of the Soviet people having complete freedom to read, to know what the positions of Trotsky and the Trotskyist movement were, which means also a pluralistic expression in the Soviet Union.) Revolutionary Marxists can also bring something from their experience for the present and the future — to be part of and participate in the ongoing debate and struggle to oppose bureaucratic planning. They have an alternative to propose to the bureaucrats' answer of marketization.

They can influence people in the direction of fighting for a real socialist democracy, but only if their approach is not that of red professors coming from outside — knowing everything and having the answer to every question, as if the problems of today can be solved simply by reading Trotsky. The long-term bureaucratic crystallization, the long-term effects of forced collectivization, etc., have raised in Soviet society new types of problems. Consciousness is very different today than it was at the time of Trotsky. One is confronted with new international and national conditions. One should be able to understand that there will inevitably be a lot of confused consciousness as the process of reforms unfolds.

But it can be a tremendous advantage to be an International, working in independent fields and not affected by the censorship of the bureaucracy or by bourgeois propaganda. Active links with social struggles in various parts of the world can help Soviet activists working for a true anti-bureaucratic revolution to develop an internationalist class consciousness. That is very difficult to have when you get only the information about the world permitted by the bureaucracy — with very strong censorship and a tendency to caricature what goes on elsewhere. That is the responsibility of the left in general, of the socialist movement in the world. There needs to be another view of the international situation and class

struggle, other than the one which the Soviet bureaucracy has provided.

It has been important, for example, to give information on Nicaragua, to try and break with the dominant idea of many people in the USSR that Soviet external policy in Afghanistan, in Czechoslovakia, in Nicaragua was all the same. When people in the Soviet Union reject an intervention in Czechoslovakia today – which is positive – or when they approve the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan – which is also positive – they tend at the same time to approve the reduction of aid to Nicaragua. Revolutionary Marxists can help explain the necessity for complete *glasnost* on the world – on the global policy of the bureaucracy and on the reality of capitalist society outside.

As far as internal reforms are concerned they can also offer something which is linked with the advantages of their existence beyond the control of the bureaucrats – a Marxist, class analysis of the market reforms which have been implemented. That can be done in tune with the sentiments of the people: how to answer the problems of bureaucratic planning and combine collective property, developing it towards real socialist property, and also a fight against bureaucracy and lack of freedom. Here concrete analyses of the effects of the reforms in Hungary, Yugoslavia, China, and so on, are of big importance because they are directly related to the problem in the USSR.

It helps to use both the ongoing crisis in those East European countries, in China, and also the social pragmatic resistance of the workers in the Soviet Union as part of the Marxist explanation of the problem. This permits one to explain that the first market reform was not a means to suppress bureaucratic rule. It was a means for the bureaucracy to maintain its own power through a more decentralized system. As in Yugoslavia, this can even permit the bureaucracy

to become larger at a decentralized level. Market reforms haven't been able to solve the problem of efficiency and they haven't been able to really bring about workers' self-management in Yugoslavia. The reason for that has been, of course, the combination of a lack of political democracy for the workers and the social effects of the market which come into conflict with the aspirations of the masses, their sense of justice. They don't accept bureaucratic rule, but the dictatorship of the market is no better.

So if the Fourth International participates in the debate in the Soviet Union using these concrete examples, then it can convince people that there is a certain continuity to be found between the struggle of the Left Opposition in the 1920s and their own political battles today. This means a fight both against a capitalist system – that is a generalized market economy based on the law of value – and against the bureaucratic regimes.

It is very easy today to be against Stalinism and against the bureaucracy from the right – from the point of view of the capitalist system. More and more it appears that revolutionary Marxists are the main force, if not the only force, which has really implemented a line of actively fighting against capitalist rule, against market dictatorship, and against bureaucratic dictatorship. That position can help the development of internationalist Marxist currents in the Eastern European countries, aid in their coordination, and help them against reactionary trends. This is possible if, on the other side, the Fourth International also learns from experience and tries to adapt its own explanations to the concrete forms in which consciousness has developed in those countries.

BIDOM: *Thank you very much.* ●

China (Continued from page 9)

political reforms and bureaucratic rule itself. In the Soviet Union and other Stalinist bureaucratic systems, the overall social, political, and economic crises have forced Gorbachev to carry out limited political reforms and *perestroika*, and forced Hungary and Poland to conditionally allow party pluralism and political liberalization. These developments have exerted a certain pressure on the Chinese regime to carry out some political reforms and democratization.

At present, while in no way minimizing the importance of the campaigns for democracy, it is also important to note that, by and large, they have not yet linked up with the working masses and their interests to any significant extent. Only by linking up intellectuals and students with the working

masses and combining the struggles for democracy with struggles to protect the livelihood of the majority of people from the attacks from capitalistic reforms and bureaucratic rule in China and from capitalism in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao can there be a persistent struggle capable of mobilizing the majority of people.

China is in an explosive situation, as the signature campaign and the related incidents revealed. That is why it is all the more important to link up the social forces capable of solving the crisis in the interest of the majority of the people. ●

April 19, 1989

Israeli Activist Tours U.S.

by Steve Bloom

Michel Warshawsky, an Israeli activist who faces a possible 23 years in prison as a result of his activities in opposition to Israeli persecution of Palestinians, toured parts of the U.S. for six days in April. Meetings were held for him in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Michigan, Washington D.C., and Florida.

Warshawsky was arrested during a police raid on the Alternative Information Center in Jerusalem on February 16, 1987. He was then working as director of the center, an alternative news service. The AIC publishes *News from Within*, which carries extensive reports about the Palestinian intifada (uprising) and of Israeli atrocities in the occupied territories. The center itself was closed down by administrative order for six months after the raid, but has since been allowed to reopen. Warshawsky, however, is still banned from working there in any capacity, and is not permitted to engage in any activity related to typesetting or printing.

There are three crimes in the indictment against Warshawsky: typesetting material from illegal organizations; possessing material from illegal organizations; and supporting a terrorist organization. The first two charges — which, of course, amount to the same thing since one can't typeset material that is not in one's possession — stem from a 1945 British colonial statute and the third from the Israeli Prevention of Terrorism Act. It is the first time that these laws have been used against a Jewish citizen of Israel. Warshawsky explained at a news conference in New York on April 25 that the AIC took in commercial typesetting work from women's, student, and labor organizations in the occupied territories. The Israeli government claims that these groups are in reality fronts for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which is illegal.

Other staff members arrested with Warshawsky in the raid were released after 48 hours, but Warshawsky was held and interrogated by the Shin Bet — the Israeli security police — for two weeks. He was then transferred to a regular prison where he remained for an additional two weeks, until a publicity and pressure campaign supported by journalist organizations and prominent civil liberties figures around the world won his release on bail. His trial is currently in progress, and because he is required to report weekly to the Israeli authorities, his visit to the U.S. had to be kept short.

In a prepared statement distributed at the news conference Warshawsky discussed the motivations of the Israeli authorities in his case:

The significance of my case, which is a political one, lies in two issues: first, freedom of the press. The AIC is a press information service which gathers and provides material to the Israeli and international press

about conditions facing the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and violations of their rights under the occupation by the Israeli defense forces. The professionalism of our work is widely recognized. The closure of the Center was immediately protested by the Israeli Journalists Association and in this country by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

The second issue, which is the core of the case, is that of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation. The Center includes Israelis and Palestinians working together.

This question goes to the heart of the political crisis of Israeli society today. More and more the artificial but long-standing barriers between the two peoples who occupy Palestine, Israelis and Palestinians, are breaking down. There are attempts on the part of all sorts of people — doctors, women's groups, as well as journalists and political activists — to talk and work together, and to form organizations and associations which include representatives of both peoples.

The government wants to stop this and hopes to use our case as a warning to others. But, as I told one of my interrogators, it is too late to stop this. This is the clear and irreversible trend.

In response to questions, he discussed the reaction in the United States to his tour, and explained that there has been a great deal of sympathy, connected to the reaction of people in this country to the intifada:

I never have been in the States before, but I follow quite closely what is happening in American public opinion and most specifically Jewish-American public opinion. I was surprised by how much it has changed. There is no longer an unconditional and uncritical support to the policy of the Israeli government. The pictures which the American media pass all over the country of Israeli oppression and the Palestinian uprising have changed the mind of many, many people. So everywhere I have been I found — not only among radicals but even among liberals, including Zionists — a great deal of support and understanding for our case.

Warshawsky also stressed that his case is only one example of the effort to repress those who resist the Israeli government's measures in the occupied territories. "Because there is for the first time a mass opposition — a minority but a mass opposition — which expresses the feelings of even broader layers of the Jewish-Israeli population, the Israeli government has to take steps to try to stop it." He cited as a prime example the case of Rami Hasson, a soldier who has been sent to prison a number of times for refusing to serve

in the occupied territories (see information on this page). Military authorities acknowledge that refusal to serve in the occupied territories has become a mass phenomenon. ●

This information is excerpted from a leaflet printed by Friends of Yesh Gvul, Berkeley, California:

Urgent – Dateline Alert – April 7, 1989

Two Israeli soldiers are in jail indefinitely— for following their conscience.

Since the beginning of the Palestinian uprising in December 1987, approximately 75 Israeli reserve soldiers have been jailed for their refusal to serve in the occupied territories. Many have now been imprisoned two or three times for the act of refusal to participate in the repression of the Palestinian people. The number of soldiers who “refuse” assignment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but who have not been jailed because the army would prefer to avoid publicizing the issue, is reported to be in the hundreds.

The Israeli government and the army have recently instigated a series of moves aimed at harassing and ultimately suppressing the growing refusal movement. Now the army has initiated its latest and most damaging policy— successive call-ups. Any reservist refusing to serve in the occupied territories may be subjected to continuing call-ups for active military duty.

What this means is that jailed soldiers will be immediately summoned for additional duty directly upon completion of their jail terms— and then jailed again, if they continue to follow their conscience. This new policy is designed to break the will of individual resisters who face repeated jailings.

Two soldiers of conscience are currently bearing the brunt of the new policy— and several more are in line to suffer the consequences.

* * *

● Rami Hasson was jailed in December 1988 for his refusal to serve in the occupied territories. Again in February of this year Rami received another call-up, refused, and was jailed for 28 days. On March 28th he completed his sentence, only to be summoned again a few days later. Rami again refused, was given a 28-day suspended sentence and— called up again the next day. When he refused to serve, he was sentenced to 56 days in jail!

Rami Hasson is a 29th-generation Jerusalemite. Prior to his call-up in February, he staged a three-day vigil in front of Prime Minister Shamir’s house which was widely publicized in Israel. Now it seems that the army is having its revenge.

● Angelo Aiden is married and the father of four daughters. He is also now serving a second continuous sentence under the new policy— and he has already been issued a call-up for the end of April! Angelo is a community activist and lives in a two-room apartment with his family and 86-year-old father who is dying of cancer.

* * *

We urgently call upon you to immediately protest these latest actions by the army and to show support for Rami and Angelo and the others to follow, by calling, writing, and petitioning the Israeli embassy and local consulates, your congressional representatives, and the secretary of state for human rights.

Israeli Ambassador Moshe Arad, Embassy of Israel, 3514 International Drive, NW,
Washington, DC 20008 (202-364-5500).

Letters of support to Rami and Angelo can be sent directly to:
Yesh Gvul, PO Box 6953, Jerusalem 91068, Israel.

Solidarity, Regroupment, and Socialist Renewal

Editorial Introduction to a Discussion Article

The November 1988 issue of *Left Turn*, published by the socialist group Solidarity, contained an article by Joanna Misnik entitled, "Regroupment: Toward a Socialist Renewal." The problems Misnik takes up are of acute interest to readers of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, and represent important issues for consideration by the broader socialist movement in the U.S. We had wanted to reprint her article to accompany the one by Paul Le Blanc which follows this introduction, but we were refused permission to do so. It can be ordered, however, by anyone who is interested. Send \$1 for a copy of the November 1988 *Left Turn* to: Solidarity, 7012 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210.

We want to indicate here what we see as the gist of Misnik's article, and explain why we consider it essential to devote some pages to a discussion of what it had to say:

"First I want to clarify that I am not going to be talking about our vision of socialism," she begins. "I'm going to be talking about our vision in contemporary terms for a socialist movement in the U.S." She goes on to make a number of important points.

As revolutionaries, we are now witness to what I would call a recomposition of the working class movement on a world scale. What do I mean by that? Since the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution, the working class and its allied movements had been dominated by traditional workers' organizations—the Communist parties and Social Democracy. But since the end of the second world war, this has slowly begun to change. The communist-Stalinist monolith has broken down; a watershed in this process was the Cuban revolution, one that was not predicted, directed, or wanted by the Kremlin. The Nicaraguan revolution has once again demonstrated that there are new leaderships arising which do not respect the limitations placed on them by the old leaderships and their philosophies. We also see the demise of Maoism as a world current.

Moreover, the workers' movement and its tasks are beginning to be defined much more broadly. Thanks to actual struggles that have raised these issues in our time, we understand much more fully than revolutionaries in 1917 that the working class movement must be defined as transformation of society at all levels. It must encompass the liberation of women, the liberation of the oppressed national minorities, the liberation of the environment, and the liberation of human sexuality.

With this recomposition of the working class movement occurring, most recently punctuated by events such as those in Poland, Nicaragua, and South Africa, we can't be so stupid as to suggest that we as revolutionaries should remain the same. Just sit on top of a mountain and say: aha, the working class is rebuild-

ing itself. We'll just wait till it catches up to us. That is exactly the wrong approach. Today's revolutionaries have got to be an integral part of this process.

In large part because we *agree* in substance with much of what Misnik has to say here, we think it is vitally important to go into a little more depth in terms of the implication of these ideas, as well as to grapple with the kinds of issues which are raised in the rest of the article. These involve "how you develop a revolutionary socialist organization . . . to reflect the ability to encapsulate these new movements, learn from them, face new questions, and include new fusions."

We are especially concerned about discussing such questions with Misnik and her comrades because of a history and tradition that we have in common. Many members of her organization, like ourselves, are part of the Trotskyist tradition and are supporters of the Fourth International. Many of them were also undemocratically driven out of the Socialist Workers Party during the political purge of 1982-84. For decades the SWP had been a united sympathizing section of the FI with room for different points of view. But its central leaders decided at one point in the late 1970s or early '80s—without permitting a democratic discussion of their new ideas—to abandon a Trotskyist perspective in order to adopt an orientation to Fidel Castro. To avoid a political struggle with those who remained vocal proponents of the SWP's traditional program it became necessary to expel them from the ranks of the organization, and this was accomplished through a process of frame-up and slander.

Among those who were driven out of the SWP during that time, three groups emerged—the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (F.I.T.), Socialist Action (SA), and a short-lived group called Socialist Unity that soon joined with two other groups—International Socialists and Workers Power—to form Solidarity. Of these groups, the F.I.T. has been the only one to *consistently* insist that the SWP experience and the issues leading up to the crisis of that party must be critically evaluated and discussed within the *entire* Trotskyist movement. We are also the only group that calls for the unity of *all* the currents in the U.S. that remain even formally in solidarity with the FI at the present time. We also are in favor of these groups working together whenever possible, as well as discussing with each other precisely the kinds of points raised in Misnik's article. What she has written in *Left Turn* is the most coherent presentation that we are aware of to explain the outlook of those Fourth Internationalists who are part of Solidarity, and for this reason we consider a discussion of it to be a vital necessity.

Misnik warns that "there's only one way . . . [to develop a genuinely revolutionary socialist organization]—by building an organization that lives in the reality of what is going on in the world working class as well as our own working class. Any

attempt to impose full-blown organizational models — to put it crudely — any attempt to pretend that at all times and in all places we act as though it were Petrograd 1917 is a sure formula for marginalization, if not irrelevance.” While identifying in a very general way with “the historical continuity of Leninism” (indicating that not all Solidarity members disagree with this), she goes on to argue that “the lessons of the 1960s and ’70s” in the United States were quite negative among groups claiming to be Leninist.

Some sense of the things she tries to convey about Solidarity can be seen if we look at the points that were selected for highlighting in the article. One reads: “We are not a party; we are not a nucleus [or] a pre-party formation. In my opinion we are a ‘contribution’ to the rebirth of a revolutionary socialist movement in the U.S.” Another says: “We have sought to decide what we agreed on instead of what we disagreed on. It’s quite a ‘revolutionary’ idea.” And finally: “Regroupment is . . . a new ethos, a new ability to confront our reality and not run away from it.”

While much of this may strike readers as rather vague, Misnik makes a number of important general points that all revolutionary Marxists, and others as well, would agree with. She stresses the need for revolutionary internationalism; independent organizations (and political independence from the capitalist government and parties) for the working class and oppressed groups; opposition to racial and sexual oppression; the building of a democratic, militant labor movement with a broad social vision; and the popularization of the ideas of socialism in a manner which underscores its democratic essence both as a vision for the society we seek

to create in the future and as an integral part of the organizations that we build in the present.

Obviously, socialists who agree on such matters as these have a responsibility to explore the extent of that agreement, *as well as any areas in which they might have disagreements*, in order to create the basis for a durable unity. It is not clear from Misnik’s article, however, that there is such a *two-sided* clarification process in her conception of “socialist regroupment,” and this seems to us to be an important problem. Drawing her article to a conclusion she writes:

All these methods of developing an organization that I’ve touched on are a way to give a new lease on life to the small and beleaguered socialist movement, a new inspiration for people that this is a purposeful and enriching thing to be part of and not merely a ritual. . . . Regroupment is a question of establishing an atmosphere, a new way of functioning and relating in the left in order to develop this socialist renewal and to bring authentic Leninism back to where it belongs in the U.S. of the 1980s. And ultimately, I think, this will make for socialists who will be better human beings, which, after all, is what socialism is about.

In the following article, Paul Le Blanc seeks to initiate a discussion on the perspective which Misnik offers. We hope that she will reply, and we encourage responses from others — whether members of Solidarity, of some other organization, or simply interested readers. We believe that the issues under discussion are vital to all revolutionary socialists. ●

Discussion

Where We’ve Come From, What We Face, Where We Go From Here

by Paul Le Blanc

Among the many things that Joanna Misnik and I have shared in common is a belief in the need for a socialist renewal which includes bringing “authentic Leninism back to where it belongs in the U.S. of the 1980s.” Of course, it’s too late to achieve this in the 1980s — the goddess of history doesn’t slow her chariot for even the best of revolutionaries. But if our goal is to be realized in the 1990s, it will be necessary to do some serious work. The tasks at hand include clarifying our thinking — grasping commonalities but also discussing differences on the left — in polemics such as this one.

In “Regroupment: Toward a Socialist Renewal,” Joanna correctly points out the need for a regroupment on the U.S.

left. As with other members of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, I believe in the need for all those who are a fraternal part of the revolutionary Marxist world network, the Fourth International, to join together in a democratically centralized organization. This includes not only my own group, but also the FI Caucus of Solidarity (of which Joanna Misnik is a leader), Socialist Action, and the Socialist Workers Party. More than this, we should reach out to others — including *all* members of Solidarity. But also including many other sincere socialists, activists, conscious workers, etc. — for the purpose of working together to create a unified, pluralistic, democratic, revolutionary socialist mass movement that can transform our society.

There is no blueprint on precisely how this will be achieved. But there are certain guidelines. We should take seriously the theoretical heritage of revolutionary Marxism, the accumulated lessons and insights from past struggles, but we should use this in a critical-minded way in order to further expand and enrich our store of Marxist theory. Intimately entwined with this, we must be engaged in the real, ongoing struggles of our time, defending the interests of workers and the oppressed, and we should also be critical-minded in regard to these struggles so that we can help them advance. And even while many of us are not in the same organization, we should try to work together in this process of theoretical clarification and social struggle — respecting each other, yet being critical-minded in regard to each other (and to ourselves), in this way helping each other, and the socialist movement, to move forward.

In this spirit I approach Comrade Misnik's article. Of course, the fact that it is written by someone whom I like predisposes me to give it the benefit of many doubts. The fact that it is written by someone whom I think has taken a wrong turn politically, on the other hand, predisposes me to having many doubts. Giving free rein to this critical impulse, I find fault even with the first paragraph which innocently, for pedagogical purposes, separates the vision of socialism from the vision of the socialist movement which Solidarity hopes to build.

Am I being hypercritical? Perhaps. But let's follow the thought and see where it leads.

Socialist Vision and Socialist Movement

Our vision of socialism is inseparable from our analysis of today's world, from our understanding of the past, and from our general orientation in the struggles for a better future. To take but one aspect, it involves the great masses of working people collectively and consciously shaping the conditions under which they themselves live, democratically controlling the economic institutions and resources of society. This is fundamentally different from the domination of society by privileged and powerful elites, which has characterized most of human history and describes most of our world even today. "The history of revolution," stressed Trotsky, "is for us first of all a history of the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny." The centrality of this vision for us does not mean "that at all times and in all places we act as though it were Petrograd 1917," as Joanna Misnik puts it. But to make this denial and then simply leave it at that isn't enough. Our revolutionary-democratic vision of socialism is intimately related to our strategic orientation for achieving socialism, with practical implications for how we seek to build our movement and for the kinds of struggles this movement will be engaged in.

Another aspect of our socialist vision is that — in the most concrete, thoroughgoing, practical sense — it is internationalist. Modern capitalism has created the means for destroying civilization and humanity on a global scale. Thanks to its dramatically evolving technology, its social organization of the economy, and its international integration of material resources and labor power, modern capitalism

has also created the possibility of world socialism. In fact, given the profoundly global nature of the political economy of capitalism, socialism cannot be realized except on a world scale. We can't even understand what is happening in our own country unless we see it in a global context, in its inter-relationship with the other advanced capitalist countries, with the "underdeveloped" regions which they exploit, and with the bureaucratically deformed "post-capitalist" societies with which they uneasily coexist. And the struggles of dissident and insurgent forces in each of these sectors are interlinked. Every victory and every defeat of working people and oppressed groups engaged in the struggle for dignity and social justice anywhere in the world will affect similar struggles elsewhere. Of course, Joanna Misnik also sees this reality, aptly describing "a recomposition of the working class movement on a world scale. . . , most recently punctuated by events such as those in Poland, Nicaragua and South Africa," concluding that "today's revolutionaries have got to be an integral part of this process."

Practically speaking, how can today's revolutionaries be an integral part of this process? Part of the answer, of course, is working to build an effective revolutionary socialist movement in our own countries. But to be effective, to be consistently revolutionary, to be capable of bringing into being a society which is actually socialist, we must organize ourselves internationally — sharing insights, developing analyses, and shaping strategic perspectives collectively with revolutionary socialists throughout the world. Fortunately, there is a world organization of revolutionary socialists which — whatever its limitations and imperfections — provides an essential, practical means for us to be part of the global recomposition of the working class movement and the international revolutionary process. That organization is the Fourth International.

It is a serious weakness that Joanna Misnik feels constrained from underscoring the practical conclusions of her revolutionary-internationalist insight, or from even mentioning the Fourth International. This shortcoming lends an abstract, almost superficial quality to the point she is making. What should be an essential guide to action becomes little more than a rhetorical flourish. Anyone who knows Joanna is aware that she is neither abstract nor superficial in her internationalism, nor is she indifferent toward the Fourth International. The problem is that many of her comrades in Solidarity don't share her specific, practical commitments. They don't want to be identified with the Fourth International, and they don't want the Fourth International to be promoted in the publications of their organization. To make the practical point which should be made might not be acceptable to these comrades, so Comrade Misnik holds back and blurs her politics.

This is a problem which crops up throughout the article.

Defending the Good Name of Leninism

It is not the case that Joanna Misnik is attempting to dissolve her own politics into a less defined, less revolutionary milieu. In fact, she is striving to provide greater clarity for Solidarity's actual politics, and she is trying to do this in a manner that might draw Solidarity's members toward the

perspectives of the Fourth International. For example, she seeks to defend the good name of Leninism, although she clearly recognizes that this is not the most popular position among many of her Solidarity comrades.

"Are we Leninists?" she asks. Not one to leave us in suspense, she boldly tells us: "Although many would disagree on this in Solidarity, my answer would be YES." The Solidarity comrades who *do* disagree might be justified in protesting against being tagged Leninists against their will. Some have indicated that they believe there are elitist and authoritarian elements in the very "soul" of Leninism which require transcending the Leninist tradition. Why can't Joanna be satisfied—they might wonder—in saying that some Solidarity members are Leninists and some aren't? It's a valid question.

Desiring to defend the good name of Leninism, she tries to persuade her critical comrades that not only is it not so bad, but that they are really good Leninists in spite of themselves—much as Moliere's bourgeois gentleman was informed that he'd been speaking prose all these years without knowing it. This impulse toward Leninist virtue on the one hand and comradely generosity on the other is commendable, but it also makes us uneasy. Is this method of defending Leninism's good name the best way to defend (and win people to) Leninism's actual qualities? When we take a hard look at how these qualities are described, we begin to wonder—setting labels aside—who is being converted to what. Let's reflect deeply over the Misnik definition of Leninism:

Lenin said that the art of politics is knowing what to do next. He didn't say that it was pretending to be in Petrograd in 1917. . . . We inherit the historical continuity of Leninism in politics which is the art of the possible and the need for organization. We inherit a continuity and not a caricature. And that is all Lenin, the Bolsheviks and every other revolutionary who went before us was asking us to do.

Knowing what to do next, the art of the possible, the need for organization.

This certainly defines important elements in the thought of Lenin. These key notions have also been embraced by others in the labor movement: Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Kautsky, Eduard Bernstein; in the U.S. Eugene V. Debs and James P. Cannon, but also Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Jimmy Hoffa, and many more. Also committed to the art of the possible and the need for organization have been many outside of the labor movement, from Attila the Hun down to Bush the president. With this way of defining Leninism, the list of "Leninists" is endless.

Obviously this definition doesn't get us very far. Misnik tries again, suggesting that "the essence of Leninism" is that "we don't have all the answers, that we must learn from the class struggle and that we are actually capable of making mistakes." These are important truisms which can be embraced by Leninists, non-Leninists, and anti-Leninists. Such a way of defining Leninism makes it difficult to win people to Lenin's orientation (or makes it easier not to risk the effort).

Once More: The Primacy of Program

It has often been noted that Lenin believed that the development of a revolutionary socialist program is a key for the healthy development of a revolutionary socialist organization. Many critics of Solidarity argue that the manner in which the organization was formed—with a firm decision of the merging organizations to *set aside* political differences and instead to keep attention focused on more general points of agreement—diverges from the Leninist approach. "What we're saying," responds Misnik, "is that our program is not something we can agree on here today and then put inside the cornerstone of this building."

Fair enough. Putting it in the cornerstone of a building would be silly, and one can perhaps accept the inability of Solidarity's diverse membership to agree on a program "here today," even several years after the organization has been formed. Of course, if Lenin is right, then it is absolutely necessary to be engaged in developing (if not by today, then at least by tomorrow) a program on which revolutionary socialists can agree. Why? Because this is essential for the consolidation and consistent activity of a revolutionary organization. It formulates basic views which orient the membership as a cohesive body on how to get from where it is to where it wants to go, helping to define the immediate political tasks of the organization and to win others to its programmatic banner. How can Solidarity hope to function as a serious organization if it is not at least engaged in the process of programmatic clarification?

The revolutionary program involves "an interaction with the living class struggle and attempting to adapt your organization to the best of it," Misnik argues. This is true, and perhaps some Solidarity members are involved in such interaction and adaptation. But once again, there's more that must be said.

There is also the need of the revolutionary organization to try to influence the class struggle, to be in a position to gain a hearing for its views on specific directions in which the struggle (actually, the multitude of struggles) should go. Of course, in order to do this, the organization must be made up of people who actually agree on this project, who agree on specific directions, and who will commit themselves to making this program a living reality in the class struggle. What we need to do is consciously, steadfastly facilitate the development of a revolutionary vanguard organization which would be capable of providing leadership within today's social movements and in the growing over of present-day struggles toward socialist revolution.

Joanna, as a Fourth Internationalist, as a Leninist, probably agrees with this at least as an abstraction. But she seems to feel that to focus on the necessity of developing the revolutionary program will result in discussions within Solidarity which will bring political differences to the fore, generating polemics and antagonisms and disunity. It's safer to make jokes about putting programs in cornerstones and to offer soothingly vague formulations which allow the various comrades to do (or not do) what they each choose. Otherwise, one risks bad feelings among one's comrades and debilitating fissures in one's organization.

But this won't work. Solidarity is not immune from internal antagonisms. After all, it is composed of human beings. In fact, because these particular human beings desire socialism but are compelled to live under capitalism, they may be prone to special irritabilities. The objective pressures and developments of the real world will also have an impact. People will think different things, become annoyed with each other, disagree. No matter how conscientiously political differences are glossed over, conflicts are inevitable.

The introduction of the question of program can help prevent the diversion of these antagonistic energies into such "delicious" wastefulness as gossip and personal rivalries, instead of helping to deepen comrades' understanding of reality and to clarify differences in their understanding, making it clear in what the differences actually consist, how profound the differences are, whether these are differences of substance or differences on partial questions, and how they might affect common work among the members of the organization. Frank exploration of disagreements can move comrades' thinking forward, clarifying counterposed positions which can then be more effectively subjected to the test of experience. This assumes, of course, that the comrades are engaged—in a democratic yet disciplined manner—in accumulating the class-struggle experience which the organization has collectively chosen to be involved in. (To add another point, it's not clear that Solidarity is inclined to function that way—which obviously makes it harder to test and clarify.)

Political Clarity and United Front

"We are not a party; we are not a nucleus; we are not a pre-party formation," writes Joanna Misnik. "In my opinion, what we should say we are is a contribution . . . to the rebirth of a revolutionary socialist movement in the U.S. . . . We make our contribution freely and we hope that others will equally contribute with us." It is not clear what all of this means. Does she see any role for a revolutionary party some time in the future? If so, doesn't she see Solidarity *in that sense* as some kind of "pre-party formation"? If the answer is yes, how does she conceive of Solidarity contributing to the creation of such a party? And what is the nature, generally speaking, of that party? These questions about the hoped-for future have relevance now because the answers would logically affect how Solidarity functions in the here-and-now. The answers that Joanna Misnik could (but doesn't) offer, I believe, would be useful to her comrades in Solidarity and to others of us as well.

It is, of course, sectarian to believe that we must all be in the same organization in order to work together, talk with each other, and contribute to each other's thinking. It's worth reflecting over Lenin's appeal for an agreement among the various socialist organizations of Russia, in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday 1905, to promote unity in action: "We shall inevitably have to . . . march separately, but we can . . . strike together more than once and particularly now." He also stressed, however, that "we must be very careful, in making these endeavors, not to spoil things by vainly trying to lump together heterogeneous elements." He foresaw (in a manner similar to Misnik, and to ourselves) that "the growth and

spread of the revolutionary movement, its constantly deeper penetrating among the various classes and strata of the people, will inevitably give rise (all to the good) to constantly newer trends and shades." But he also warned that "our ideal should by no means be that all parties, all trends and shades of opinion fuse in a revolutionary chaos." In Lenin's opinion, "only full clarity and definiteness in their mutual relations and in their attitude towards the position of the revolutionary proletariat can guarantee maximum success for the revolutionary movement."

This united front perspective allows unity in action without the dilution of political ideas or the glossing-over of differences. This is essential for the ongoing testing and development of the program which is crucial for building a revolutionary socialist movement that is capable of victory. This approach—far more than that which is presented in "Regroupment: Toward a Socialist Renewal"—is what makes sense for us in the United States today. To the extent that the activists find themselves able to work together, clarifying their political perspectives through frank and open discussion, testing their perspectives in the struggle, sharing the lessons of experience—precisely to that extent will socialist regroupment be fruitful and revolutionary unity be genuinely possible.

Lessons of the 1960s, '70s, and '80s

Joanna makes fleeting reference to "the lessons of the 1960s and '70s." The lessons all seem quite negative. "We were supposed to believe that revolution was around the corner and we were going to lead it, but we really didn't [believe that]," she writes. "So we built self-contained societies to convince ourselves of things we didn't believe." This is quite a statement. She was in the Socialist Workers Party in this period, and she seems to be speaking of her own experience: "Our program was the only program. We were the vanguard and everybody [else on the left] . . . were opponents and they had to be smashed." (There is, I believe, an element of truth to this point—not the whole truth, but an element—although the tendency was not always to smash but often simply to contemptuously ignore other left-wing groups.) She continues: "We had a militarism that called itself democratic centralism but that in fact crushed democracy in many organizations." All the terrible accusations leveled at the SWP by its opponents on the left (some of whom are now her comrades in Solidarity) were, so it seems, painfully true, but the other organizations trying to be "Leninist" were also terrible. And that's "the lessons of the 1960s and '70s."

Perhaps this is not an attempt to provide a balanced judgment but merely a rhetorical device to make friends and influence people in and around Solidarity. But it's a mistake.

It's a mistake, first of all, because the lessons of the 1960s and '70s go far beyond this bitter summary. There was the inspiring, exhilarating commitment to transforming society—a massive upsurge of idealist youth in the United States (in "the belly of the beast," as some used to say) for civil rights of oppressed races and nationalities, against the threat of nuclear war, for civil liberties, against poverty, for campus reform and academic freedom, against the Vietnam

war, for women's liberation, against anti-gay prejudice, for cultural freedom and revitalization, against the destruction of the earth's ecology, for the elementary and revolutionary democratic demand to "let the people decide." Increasing numbers of people decided to speak truth to power, question authority, move from protest to resistance, finally to be realistic by demanding the "impossible." The radicalization process helped to show us that the numerous issues of concern were interrelated, and that through collective action people can more effectively deal with their common problems, that if enough of us commit ourselves to struggles that make sense, we could transform the political climate, change small minorities into majorities, and win meaningful victories. Some of us also learned that electoralism and reformist politics are traps, that ultraleftism is a dead end, and that society will not be fundamentally transformed unless the working class becomes conscious of the need for this to be so. In 1968 we became especially aware of the power of the workers, thanks to the May-June events in France. That year also illustrated for us that the struggle for liberation is global, with the Tet offensive in Vietnam, the resistance to bureaucratic rule and Soviet invasion in Czechoslovakia, the worker-student upsurge in Western Europe, the killing of student demonstrators in Mexico, the intensified battles for peace and justice in our own land.

It is also a mistake to characterize the Socialist Workers Party as pathological and grotesque. Perhaps certain of its members have earned such adjectives, but the SWP was a far more interesting, complex, and valuable organization than this. It helped to preserve and carry forward into a new period the revolutionary Marxist heritage. It contributed to the education of many thousands of people, in its ranks and far beyond its own milieu, on the nature of racism, the centrality of the Black liberation struggle, the meaning of Black nationalism. It was in the vanguard of those who sought to defend and learn from the Cuban revolution; defended the dissident workers, students, and intellectuals of Eastern Europe and the USSR; played a central and truly historic role in helping to end the U.S. war in Vietnam. It understood, earlier than many, the necessity of revolutionary Marxists to embrace and learn from the new wave of feminist insurgency. Advancing the proud tradition of U.S. labor radicalism (which was part of the historic core of American Trotskyism), it championed democratic and militant trade unionism infused with social vision, and it was a clear and uncompromising voice for the political independence of the working class. More than this, the SWP was a tireless force in the effort to popularize the ideas of socialism and to win

people to the struggle for a socialist world. These are only some of the positive things that can be said about the Socialist Workers Party, which helped to provide invaluable lessons to many of us in the 1960s and '70s.

If what I've just said is one-sided, it is nonetheless far more accurate a summary than Joanna's dismissive comments about "the lessons" of those two decades. Of course, a more critical assessment of the SWP is necessary simply in order to explain its subsequent degeneration. Elsewhere I've attempted a somewhat deeper and more rounded assessment. In fact, we have a responsibility to develop — from a serious-minded revolutionary Marxist standpoint — more balanced, informative, critical-minded, and useful discussions of the experience of the 1960s and '70s . . . and now of the 1980s. We should look at far more than simply the experience of the SWP, although that experience must be understood by those who would build a revolutionary socialist movement.

The problem with Joanna Misnik's flippant put-down of the experience of the previous two decades is that it cuts across our drawing up such a real balance sheet. Indeed, she seems to imply that these experiences were too stupid to take very seriously — better to put it all behind us and start afresh. To do otherwise, especially to attempt a balanced appreciation of the SWP's contributions, might also stir up bad feelings among the members, supporters, and contacts of Solidarity.

If we are serious about clarifying for ourselves what has happened and educating others about it, if we are serious about building a viable revolutionary socialist movement, we must do better than that.

Conclusion

Obviously, there's much more to be said about all of this. Hopefully other groups and individuals supporting the Fourth International, and others identifying with revolutionary socialism, will want to join in this discussion of how to achieve a socialist renewal in the United States.

It might set a very good example for others if comrades of the F.I.T. and Solidarity (for example, Paul Le Blanc and Joanna Misnik) show the way: we don't consider each other opponents to be smashed or contemptuously ignored. We seek to work together to the extent that it's possible, taking each other seriously, and discussing our different perceptions of where we've come from, what we face, and where we go from here. The resulting programmatic clarity can help pave the way for socialist unity and revolutionary victories. ●

Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

31. Russian Patriots

Who could I have been friends with in Kirov? With Kostya, his wife, and his brother-in-law. Kostya rarely discussed the camps with his family, and I noticed that people were afraid to hear about them.

By that time, word about the camps had already begun to filter out to the people, although, of course, only a tiny bit of all there was to know. Of the methods used to prepare the camps, the methods of investigation, or the deceit used to conceal the truth, they knew nothing at all. The Kashketinas [plenipotentiaries of the apparatus sent to oversee executions] had done their jobs well. And then they too were killed, so everything turned out splendidly.

Some in Kostya's family guessed that people ended up in the camps even though they were innocent but could not have imagined that Tukhachevsky, Yakir, Bukharin, Krestinsky, and the dozens of other defendants of the famous trials were victims of slander.¹ "Your case," Kostya's bride-to-be said, "was decided in secret. In such a case, of course, the investigator could say anything he wanted to. But Bukharin's testimony was printed in *Pravda*! I read myself how he confessed to having been a spy! Hundreds of correspondents were present! No, no, Misha, don't say anything or I will also be considered an agitator for listening to you and not telling them what you have said!"

There was an unbelievable attack on the psychology of the people. It continued, growing and gaining strength. And with every day, more and more of the selfless labor of the popular masses was used against them, to feed and nourish the detachments used in this attack. There was a noisy flow of Greetings and Reports, the jangle of bunches of keys to the cell doors, the stamping of the feet of the detachments of "Mr. Fidgets" [jailors], some with rhymes and some using foul language, but all alike convinced they were entitled by Marx to guzzle sweeter things, to rest in special sanatoria, to be treated in special clinics, to get provisions from special stores, and live not alongside the people, but in special homes. No, no, Misha, don't speak, don't generalize!

So I did not. I fell silent. And I never after that undertook to open my mouth to my friends about Vorkuta, or about Grisha, or about the hunger strikes and executions. And even less did I open my mouth on the job. I stood at the work bench, one time even worked as a specialist, and then was sent back to the bench again. But I never uttered a word.

The first two or three weeks after our arrival, Manya's brother would buy a bottle of vodka every day. Again and again he would mark the happy occasion. A young man, he was already becoming an inveterate drunk.

"So," he would say, "let's have another so the head doesn't ache."

He was a good, kind lad and like his sister he loved to help people. His head ached from thoughts about Kostya, Manya, and himself—a close relative of a persecuted and besmirched man. If he had not fled Artemovsk, he would have been imprisoned too, as many others were. And so, he drinks and again becomes witty, cheerful, and happy about life.

"Let's have another, so our wives won't get mad at us."

His wife was a "hard party woman" as he put it, and she overdid the political conversations at home and even more over a glass of wine, when tongues, God forbid, can at last loosen. It was because of people like her that I was warned not to generalize. This woman faithfully believed every word she read in the newspapers and heard on the radio, even if yesterday she read and heard something different. She was able to completely erase from her memory what she heard the day before.

But while she trusted the newspaper *Pravda*, she did not trust people. Even in Kostya's presence, she spoke not in her own words but with words learned by heart from the newspapers.

Maybe she was pretending. But it all came so naturally to her—most likely, pretending became natural for her. Any person not singled out as trustworthy was ideologically suspicious to her.

She would shake her head reproachfully when I, acting like a drunk, would cheerfully go on about the questionnaire Marx's daughters had prepared for him. I knew almost the entire thing by heart since the time that I had read it in an "anti-Soviet leaflet" of the Opposition. Our hard party woman did not know that this theme was taboo but sensed that something was wrong about it. But out of spite I would toast her with Marx's saying: "Subject EVERYTHING to scrutiny." Don't trust anyone! Don't share any ideas with anyone! Be suspicious of everyone!

And it was not her fault if she drew from these ideological rules the most fully practical conclusions: "Less about politics. Someone will report you!" If you recall the blacksmith Semyon Slabodsky, who proposed instead of politics to talk about women, then you will see that the camps differed little from the outside world, in this respect at least.

While I lived in Kirov, I was called in several times to "the organs" [the authorities], as they were called, and records were kept about where I was, what I did, and whether I was sharing secrets about the camps. Kostya was called in also.

Kostya was drafted into the army sooner than I was — he was younger. A conviction under a political article meant little. Apparently, they had originally decided not to take us. This is what I gathered from conversations with “the organs.” Kostya was sent to a work division. Mobilized later, I ended up at the front. Undoubtedly, the military commander received and passed along the chain of command information about my conviction. I was assigned to the infantry although as a metal worker, I had applied for the machine-gun division. I was attached to a unit, then transferred. From the first day to the last, I served in the ranks. I went in and came out a soldier.

Lion Feuchtwanger wrote: “Civic courage is less common than military courage.”² He was writing about the eighteenth century, but this is just as true today, when the unbounded power of one man, with centralized rule driven to extremes, continues to need soldiers for defense of the state, but ceases to need citizens to create the state. The war began and military courage became a mass phenomenon. But were there any more people prepared to say out loud what they knew about Stalinist historical and judicial falsifications? Or in time of war will truth about this only serve the enemy while lies defend the homeland?

Here is a question for the authors of military novels, in which generals unjustly condemned and rehabilitated are removed from history. (And how many of them were there really?) They believed Stalin. Then why didn’t they write to Stalin about what they thought of their investigators, not to mention Beria.³ Because they, I, everyone, lacked civic courage.

But those who died at the brick factory had it. You are silent about them. Why did you not depict people with civic courage? You did not know Baglyuk? You did not send telegrams when the Donetsk writers marked his sixtieth birthday, posthumously? You are silent for the same reason.

I will not go into detail about the war; many fine tales, novels, military diaries have been based on it. It is not my job to add to them. My task is to call to mind those people who the Twentieth Party Congress said deserved a monument, and to say a few words about what the congress decided not to mention.

In many situations, I was sustained by a thought that before 1940 would never have entered my head: Jews have no right to behave like cowards, precisely because they are Jews. This was true the night we were led from a march directly into battle. Both during the campaign, and before it, during the formation, senior sergeant Egorov, my section commander, repeated: “You should be selling meat pies, not dragging a ‘Maksim’ [a heavy machine gun].”

By the way, in that campaign, I carried the barrel of the machine gun while he carried only a rifle. And not only I but many others very likely felt the same way, seeing Egorov, who was lying alongside them in the trench, cast them a suspicious glance. Why keep silent about it? In those years I was not the only one who noticed anti-Semitism. And, of course, it didn’t at all originate in the fact that all the Jews had fled to Tashkent (“You want to go to Tashkent?” I heard hundreds of times.) Three and a half million did not flee, but perished at the hands of the police and SS officers. And Jews joined the battle no less often than others; they joined the battle not

only for their homeland but for their human dignity as well, which Jews should always remember.

I was wounded in the chest near Kovel. At the medical station, tearing off the bandage that Egorov had wrapped around me, the doctor discovered that my chest had grown emaciated while my legs were absolutely elephantine. I had constantly concealed this from Egorov. The doctor asked: “Where did you spend so many years without vitamins?”

I could not tell him that I had been in a camp! I knew very well why legs swelled up — you wouldn’t see anything like that in Vorkuta, of course — but precisely because I knew, I hid this from Egorov. Let him grumble about how clumsy I was.

As a soldier, I was able to observe what went on around me with a soldier’s eyes. The soldiers did not like my platoon commander, and I am not going to write about him either. But the commanders of the two other platoons were two younger lieutenants, still youths, having gone straight from school into military training and then to the front. They were friends and even looked like they could have been brothers: snubbed-nosed and black-eyed.

It jarred me and many other older soldiers to hear them use the informal word for “you” when addressing us. They themselves, evidently, felt that it was not appropriate but were not able to find another tone. Beneath the studied coarseness of both platoon commanders, one could see the simplicity and sincerity natural to 19-year-olds.

They sincerely believed every word of the leader and about the leader. And when they shouted “For the Motherland! For Stalin!” they said it, I would say, with such feeling that it became clear that for them the Motherland and Stalin were inseparable.

During offensives, both young lieutenants were constantly tearing off far ahead of us. They never had time to look around for each other, but it is very likely they were thinking of each other. They were both killed the same day, near Sarny.

Contemporaries of my son belonged to the generation educated in the 1930s. About them, and himself, Korzhavin wrote bitterly:

If God had deprived us of sufficient intelligence,
Then at least I’d have heard and seen nothing.
It’s too bad, but it was unnecessary;
And the fact is that this was not what happened.
Intelligence was not in such short supply;
There was plenty to hear and to see.

But my generation simply did not believe what it heard and saw,

And it did not even trust its own thoughts.

It was not sight and hearing that we picked up in childhood,

But how to replace knowledge with faith.

* * *

These youth, the youngest of the soldiers and officers of the Patriotic War [the Second World War], might not have perished, the queue into the army would not have reached them, if not for the actions of Stalin on the eve of the war. A quarter of a century has passed since then, and historians

(true, very few of them, since it calls for civic courage) cite devastating facts as evidence of the nature of the diplomatic and military leadership of Stalin before June 22, 1941 [the day after Hitler invaded the Soviet Union]. But their investigations, even those that managed to get publicized in the mid-1960s, were soon removed from the libraries and bookstores (for example, the book by A. Nekrich⁴). In international politics, openness with a partner who is not open with you is not always required; but truthfulness with your own people is always, under all circumstances, obligatory. Stalin did just the opposite: at first, before the beginning of the war, he was remarkably loyal toward Hitler, so as not to “provoke” him. And later, when this did not help (there was no way it could have helped!) and Hitler attacked us anyway, Stalin began again to betray his people, acting as if there had been no appeasement of any kind. There is an interesting document that is never quoted from that period. It was printed in our newspapers December 1, 1939, when there was a war going on between Germany and the Western powers, who were at the time not yet our former allies. The document was entitled “False Communiques of the Havas Press Agency.” And it said the following:

The editor of *Pravda* asked Comrade Stalin how he felt about the Havas communique about “Stalin’s speech” allegedly made “at the August 19 Politburo” meeting where the idea was allegedly conveyed that “the war must be prolonged as long as possible so as to exhaust the warring sides.”

Comrade Stalin sent the following reply:

This communique from Havas, like many of its others, is a lie. I, of course, cannot know in precisely what cabaret this lie was fabricated. But whatever lies the gentlemen from Havas agency may tell, they cannot deny that:

1. It was not Germany that attacked England and France, but France and England who attacked Germany, thus taking upon themselves the responsibility for the present war.

2. After the opening of the military conflict, Germany made peace proposals to France and England. The Soviet Union openly supported the proposals of Germany since it considered and still considers that the sooner the war is over, the easier it will be for all countries and peoples.

3. The ruling circles of England and France rudely declined both the peace initiatives of Germany and the attempts of the Soviet Union to obtain a hasty end to the conflict.

Such are the facts.

What can the cabaret politicians from the Havas agency say to refute these facts?

For the sake of clarity, once again we should recall that what we are talking about is the 1939 war of England and France against Germany, and try to imagine what it would have meant to accept Hitler’s “peace proposals,” which Stalin supported, and how that would have “made it easier for all countries and peoples.”

This “peace” would have meant reinforcing the status quo. And that consisted of the following: Hitler had occupied Holland, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Greece, France as far as Paris, Poland up to Western Belorussia, and Ukraine; with Italy, Spain, Hungary, and Rumania as his allies, or more precisely, satellites. Particularly notable was Poland’s situation. In those days, in the journal *World Politics and World Economy* (no. 12, p. 149) it was written: “On December 19, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR ratified a treaty of friendship and respect for borders with Germany, concluded September 28, 1939, in Moscow.” Yes, there was such a treaty, and the newspapers even printed a map showing the new borders and demonstrating the division of Poland after Hitler’s disgraceful attack on Poland September 1, 1939.

In any case, our current textbooks and scholarly works omit all mention of this treaty, and refer instead to a nonaggression pact that was concluded *before* Hitler seized part of Poland in the very beginning of September and we occupied western Ukraine and the western Belorussian parts of Poland. We write about this pact but we are silent about the treaty on *friendship and respect for borders*, as if it had never existed.

It is clear who is discredited by this second, September, treaty. But who is discredited by the juggling of historical facts and by the silence about what really happened and about facts that magnificently refute Stalin’s entire policy before Hitler’s attack on our country? Could anyone seriously believe that the truth, whitewashed by the retouchers of history, would remain forever whitewashed and that the whitewash will never wash away? When historical science becomes the maidservant of the conjunctural period, it is no longer a science. Honest investigation does not diminish the glory of the Red Army, which was able to win despite the most ignoble calculations of Stalin—it fortifies it. But lies deeply insult the noble memory of the millions who died.

The hidden weight on our souls did not rest on the souls of the younger military generation—that most uncorrupted and precious generation of the war. But the easier it was for them then, the graver and more grievous became the consequences. The contradiction between the lofty revolutionary tasks bequeathed by the older generation and the contemptible practice of Stalin took on monstrous proportions and reached inevitably even to them, bringing grief and pain. But can anyone really regret that the eyes of the youth have been opened? For honest people, it is not knowledge of the truth that is hard to take, but the belated knowledge of the truth.

Is it really possible to separate the difficulties experienced by the people from all the things that so magnified those difficulties? What was the cost to the people, in suffering and deaths, of Stalin’s fundamental lack of confidence in them and his inconceivable confidence in Hitler’s word?

There were most likely people who saw and understood the hidden chain of events. But I did not want to see. I was happy to become more and more indifferent to politics. I was happy that I would soon return home and hug my mama and children. It is true that I was not able to see Mama for quite a while. And after the war I did not want to go to Lyuberets, from where they would have taken me away back to camp.

By all visible evidence, I am not a hero. At the front, I managed to overcome the instinct for self-preservation. My entire upbringing came to my rescue: the books I had read, the sense of duty inspired by my parents, my unforgettable Young Communist youth, my desire to prove to Sergeant Egorov that Jews are worth something.

And after the war, to return to prison? Again to be subjected to interrogations and blackmail? To return to the tents on the Usa? To live once more among recidivists and pederasts? And to know that people will again be afraid even to evoke your memory, and that no one will ever tell your children about you? No, I am no hero. I was afraid of the camps.

I was afraid. In Moscow, on leave, the officers talked about the camps and mentioned in passing: Documents are being scrutinized very closely. And what if they establish that I lived here at one time? Yes, I was afraid of Lyuberets.

[Next month: "Russian Patriots," continued]

Poland (Continued from page 5)

for democracy and national self-determination. And they must realize that Jaruzelski and Gorbachev have a different agenda from that of the masses.

The bureaucrats have made concessions with the aim of retaining their power, not of giving it away. Their intention is to make their political opponents partners with them in the management of the crisis. In Poland that means attempting to maneuver the leadership of Solidarity into a position where it has to take co-responsibility with the bureaucracy for the country's economic and political problems.

In many ways this is analogous to the process which has taken place in the United States, where many trade union leaders have come to accept a partnership role with top corporate management in making their industries "competitive." The president of the United Auto Workers, for example, even had a window-dressing seat on Chrysler Corporation's board of directors. Similar objectives are served by "employee ownership" plans, in which wages are lowered while bonuses are provided to workers on the basis of "profitability." These and similar schemes are designed by the capitalists to demobilize and disarm the trade union rank and file, by deepening the illusion that their interests are tied in with those of the bosses. Jaruzelski, and the dominant wing of the Polish bureaucracy, has decided to try something similar.

There is no guarantee, of course, that this effort will be successful. That depends on the outcome of future struggles. If Solidarity's leadership accepts the government's concessions in the spirit of "patriotism" and "partnership," and responds by giving concessions in return, and if they are able to get the masses to accept those concessions (two very big ifs), this would certainly be an important victory for Jaruzelski. It would create a functioning buffer between the bureaucracy and the masses to absorb and deflect discontent. But if the present Solidarity leadership tries to move along that road it runs the risk of simply becoming discredited in the eyes of the masses when further austerity measures are imposed and/or if the joint economic policies fail to solve Poland's problems.

Notes

1. Mikhail Tukhachevsky (1893-1937) and Iona Yakir (1896-1937) were among the Red Army commanders charged with treason and executed in 1937. Nikolai Bukharin (1888-1939), an Old Bolshevik, editor of *Pravda* (1918-29) and, in Lenin's words, the favorite of the party, had been the leader of the Communist International from 1926 to 1929. He became the leader of the Right Opposition to Stalin in the Russian CP. When it was expelled from the party he capitulated, but became a defendant in the third Moscow trial and was executed. He was posthumously rehabilitated in 1988. Nikolai Krestinsky (1883-1938), an Old Bolshevik and a Left Oppositionist, capitulated in 1927 but was killed after the third Moscow trial.

2. Lion Feuchtwanger (1884-1958) was an expatriot German novelist and dramatist who attended the 1937 Moscow trial and wrote *Moscow 1937: My Visit Described for My Friends* (London, 1937).

3. Lavrenty Beria (1899-1953) was chief of the Soviet political police (GPU) after Yezhov. He was executed after Stalin's death.

4. "June 22, 1941": *Soviet Historians and the German Invasion*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, S.C., 1968. Nekrich is an unofficial Soviet historian who has exposed Stalin's role in leaving the Soviet people unprepared for the German invasion.

Though Walesa and his associates have given every indication that they are, indeed, acting out of a desire to collaborate with the bureaucracy for the "greater good of the country," they are no doubt aware of the contradictions. It remains to be seen whether they will risk attempting to impose austerity, wage concessions, and a no-strike pledge on the rank and file.

The democratic concessions which the government has made are not the result of prayers or good will: they are the direct result of strike action, and the Polish workers know it. The Polish masses are used to broken promises; Solidarity's younger members have been listening to broken promises quite literally their entire lives. The legalization agreement itself indicates that the relationship of forces favors the working class. Even though Solidarity has agreed not to strike, it is only for a limited period, during which a procedure for arbitration and job actions can be worked out, and the government has agreed to cost-of-living wage increases in exchange.

The legalization of Solidarity and the climate of political discussion which an election campaign will create has the potential to bring out into the open all of the issues which the working class is facing. These can now be debated more freely in the workplaces, on campuses, and in the community. The young worker activists can gain invaluable education and experience in the months immediately ahead, and the possibility exists that a new leadership, with a conscious appreciation of the need to replace the bureaucracy altogether by the democratic rule of the workers, can come together. It is also possible that Walesa and other more conservative leaders may recognize the futility of trying to hold the ranks back and will be forced to lead them in militant action.

Every settlement short of revolution inevitably involves compromise. Polish workers — and workers throughout the world — have every reason to be encouraged by the legalization of Solidarity. Though it is not the final victory, it is a giant step forward; it proves once again that bold, decisive action on the part of a united labor movement is the way to win. ●

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