

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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Pro-Choice Forces Say: NEVER AGAIN!

by Evelyn Sell

On July 3 the U.S. Supreme Court invited civil war over the right of a woman to control her own body.

When the majority of justices upheld the Missouri law restricting abortion availability, they made each state a battleground by giving legislatures broad powers to limit abortion counseling and services. The justices stopped short of reversing the 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade* which established a woman's right to choose. But they began to gut women's reproductive rights in significant ways.

They made it extremely difficult for poor women to have access to abortion services by allowing Missouri to ban abortions in public hospitals and to forbid public employees from assisting abortions in any way. They made it more expensive and difficult to obtain abortions by approving Missouri's right to require doctors to test women who are at least 20 weeks pregnant to determine fetus viability. This provision directly upsets the *Roe v. Wade* decision which prohibited government interference through the first 24 weeks of pregnancy. The July 3 decision *implicitly* overrules a woman's right to control her own body by giving a doctor the power to choose compulsory pregnancy—regardless of the woman's personal needs and beliefs.

Further limitations are clearly on the Supreme Court's agenda. Three justices stated they favored laws that would "modify and narrow" *Roe v. Wade*, a fourth said he would overturn the 1973 decision, and a fifth asserted that upholding the Missouri law was consistent with past court decisions and did not require a reexamination of *Roe v. Wade*. These five will soon get their chance to slash away at women's reproductive choices. When it reconvenes in October, the court will hear two cases dealing with abortion rights of teenagers, and a third case involving outpatient surgical units performing abortions.

Anti-choice forces rejoiced over the court's decision and immediately announced fights in all 50 states. Judie Brown, head of American Life League, explained that opponents of abortion would "continue to challenge the court by referendum, state law, and lawsuit to define for us that life begins at fertilization." Randall Terry, head of Operation Rescue, hailed the ruling as both "a tremendous victory" and a

"faltering step" because it did not outlaw all abortions. Politicians announced their intention to pass restrictive statutes. Anti-choice legislators in Louisiana took steps to resurrect the never-repealed state law barring all abortions, and said they would use this to force the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

Pro-choice forces immediately denounced the decision and held street marches and rallies to show their determination to battle for a woman's right to control her own body. Judith Widdicombe, founder of the Missouri clinic which had challenged the state's restrictive law, declared, "There's a movement in this country that will not tolerate this. It will become our Vietnam of the 1990s." Kate Michelman, executive director of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), stated, "Women's lives hang by a thread, and the justices this morning handed politicians a pair of scissors."

National Action in the Fall

At a July 5 rally in Washington, D.C., leaders of the National Organization for Women (NOW) pledged to call a march on the national Capitol in October. NOW president Molly Yard stated, "We will organize . . . the largest mass mobilization in history. We are going to turn this country upside down because we aren't going to take it anymore."

NOW's call for a fall demonstration is exactly the right step in mobilizing the forces needed for a sustained campaign to secure women's reproductive rights. And NOW, this country's largest feminist organization and the initiator of the 1986 National March for Women's Lives and the 1989 March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives, is in a crucial position to play the decisive role in guaranteeing the successful outcome of this war over who will control women's wombs: the state and religious groups or women supported by their allies.

The majority of the population continues to support a woman's right to choose. But numbers in public opinion polls are not enough. This sentiment needs to be expressed more forcefully in massive public demonstrations which deliver the clear demand to keep abortions legal, safe, and available

Note to our readers:

Because of a trip to the Soviet Union over the summer by Marilyn Vogt-Downey, translator of *Notebooks for the Grandchildren* (the memoirs of Mikhail Baitalsky which are currently being serialized in the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*), there will be no installment in this issue. We will resume publication next month.

regardless of financial circumstances. All supporters of women's rights must respond to NOW's call and help build the biggest-ever demonstration this fall!

We Can Win This War

We all know this will not be a quick or easy fight. But we have many resources to carry out successful battles.

- Women and their allies have been mobilized for clinic defense actions and the massive April 9 demonstration in Washington and the complementary march and rally in San Francisco on April 2. Local organizing efforts to build the March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives prompted the formation of coalitions and groups which remain active and provide a solid basis for persistent campaigns.
- New forces have been activated by the terrorist attacks against women's health clinics and the April demonstrations. A new generation of young women participated in these events—in fact, young demonstrators have predominated in cities around the country. Many said they were involved in their first action of any kind. After the July 3 ruling, a television news program showed a crowded room of pro-choice activists making phone calls and putting out a mailing. The reporter explained that half of these people were involved in such activity for the first time in their lives.
- Pro-choice forces recognize that there is no "safe" state and are taking the initiative to fight attempts to overturn established rights. In California, for example, abortion rights have been protected for 22 years by statute, the privacy provisions of the state constitution, and numerous rulings by the state Supreme Court. But anti-choice forces, emboldened by the July 3 ruling, are trying to get the legislature to change the law, and to amend the state's constitution through a ballot initiative. They are also looking to the current conservative majority on the state Supreme Court to rule against availability of abortion services.

The July 7 *Los Angeles Times* carried a full-page ad by Southern California affiliates of Planned Parenthood. The text called for a campaign to "Keep Abortion Safe and Legal," and noted: "In California, abortion is still a decision between you and your doctor, not your legislator. And all of us in California must fight to keep it that way."

- Women have many important allies in this crucial fight. Civil liberties organizations have long aided our efforts. Many religious groups have voiced unconditional support for women's right to choose, and have helped swell the ranks of demonstrators. Over 450 college campuses sent busloads to the April 9 action in Washington. Major unions endorsed the April 9 march and thousands of unionists participated. The lesbian and gay movement strongly supports feminist demands. On April 9, lesbian and gay activists spoke

to the rally crowd and constituted an important contingent in the march.

- Women have a wealth of abilities, skills, and experience to carry out this struggle. We displayed great creativity in the battles to repeal anti-abortion laws and win reproductive rights during 1969 and the early 1970s. Our range of tactics included: petition drives, conferences, citizens hearings, abortion crimes tribunals, demonstrations at state capitols, picketing, packing galleries at legislative proceedings, initiating and supporting lawsuits, speak-outs and teach-ins, radio and television debates, ballot referendums, defending doctors indicted for performing abortions, and rallying behind Shirley Wheeler, the first U.S. woman convicted for having an abortion.

To carry out these activities, we formed local, state, and national coalitions. And we gained strength and numbers through mass actions such as the August 26, 1970, Women's Strike for Equality which focused on demands for legal abortions and against forced sterilization.

Lobbying Then and Now

We forced legislators to take unequivocal positions. We did not allow politicians to select our demands or determine the forms of our activities. A healthy distrust of politicians is being voiced by many pro-choice activists today. Although legislative votes will be needed to safeguard women's reproductive rights and fight anti-choice attacks, past experiences prove that women cannot stake their lives on vote-catching promises or slick political maneuvering.

Over the past 16 years, local and state officials have been able to play political games knowing that however they voted it would be rendered meaningless by courts upholding principles enunciated in *Roe v. Wade*. The rules of this game have now been changed. Some officeholders and candidates are reshaping their public pronouncements in the hopes that they can capture support from both the pro-choice majority and the anti-choice minority. Others are trying to downplay the issue, according to Nancy Broff, political and legislative director of NARAL. Pro-choice activists will have to cut through these maneuvers in their efforts to pressure legislators to vote for women's rights.

No Restrictions!

July 3 marked a turning point for women's reproductive rights. Demonstrations have taken place in cities across the U.S. to protest the Supreme Court's decision and to assert: *Never Again!* No return to back-alley abortions! No more needless deaths and internal butchering! We will control our own bodies!

All Out for the Fall Pro-Choice Demonstration!

July 8, 1989

NOW National Convention Charts Fight To Defend Abortion Rights

by Helen Grossmann

With its July 21-23 national convention the National Organization for Women (NOW) has become, at least for the present, indispensable to the lives of women throughout the United States and perhaps beyond its borders.

The July meeting, held in the wake of the Supreme Court's *Webster* ruling, provided the women's movement a timely and critical opportunity to address several pivotal issues. Many of these, including the need for defense of abortion clinics, independent political action, and a mass action perspective, were already the subject of sometimes heated debate among organized sections of the pro-choice movement. The direction charted by the convention, on each and every one of these issues, will allow for hundreds of thousands of women to be mobilized over the coming period.

Over 1,000 registrants attended the three-day convention, representing every region of the nation. Delegates, and many new members, were present from every major city and, significantly, from many rural areas as well. The meeting combined over 40 workshops with "Issue Hearings," regional and special issue caucuses, and plenary (decision-making) sessions, allowing for a very full discussion. The most popularly attended sessions and workshops dealt with the serious organizing of the movement for reproductive rights.

Forty thousand new members had joined NOW between the July 3 *Webster* decision and the opening of the convention, bringing its membership to almost 200,000 and signaling a groundswell of anger and an eagerness to organize. This was reflected and reaffirmed throughout the meeting. As feminist author (*Sisterhood Is Powerful*) and organizer Robin Morgan expressed in her remarks opening the third day of the convention, "We will not be in the back alleys of this country. We *will* be in the streets." Saturday's pro-choice rally, which received national media attention and was estimated at 4,000, was further indication of this commitment.

A key decision for the convention focused on how to define the post-*Webster* struggle; whether to shift the fight for reproductive choice to the rights of individual states or continue to organize a national movement focused on the nation's capital and federal agencies. The push from many sectors, including (and most obviously) from the Supreme Court, and found in countless newspaper editorials, has been to leave the issue to the states. This has been presented as a foregone conclusion in nearly every mainstream analysis of the *Webster* decision. The NOW convention, while not turning its back on state-by-state developments, pledged that the fight for reproductive freedom would not allow for the picking off of one state at a time, would not allow for the loss of rights by any segment of the population, would not trade

rural for urban or small state for large. As NOW president Molly Yard put it: "Our opponents want women's rights to become a state's rights issue, but we aren't buying into that. We know this is a federal issue, a constitutional issue, and we will keep the pressure on the Supreme Court, the Congress, and the president."

On Saturday, July 23, a "Freedom Campaign for Women's Lives" was given official sanction by convention delegates, outlining NOW's reproductive rights strategy. The resolution calls for "going directly to the people in a mass organizing effort with a multifaceted strategy"; and contains the crucial national call to action hoped for and anticipated by many prior to the meeting. "Be it resolved: to bring hundreds of thousands of Americans to the nation's capital on November 12, 1989, to demonstrate their outrage at the erosion of abortion rights by the Supreme Court and to demand Congressional protection of those rights."

The resolution also provides for the development of a "Freedom Caravan for Women's Lives" to "be used as the major organizing vehicle at the state level to activate and train the 'political army' mobilized by the April 9, 1989, March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives, the November 12, 1989, mass demonstration, and the overwhelming public reaction to the *Webster* decision." The announcement of a coordinated political effort must be taken as a positive development and defined over the coming months by those in the National Organization for Women and in the movement as a whole.

A "Declaration of Women's Political Independence," reported by major newspapers even before its official passage at the convention, is a strong statement allowing NOW to "form an exploratory commission to investigate the formation of a new party." Although the media reported this as a development favoring a strictly "women's party," the intent of the resolution is much broader and reflects both the disillusion with the present two-party system and the desire to form alliances with all those in this country who share that feeling. This has a different thrust than that introduced by Molly Yard in her opening talk to the convention. In advocating an alliance with the environmental movement, she proposed linking the deterioration of the environment to the "population explosion" and reproductive rights to population control (a contradiction in terms). This idea met with some criticism and was not repeated or submitted to a vote. The resolutions that were passed indicate correctly how alliances can be promoted. They include support to the strikers of Eastern Airlines and Pittston coal mines, Chippewa Treaty Rights in Wisconsin, lesbian and gay rights, and

endorsement of an anticipated 1989 NAACP national march for civil rights in Washington, D.C.

Though in the midst of a major confrontation over reproductive rights, or more probably because of that confrontation, these issues were not simply touched on or passed as token gestures of support. They were discussed quite seriously, including a determination that those unable to attend the NAACP march (at that time set for August 26, also Women's Equality Day) work for the inclusion of its demands in local events on that day.

Perhaps more significant than the exact wording of the "Declaration" was the overwhelming response it received from the convention floor. Its passage was met with a tremendous standing ovation that reached deeply to the disenfranchisement women feel as members of this society and to the power of a movement that is once again calling on its true strength.

This sentiment has been fully expressed and brought to the fore forcefully in the clinic defense effort first organized in Boston and today known as "Project Stand Up for Women." The unequivocal position of NOW on this critical effort will make it possible to organize clinic defense on a nationwide basis, combining research, training, and broad mobilization to keep "Operation Oppress You" at bay and clinics open.

Therefore, Be it resolved, that the National Organization for Women's Project Stand Up for Women be expanded to defend women's rights against anti-abortion bullies at women's health clinics by organizing abortion rights supporters to keep clinics open all across the country. Be it further resolved that this project continue to convey the critical message of the March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives that abor-

tion rights supporters are a majority, that we will not be intimidated by terrorist tactics, and that we will fight against all efforts to deny women their rights to birth control, abortion, and reproductive services at every health care facility in the country.

This movement has been tremendously successful and has been a key entry point for new activists. Convention participants learned from the experiences of Boston, Los Angeles, and Pittsburgh in a workshop that, in the opinion of this writer, should be developed as a national tour. For those areas attempting to organize defense efforts the support of a well-known and respected national organization may prove decisive.

Sixteen years after *Roe v. Wade*, this is not a movement struggling to put organization into place, learning, for the first time, how to conduct a meeting, do a mailing, or hold a rally. Longtime veterans of the women's movement are blending their knowledge and renewed enthusiasm with the vital anger and enthusiasm of thousands of young women involved for the first time. There is a lesson in consistency to be drawn, a lesson in maintaining organization and structure on a national scale over years and in the need to participate in all mass organizations — even conservative ones — not uncritically, but in recognition of their potential.

NOW's leadership is to be credited. After years of seeming dormancy, the organization responded, at a critical juncture, with an appeal to the women of this country (and their allies) to act. And it created the means to do so. The necessity and the clear intent are to continue on the course charted on April 9 in Washington, D.C. To paraphrase Robin Morgan's succinct observation, "It is now up to the leadership to keep pace with the people." ●

Build and Organize

November 12 Mobilization for Women's Lives

Washington D.C.

Watch the pages of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* for further coverage.

The Struggle for Women's Liberation in the United States

by Evelyn Sell

This report was approved by vote of delegates to the Fourth Internationalist Tendency's national conference, July 2, 1989.

The April 9 March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives—the largest demonstration for women's rights in U.S. history—sent clear messages to both the enemies and supporters of women's rights:

- women and their allies are determined to safeguard a woman's right to control her reproductive choices;
- the struggle for women's liberation is not a short-lived phenomenon of the "radical '60s" but remains a vital, ongoing process;
- significant numbers of young women have joined with veteran feminists to carry out current battles;
- the fight against sexist practices and attitudes is not primarily dependent upon the vigor of other movements for social change but is propelled by the continuing oppression of women both as a sex and as a superexploited section of the labor force.

Never Again!

The centrality of the abortion issue has been clear since the time the women's liberation movement emerged as an organized force in 1969. An immediate goal was to save women's lives—too many had already died from illegal butcher operations or self-induced abortions; more were fated to die—but long-range, fundamental needs were involved as well. Every aspect of a woman's existence is affected by reproductive choices: her role in society, educational pursuits, job opportunities, physical and mental health, patterns of daily life, and personal relationships.

The fight to gain legalized abortions was won by mobilizing women and their allies in a persistent campaign marked by mass actions expressing the majority's support for a woman's right to choose. The strategies and tactics of the campaign were decided by women who relied on their own strengths and abilities—rather than depending on the promises and advice of political officeholders.

Over the 1969-72 period, the struggle for legalized abortion escalated from scattered local activities to statewide and regional campaigns to nationally coordinated actions. At the beginning of 1973, women were organizing rallies, an International Tribunal in New York City, and other events across the country. These mounting pressures led to the U.S. Supreme Court decision on January 22, 1973. The ruling in *Roe v. Wade* established a woman's right to control her own body.

Having won this historic victory, abortion rights forces demobilized. But anti-choice forces tried to turn back the

historical clock and registered many victories over the next 16 years. Legislators at the national and state levels cut off funds for programs offering abortion services. State governments passed restrictions on teenagers' access to abortion. Boyfriends, husbands, and estranged spouses were encouraged and financed by anti-choice forces to claim "fathers' rights" in order to halt abortions. Campaigns were waged against women's access to medical advances such as the French-produced drug RU 486.

This chipping away of reproductive rights has been most harmful to women who are poor, legally underage, and members of oppressed national minorities. Unlike women with financial resources, they have been forced to choose compulsory pregnancy or unsafe procedures or dangerous self-induced abortions.

In their efforts to stop abortions, anti-choice forces have tried to establish fetal rights—with some success. In New Jersey, a psychiatric facility refused to release a pregnant woman because some staff members believed she would not seek appropriate prenatal care. In 1988 a Washington, D.C., judge sentenced a pregnant woman to jail after her conviction for forging checks. The judge explained, "I'm going to keep her locked up until the baby is born because she tested positive for cocaine when she came before me."

Terrorist Attacks and Legal Threats

Unable to prevent women from exercising their reproductive rights, anti-choice forces targeted women's health clinics. Terrorist tactics against these facilities include arson, bombings, vandalism, hate mail, and threatening phone calls. In mid-1988 national attention was focused on this problem when Operation Rescue launched its campaign to blockade clinics and harass women seeking counseling and medical services.

The most serious threat to a woman's right to choose came when the U.S. Justice Department asked the Supreme Court to utilize an appeal to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. On January 9, the court agreed to hear *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* of Missouri and arguments were presented on April 26. [Note: This report was presented before the July 3 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court was announced. E.S.] The conservative composition of the court raises the very real possibility of a renunciation of the principle that women have the legal right to control their own bodies. Along with reviving back-alley abortions, such a court ruling would seriously weaken women's access to contraceptives, family

planning programs, and existing financial aid for reproductive services. A legal door could be opened to punish women for not providing a "proper fetal environment" because of their activities during pregnancy. Women's wombs could become a prime target. For example, employers could refuse to hire or to retain a pregnant woman on the basis that a particular job was dangerous to the health of the fetus.

Women and their allies have shown their determination to fight back against anti-choice terrorists and the threatened loss of legal abortions. Feminists are organizing demonstrations to respond to the Supreme Court's ruling—demonstrations to protest the weakening of abortion rights or demonstrations celebrating the preservation of the 1973 decision. Here's a leaflet from Pittsburgh: "Pro-Choice Call-to-Action THE DAY AFTER." And here's a leaflet from the Bay Area Pro-Choice Coalition announcing: "Celebrate or protest on the day of the decision: Stand up for our rights." Either way, women are prepared to battle for their right to choose.

Operation Rescue has been outnumbered and outorganized in city after city. Pro-choice forces have trained escorts to provide safe passage for clinic clients and have mobilized women's rights supporters to surround clinics and demand, with signs and chants, "Keep Abortion Legal!"

Reports about these clinic defense demonstrations show that young women are joining with veteran feminists to safeguard women's reproductive rights. In fact, the overwhelming majority of demonstrators have been young—in Boston, San Francisco, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Los Angeles, and cities across the country. The participation of young women was noted three years earlier in the 1986 pro-choice demonstrations organized by NOW. The National March for Women's Lives brought 125,000 to Washington, D.C., on March 9 and 30,000 to Los Angeles a week later. In 1989 the predominance of young women was evident in the 600,000 demonstrators in Washington, D.C., on April 9 as well as in the 30,000 who marched in San Francisco on April 2.

The huge numbers involved in these 1989 mobilizations once again showed the power of mass actions to invigorate a struggle for women's rights. For many thousands of marchers, it was their first demonstration of *any kind*. First-time participants need to know—and longtime feminists need to be reminded—about the earlier pro-choice battles. The fight to legalize abortion provided positive proof of the need for a mass action strategy and a self-reliant approach. A negative proof was provided by the failure of the 1972-82 campaign to add the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution.

The Campaign for an Equal Rights Amendment

The main weakness of the ERA campaign was its reliance on Democratic and Republican politicians. Instead of mobilizing women's rights supporters in massive visible demonstrations from the very beginning, leading forces such as NOW depended most heavily on direct lobbying of state legislators. The politicians betrayed ERA campaigners again and again.

By the time ERA supporters began to organize rallies, they had squandered the initial momentum created by the

women's liberation struggle during 1969 and the early 1970s. It is obviously necessary to win legally required votes in Congress and state legislatures. But the 1972-82 experiences proved that lobbying efforts are not the primary nor the most effective means to gain the ERA. The key to success is a strategy to mobilize the pro-ERA majority for independent mass actions. Such demonstrations educate and win over hesitant elements in the population—including legislators. Such actions build women's confidence in their own strength and abilities, and inspire their allies to remain steadfast in their support. Unfortunately, this strategy was not adopted when a new ERA campaign was launched in 1987 by NOW. Initial activities focused on lobbying congresspersons. NOW's call for the April 9 mobilization in Washington, D.C., was an important step in the direction of utilizing the strength of pro-ERA forces. The unparalleled turnout could provide a solid basis for continued mass actions to win this much-needed amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Women Affected by Changed Conditions

Pro-choice battles and the ERA campaign are two of the key fights within the broader ongoing struggle for women's liberation. When the feminist movement erupted 20 years ago, it seemed to be the product of the 1960s radicalization. But this was just the surface appearance. The fundamental impetus came from changes in U.S. society which profoundly altered women's lives.

A number of trends undercut the role of women as primarily wives, mothers, and homemakers.

One of the most important set of changes involved the interrelations between the duration of women's child-bearing and rearing period, family size, and female longevity. The average woman's reproductive period runs about 30-40 years from age 10-16 to 45-50. In 1900, when the average number of children per family unit was greater and when the average woman's life expectancy was 48 years, this meant that almost her entire life was taken up with child-bearing and rearing responsibilities. But after World War II, the size of the average U.S. household dropped and the birthrate fell to new lows. This meant that women were having fewer babies and spending less years in child-raising activities. The years spent in child care were both *relatively* shorter in relation to women's total life span and *absolutely* shorter in terms of actual time spent in this role. With the steady increase in women's life expectancy—up to over 71 years in 1950—women could look forward to many years not focused on child-rearing functions.

A combination of factors led to this changed situation for women. The growing use of contraceptives helped decrease the size of families and the length of the child-bearing/rearing period. The general historic trend has been for birth control to spread from the rich and educated to the poor, and from the cities to the countryside. Even before the birth control pill and intra-uterine devices became available, the majority of heterosexual couples in the U.S. practiced birth control. The use of contraceptive devices and methods was significantly conditioned by the wife's educational level: the

(Continued on page 33)

Pittston Strike: Pivotal Battle in Coal Field War

by Bill Onasch

A British reporter began an article on the Pittston coal strike with the following paragraph.

In the stifling green valleys of southwestern Virginia, you can tell there is a war on because the only people you see are in uniform. The men and women on strike since April from the Pittston coal mines wear camouflage fatigues and so do their children. The private security men hired by Pittston wear tight blue jump-suits and peaked caps. The state troopers dress like state troopers. ("A Marriage of Coal and Violence," James Buchan, *Financial Times*, July 10)

There is indeed a war on in the coal fields east of the Mississippi as the mine operators seek to marginalize, if not destroy, the United Mine Workers of America. Right now a pivotal battle is raging in Virginia as the combined weight of the employers, the courts, and state police has been brought to bear on 1,700 working miners at Pittston, hundreds of retired miners, and their families. A dozen union supporters have been hospitalized with injuries sustained on the picket line. There have been over 2,500 arrests. The union is facing fines totaling more than 4.5 million dollars and union leaders long jail terms. Once again, as at Hormel in Austin, Minnesota, 1985-86, a small group of workers is on the firing line, taking the heat for all of us.

The Hormel workers were eventually defeated after a proud fight. But, though the victory of the packing bosses and the treacherous bureaucrats of the United Food and Commercial Workers union over Local P-9 was a big setback for organized labor, the fighting example of P-9 continues to inspire workers to struggle. The Pittston strikers have utilized many of the positive innovations introduced by the Hormel workers as well as drawing on traditional militant tactics from the rich heritage of the UMW. While there are some obvious similarities between the Hormel and Pittston struggles there are also important differences and a similar victory for the bosses is by no means assured.

To better understand this current battle it's useful to keep in mind the material conditions that prevail in the coal fields and the history of the miners union.

Why Miners Are Militant

While caution must be exercised in making generalizations, it can be safely said that nearly everywhere miners tend to be the most combative workers. Whether they be in Wales, Galicia, the Ukraine, the Transvaal, or Appalachia, they will be found on the cutting edge of the labor movement. It's not difficult to understand why.

First and foremost is the fact that mining is the most dangerous of all industrial occupations. Over the years 100,000 men and women have died on the job in America's mines. Countless thousands more died prematurely because of occupational-related diseases or injuries. Not even the packing houses or steel mills can come close to matching that level of carnage in the pursuit of profits. So the most elementary questions of working conditions often take on a life-and-death character for the miners.

This hazardous environment tends to build a stronger bond of solidarity among workers than will be found in most industries. This solidarity is reinforced by the fact that mining operations are often in relatively small, isolated communities that by necessity become more close-knit than the cities or suburbs that most workers return to after the end of their shift.

While miners have had more compelling reasons to organize than most workers this doesn't mean that organizing has come easy. Far from it. No group of bosses resisted organization as bitterly as the mine operators. In the long struggle to build the UMW, many miners were killed by company thugs, scabs, cops, and troops. Others were fired, evicted from their homes, and literally run out of town. There were many bloody defeats before the UMW was able to establish itself as a force but the drive to organize and resist the operators has been irrepressible. (The same can be said for Botha's South Africa, Jaruzelski's Poland, and Gorbachev's USSR.) By the time of the First World War the UMW was well established and beginning to improve wages and conditions throughout the industry.

The Legacy of John L. Lewis

From 1920 till 1960, the United Mine Workers was headed by a most contradictory figure — John L. Lewis. In terms of social vision or political understanding, Lewis wasn't much different than the other class-collaborationist union bureaucrats of his time — or today. He believed in capitalism and the two-party system. He also believed in running the UMW with an iron hand. He was not adverse to accepting a handsome material reward from his union in payment for his services.

But unlike most of his more short-sighted brother bureaucrats Lewis understood something about the class struggle. He knew that it couldn't always be repressed. He became more adept than any bureaucrat then or since in leading or sometimes even promoting struggles in order to control them and extract concessions from the bosses and politicians. A skilled organizer, he possessed almost limitless courage and determination. He was also, arguably, the most gifted English-speaking orator of the 20th century.

Under his leadership the UMW came to play a role in the labor movement far out of proportion to its size. Lewis recognized early on the potential of industrial unionism and was a prime mover in the construction of the CIO. He was motivated by two principal concerns.

First of all, many of the UMW mines were "captive" operations, owned and controlled by steel, rail, or electric utility companies. Lewis recognized that it would be to the UMW's advantage if the parent companies were also organized.

But perhaps even more importantly Lewis understood that the potential for mass organization was going to be realized by somebody, and if not the union bureaucracy then by the radicals who were experiencing a rapid growth of influence.

There is no question that the explosive growth of industrial unionism of the 1930s would have been much weaker without the commitment of Lewis and the tremendous material contributions made by the UMW.

During the '30s and '40s, Lewis made a number of other progressive contributions: he firmly established master contracts, refusing to allow individual operators to cut their own deals; he stuck to the principle of "no contract, no work," promptly striking whenever the operators tried to stall past contract deadlines; and he refused to knuckle under to government interference, defying numerous injunctions and back-to-work orders. Lewis was the only major union official to reject the no-strike pledge during World War II, leading the miners out on strike no less than four times.

But as the level of class struggle subsided during the long postwar capitalist boom, Lewis was content to return to the old traditional methods of business unionism. During the 1950s a combination of a big decline in the demand for coal, along with a big expansion of nonunion mines and job-eliminating automation, dealt devastating blows to the UMW. Nearly 300,000 union jobs were eliminated during this period. As production in UMW mines declined, so did the employer contributions to health care and pensions, creating a real crisis in many mining communities.

Lewis had no program for saving jobs or benefits. He proved to be as adept at exploiting a downturn in the class struggle as riding on an upsurge. From Public Enemy #1 in the eyes of the bosses, he became revered once more as a responsible "labor statesman," sensitive to their need for profitability. When Lewis withdrew from active leadership of the union in 1960, a new team of bureaucrats, with all of his vices and none of his virtues, took over.

Miners for Democracy

The post-Lewis UMW bureaucracy, headed by Tony Boyle, showed no interest in serious organizing efforts as nonunion mines proliferated, especially in the West. Nor did they show much concern about deteriorating conditions in the UMW mines. While Lewis ruled as a benevolent dictator, retaining a lot of popular support among the ranks based on his militant period, the Boyle machine didn't much care about its image and didn't bother the bosses. As Lewis should have been able to tell them, this was shortsighted. The ranks began to organize.

The fight to clean out the corrupt Boyle machine was one of the bitterest internal struggles in labor history. In the 1969 UMW election, Boyle had to rig the vote to beat off challenger Joseph Yablonski, the head of the union's political action committee. Shortly after the election, which was challenged, Yablonski was murdered, along with his wife and daughter, by thugs hired by Boyle. But in the long run Boyle's gunmen could no more hold down the miners than the operators' earlier use of Pinkerton gun-slingers. Yablonski's sons mounted a legal campaign against the murderers. With the support of sympathizers from other unions, and students, the Miners for Democracy opposition pressed its fight on a number of fronts and was able to oust the Boyle gang in 1972. The UMW became transformed from one of the most autocratic institutions in America into the most democratic of unions.

Arnold Miller, who replaced Boyle, was completely honest and a man of great physical courage. But while these qualities are indispensable for a worker's leader they are not in themselves sufficient to meet all the challenges. Miller had no real strategy for the UMW and proved to be vulnerable to the tremendous pressures that came down on the new union leadership from the bosses, government, and the remnants of the Boyle gang.

The 110-Day Strike

During the '70s the coal industry, profiting from the "oil crisis" and disasters in nuclear power, made a big recovery. But the bosses did not opt for labor peace during this expansion. Instead they decided to test the new union leadership. After a long period of provocations, the mine operators forced a major confrontation in December 1977. They presented a series of take-away demands that would have greatly weakened the union's control over conditions on the job and would have unraveled the health and welfare benefits that are the lifeblood of so many mining communities. The miners responded with one of the longest major strikes in U.S. history.

The coal operators were cocky. They had built up huge stockpiles of coal. They knew that the UMW strikers accounted for less than half of total coal production. They hired thousands of "security men," sometimes armed with M-16s, along with professional strikebreakers. And they knew that they had all the weight of the capitalist state behind them, from county judges and sheriffs right up to the White House.

The bosses also viewed the union as weak and in disarray. There had been a petition drive, suspended during the strike, to recall the vacillating president, Arnold Miller. The old Boyle machine sought to stir the pot as well. But the employers soon found that while the leadership might be weak the ranks were ready for a fight to the finish.

The strikers not only succeeded in shutting down their own mines; they also closed a number of nonunion operations as well. At the height of the strike they cut off two-thirds of all coal production. Despite armed assaults by company goons, despite great economic hardship, the UMW membership proved themselves ready to hold out as long as necessary.

Their fight inspired widespread solidarity from the rest of the labor movement. Numerous car caravans were organized by other unions and family farmers organized in the American Agricultural Movement to deliver food and clothing to strikers. The United Auto Workers, recalling the generous material aid given to autoworkers in the formative days of their union by the UMW, contributed two million dollars to the strikers.

As the strike neared the 60-day mark, the employers made a new, slightly changed offer to the union. Arnold Miller recommended it to the membership as "the best agreement negotiated in any major industry in the past two years." But the miners, who had now won the right to ratify or reject contracts, after discussing it in democratic mass meetings, decisively rejected the offer. A second, similar offer, based on a settlement with a small employer, was also rejected a couple of weeks later. At that point the employers were no longer so cocky. They decided to call on Washington for help.

On March 6, 1978, Jimmy Carter ordered the miners back to work under the provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act. Federal marshals served papers on each UMW local president directing them to desist from "interfering with or affecting the orderly continuance of work in the bituminous coal industry." They were warned that violation of the injunction would mean fines, or jail, or both. It was also announced that any miners continuing an "illegal" strike would be denied food stamps.

Everyone waited to see what would happen on the first day of the back-to-work order. What happened was nothing. Out of 160,000 UMW members fewer than 100 reported for work. But there was no work to do. The "weak" UMW no more budged for the president of the United States than they did for the bosses. They humiliated the employers and the government.

The employers then quickly got down to some serious bargaining. They withdrew most of their take-away demands and came up with a 30 percent wage increase. After 110 days on the picket line the miners proudly went back to work. A great battle had been won.

The War Continues

The bosses had failed to break the UMW through a frontal assault. But they were far from accepting the union's continuing restraint of their profitability. The coal operators adopted a longer-term strategy for undermining the effectiveness of the UMW. This included:

- Shifting more production out of UMW sites into non-union operations.
- Slashing jobs through the introduction of long-wall technology and increased strip-mining.
- Withdrawal of key, aggressive companies from the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) master agreement, forcing the union to fight more limited, isolated battles.

In the decade-plus since the 110-day strike, the bargaining power of the UMW has been considerably reduced. In the late '40s, there were a half-million working miners in the

UMW; by the time of the 1977-78 strike, 160,000. Today there are 65,000. The majority of U.S. coal production is filled by non-UMW operations and the nonunion share continues to grow.

U.S. labor law prevents the union from insisting on the maintenance of the master agreement if a company wants to pull out. The current UMW leadership has sometimes tried to make a virtue out of necessity by promoting the idea of "selective strikes." The union got the short end of the stick in such a selective action against the A.T. Massey coal company in 1984-85.

Throughout their history the miners have been able to win victories only when they completely shut down the industry. FDR couldn't jail a half-million workers during World War II and Jimmy Carter couldn't do much about 160,000 defiant strikers in 1978. But when the full impact of repression and attrition can be focused on small groups of workers the bosses can gain the upper hand.

Pittston's Provocations

Pittston Coal, a subsidiary of a conglomerate that includes Burlington Air Express and Brinks Security, is the biggest exporter of metallurgical coal — mainly to Japan. It withdrew from the BCOA in 1986. Pleading the need to be competitive in the international market, Pittston has made a series of demands regarding working practices, pensions, and health insurance that would gut the union contract.

Pittston wants the right to schedule forced overtime, including Sunday work. They want complete freedom to contract out UMW work to nonunion operations. And they want to cut pensions and survivors' benefits while saddling the workers with big increases in costs of health insurance. These are not trifling issues. They go to the heart of the survival of the union.

The overtime and Sunday work demands are not only disruptive to the personal lives of the miners and their families; this is also a question of safety. Overworked mines and overworked miners can lead to disaster.

The union's health and welfare plan, once the envy of the rest of the labor movement, has already taken a beating. More than a decade ago, the union was forced to give up industry-wide health benefits, accepting company-by-company deals that brought in private insurance carriers. Operator royalties to support miners' pensions, formerly tied to tonnage produced, was switched to contributions based on hours worked. As miner productivity climbed with new technology, this meant declining revenue for the fund. Probably the most sensitive issue of all is Pittston's determination to attack pensions and the survivors' benefits of miners' widows. UMW spokesman Joe Corcoran told the *Financial Times*:

What these people in Greenwich [site of Pittston's corporate headquarters] don't realize is that the company pensioners are not an amorphous, unidentified bunch of people in Miami: they're these guys' fathers and widowed grandmothers and they're living together in some hollow of these mountains. To use pensioners as a stick to beat the working people has really appalled Appalachia.

But that's precisely the stick that Pittston wielded to force the miners out on strike. For more than a year after the expiration of the old contract the union continued to negotiate. Finally, this past spring, Pittston unilaterally ended all health insurance coverage for 1,500 pensioners and survivors. No self-respecting union could swallow that. On April 5 the Pittston workers in Virginia struck.

The union won an important legal victory when the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled that Pittston's action constitutes an unfair labor practice. The effect of this ruling, if it is not overturned on appeal, is that Pittston can't hire permanent replacements for the strikers — at the end of the strike the strikers must be returned to their jobs. It also means that Pittston can't have the union decertified through an NLRB election. But the company can hire temporary scabs and try to starve the miners into submission.

Scabs are not easy to find in coal-mining communities where they are considered to be a couple of notches below child-molesters on the social acceptance scale. Pittston has used special services to recruit and import scabs from other areas. The productivity of this scab force probably leaves a lot to be desired. Most observers think that Pittston has gotten no more than 10 percent of their prestrike production level out of the combination of scabs and supervisory personnel.

The company carefully prepared for what they view a decisive showdown with the UMW. Although Pittston owns their own security company—Brinks—they employed a specialist outfit two years ago to get ready for what they knew would be a bitter fight.

Vance Security is run by a former Secret Service agent, Chuck Vance. Their specialty is strikes and they've seen battle with the UMW more than once in the past. They closely coordinate efforts with the recruitment of professional strikebreakers. They have intimate relations with all levels of "law enforcement" agencies.

The Union's Varied Tactics

To their credit the union leadership has succeeded in mobilizing their members, retirees, families, and the community in a variety of activities in support of the strike. These include:

- In addition to conventional picketing, massive civil disobedience at worksites and along the roads where scab coal is transported. UMW president Richard Trumka has called for combining the traditions of Martin Luther King with the traditions of the UMW. The Rev. Jesse Jackson has lent his support to these actions.
- A corporate campaign which disrupted Pittston's stockholder meetings, and has put pressure on the banks and insurance companies who are closely interlocked with Pittston. The city of Boston recently threatened to pull business out of banks with Pittston connections.
- Informational picketing and leafleting at non-UMW plants which, in a few cases, actually led to brief sympathy shutdowns.

A highly energetic women's auxiliary—the Daughters of Mother Jones—has been in the thick of these activities. They often add a little touch of style to their camouflage dress by wearing earrings in the shape of miniature jackrocks. (Jackrock is one of the names given to a traffic control device made by welding together bent nails. They are capable of ripping to shreds even the biggest truck tires.)

Strikers have been sent on speaking tours to local unions across the country.

Radio has been effectively used to get the union's message out in the strike communities.

These activities are important. They put pressure on the employer. They maintain the morale of the strikers. And the involvement of the strikers' families and the community is crucial in a protracted struggle that will mean severe financial hardships for everyone.

But, as vital as these support actions are, they are probably insufficient to overcome the attack on this relatively small group of workers. Wider solidarity actions are needed.

Sympathy Strikes

On June 11, 12,000 workers massed for a support rally in Charleston, West Virginia. Although the top labor bureaucracy is cool toward the miners' fight some important figures came to speak: International Association of Machinists president William Winpisinger; Communications Workers of America president Morton Bahr; and Joyce Miller, president of the Coalition of Labor Union Women. They expressed appropriate diplomatic greetings of solidarity.

Richard Trumka was less restrained, more explicit. He made no bones about the miners' struggle being a fight against the state of Virginia as well as the coal bosses and bluntly stated that the future of the entire UMW was on the line. Coincidentally, the next day UMW miners across the coal fields started walking off the job.

44,000 miners in 11 states—nearly two-thirds of the UMW membership—decided to risk their own jobs to come to the assistance of the Pittston strikers. The coal bosses were beside themselves with fury. Their lawyers rushed into courtrooms sputtering about no-strike clauses in their contracts, and the Taft-Hartley prohibitions of sympathy strikes. From a legal point of view these shysters had all the right arguments as the UMW lawyers had to acknowledge. Trumka issued an appeal for the miners to return to work.

But just as one ignores the statements of hostages held by terrorists, the miners realized that Trumka was being forced to tell them to go back to work. Most of them paid no attention to either judges or official union statements. Trumka shrugged at this disobedience and said "They believe their union is threatened and they walked off their jobs because of it. They've come to the point where they genuinely and sincerely believe that the equality of employers and unions that was supposed to have been set up by our laws no longer exists." Instead of returning to the job, many "wildcatters" found useful things to do in support of their brothers and sisters at Pittston.

A number of sympathy strikers headed for Virginia where they were welcomed at a huge campsite—Camp Solidarity

in Castlewood. There they lent a hand to the Pittston picketing. Others insured that their own operations were effectively shut down in their absence. Some visited nonunion mines to do some organizational work. Still others spread out to talk to workers in other industries.

The sympathy strikes were an unexpected complication for the coal operators working hand-in-glove with Pittston. Production was disrupted. Customers started getting nervous. The repressive apparatus of the capitalist state is ill-equipped to deal with such widespread militant actions. They had to somehow convince the miners to go back to work. This could only be done by showing that there was some movement in the impasse at Pittston.

The sympathy strikers finally called a truce and returned to work after two gestures by the bosses: the union leaders being held in jail under contempt were released; and Pittston, after weeks of resolutely refusing to negotiate, agreed to meet with the union through the auspices of a federal mediator.

Wider Solidarity Needed

It seems unlikely as this is written that Pittston is ready to conclude an honorable settlement with the union. Their agreement to negotiate is probably just for cosmetic and legal reasons. They remain determined to break the UMW. The rest of the UMW may be forced to take action once again and the entire labor movement should recognize the strategic importance of the Pittston struggle.

Some important initiatives are beginning to emerge. In Pittsburgh the official local labor movement and the international leaderships of the Steelworkers and United Electrical Workers unions have come together to organize a mass march and rally, as well as collecting material assistance, for the strikers. The New Jersey Industrial Union Council has urged the AFL-CIO to call a one-day national work stoppage in support of the Pittston and Eastern airlines strikers—an advanced proposal that will receive no serious attention from the federation bureaucrats but is indicative of the growing consciousness of the need to mobilize the collective power of the working class in defense of those on the front lines.

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August 1, 1989

A Political Strike

As with all major strikes today the Pittston strike is a political action, touching on many major questions of interest to revolutionary socialists.

• The central issue of the economic dispute at Pittston—health care and pensions—will never be adequately resolved through bargaining with private employers. One of the great defaults of the U.S. labor movement was the abandonment of the fight for national health insurance and adequate social security pensions—benefits secured by workers in every other industrial country. The best private plans are of use only to those who retain their jobs and are always subject to take-backs by the employer. Nearly 20 percent of American workers are without any health insurance at all. The labor movement has to begin a priority campaign to win socialized medicine and social security pensions that retired workers can live on with dignity.

• Federal, state, and local laws—backed up by armed force—have once again been utilized in support of the bosses against the most elementary democratic rights of the miners. If the workers accept this situation they will be crushed. The miners have been forced to fight the government. At some point these antilabor and antidemocratic laws and government have to be replaced with a government that will serve the interests of the workers.

• Both the Democrats and Republicans share responsibility for the pro-boss laws and their enforcement. It is a Democrat “friend of labor” governor who has directed the Virginia state troopers trying to break the Pittston strike. The recent Virginia Democratic Party convention rejected even hearing a speaker representing the strikers. To take on the political challenges facing labor we must have a party of our own. It is high time to once again raise the call for a labor party. The solidarity movement around the miners’ struggle is a good place to start seriously discussing this perspective.

Al Shiminsky (1917-1989)

Alfonse Shiminsky, a steelworker all his life, died June 30th at the age of 72. He was born in Youngstown, Ohio, and joined the Socialist Workers Party there in the late 1930s. He became one of a group of steelworkers active in building the union in this one-industry town. Many steelworkers became radicals in those days of militant unionism, but only a very few retained their attachment to the ideas of revolutionary socialism as Al did to the end.

In 1949 he moved to Newark, New Jersey, getting a job in a steel mill there. In 1951 he married Ruth Greenberg. They both were an

important part of the Newark branch of the SWP and remained active members of the branch until it was dissolved in the late '50s. By this time they had two children. They remained members-at-large until Ruth's death in 1971. They had had another child and after Ruth's death Al took over the raising of the children and keeping of the house.

In 1982 he retired, continuing his role of homemaker with two children still at home. His years of work as a bricklayer and then mason in the steel mills had taken their toll. He walked bent over almost to a right angle. He was in and out of intensive care units the last three years of his life.

In October 1988, he sent a financial contribution to the affair celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International. A week before his death, he had a slight turn for the better and was able to watch TV. A comrade visiting him spoke to him about the Chinese students and their struggle for democratic rights. He could not talk but grabbed a pad and pencil and excitedly wrote “And Russia! — Trotsky!” He is survived by his children Joseph, Steven, and Eloise; daughters-in-law Lorraine and Helen; five grandchildren.

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Dorothy Breitman

Historic Strike by Soviet Miners Demands Are Won

by Tom Barrett

In July the Soviet working class for the first time entered directly into the process of political change sweeping across the world's first workers' state — and a stunning victory was won. The coal miners of Siberia and the Ukraine took strike action and dealt a defeat not only to the mismanagers of the Soviet economy but also to the conservative Communist Party bureaucrats who still control the trade unions. Mikhail Gorbachev had to use all of his public-relations skills to try to convince the miners that it was he who had their best interests at heart, and that his perestroika policies were the answer to their grievances. Whether he will succeed or not will depend entirely on his ability to deliver on the promises he made in order to get the miners to return to the pits.

The Reasons for the Strike

The strike began in the Kuznetsk Coal Basin — usually called the Kuzbas — in Siberia. The conditions, not only of work there but of life in general, make one wonder why the miners held their tempers for so long. *Komsomolskaya Pravda* reports that 10,000 miners have been killed in pit accidents in the past nine years, nearly as many as were killed in combat in Afghanistan. No attention is paid to environmental pollution in the immediate area where the miners have to live.

Even though miners could be considered a "labor aristocracy" in the USSR — their average wage is over double the national average — there is little in the shops for them to buy, and living conditions are as bad as the worst inner-city slums in the United States. The apartment houses in the Kuzbas were built during World War II by German prisoners of war. As might be expected, little attention was paid to quality in construction, and today the buildings are crumbling. The roofs leak; the houses are unbearably hot in the summer and cold in the winter. The plumbing is almost always stopped up, so people live with the constant stench of raw sewage. Yet this is the only housing available for those who work in the mines.

This year there has been a nationwide shortage (actually, absence) of soap in the Soviet Union; this was probably the "last straw" for the Kuzbas miners. On top of shortages of food — even shortages of milk for the children — and the lack of other social services, to return from the pits in the heat of summer and not be able to wash with soap was more than the workers could stand. On July 10 the nightsiders from the five mines in Mezhdurechensk knocked off work and marched straight to the center of town to occupy the main square. The strike was on. Within a day or two it had spread throughout the Kuzbas.

Independent Trade Unionism

The official miners' trade unions are considered a joke, or worse, part of the whole system of economic mismanagement. Consequently, the workers set up their own strike committees, bypassing the official unions. They issued 45 demands, the first of which was that the other 44 demands be published in the official union newspapers. Because the USSR know what all the demands were. However, whatever the other 44 were, the mine management must have promised to meet them, or most of them, because the strikes were all settled rather quickly. The central CP leadership was especially anxious to settle the Kuzbas strikes in order to prevent them from spreading into the larger Donetsk Basin (Donbas) in the Ukraine, the largest and most productive coalfield in the Soviet Union. They failed. On July 19, Donbas miners walked off the job.

As in Mezhdurechensk the miners in Donetsk occupied the city square. Their demands were far-reaching, and a week later the government acceded to them. The changes promised to the miners — of the Donbas, Kuzbas, and Vorkuta, which is inside the Arctic Circle (see "Notebooks for the Grandchildren" being serialized in the pages of this magazine), are both economic and political. The government made 47 concessions, ranging from higher pay and longer vacations to improvement in the availability of consumer goods. They have even conceded workers' control of the mines. The former strike committees now have the authority to set production targets and sell surplus coal on the international markets.

The Ukrainian miners were also angry over a decision to delay local elections. These had been originally scheduled for the fall, but the bureaucracy decided to postpone them until the spring of 1990. The people of the Donbas blame their local officials for most of the problems in their workplaces and communities, and they want to throw them out of office as soon as they can. Because of the strike, the decision to postpone the elections was reversed, a political victory for the workers. The strike's effect was also felt in the Supreme Soviet, the Soviet Union's highest legislative body. It promised to pass laws during its fall session which will ensure "real independence for work collectives, their right to be masters of their enterprises and to dispose of the results of their labor, to transfer, in real fact, land to the peasants."

Showing his ability to maneuver, Gorbachev (after a period of a few days) hailed the striking miners, asserting that they were acting in support of his campaign against bureaucracy in the USSR. This, of course, is a total fraud.

Gorbachev is trying with all his might to preserve the rule of the Soviet bureaucracy by sugarcoating it a bit and making it work well enough so that he can alleviate at least the worst cases of abuse. He has enough experience and intelligence to know that decades of economic mismanagement and totalitarian rule have created a resentment on the part of the Soviet working class with the potential for a real explosion — one that could sweep the bureaucrats away entirely. The only hope for avoiding such an explosion is to let out the steam that has built up a little at a time, in a reasonably controlled fashion.

The lesson of recent events in China — that even complete totalitarian rule is no guarantee for continued bureaucratic domination — was not lost on Gorbachev. He has no desire to face a similar challenge in the USSR. By giving verbal support to the miners and promising to address their grievances, he has tried to buy some time. We will see how successful that ploy will be in the long run.

The Miners' Strike and Perestroika

Because of their real victories, combined with Gorbachev's campaign to convince the workers that his perestroika policies will solve their problems, some miners are at this time supporting Gorbachev against his political rivals within the Soviet bureaucracy. Those who support Gorbachev's perestroika campaign may do so on the basis that any change at all has to be a change for the better.

Alison Mitchell, writing in the July 30 issue of the New York newspaper *Newsday*, quoted a miner named Vladimir Faustov as saying, "Gorbachev can't fight the bureaucracy alone. He can't do it from his high seat. We're helping him." Anatoly Romov, another miner whom she interviewed, said, "Those officials who did not support the workers during the strike will not get enough votes. For that reason our strike has to do good for perestroika. The strike was economic but the results will be political."

In spite of these miners' faith in Gorbachev's promises, the truth is that perestroika is partly *responsible* for the bad conditions in the mines. The workers may not think that things could get worse, but in fact they have gotten worse since Gorbachev's reforms have been instituted. Donetsk, for example, during the Brezhnev period was a "first-category" city, like Moscow, Leningrad, and regional capitals. As such it was allocated the best consumer goods and social services. During the years of perestroika — and perestroika has been in effect for over four years now — Donetsk was downgraded to a "second-category" city. Wages have fallen as prices have risen.

On the day after the miners returned to work, strike committee representatives examined the list of pay scales at the Bashanov mine in the Donbas. They found that the mine manager was paid 800 rubles a month (about \$1,300), whereas the average miner was paid 370 rubles a month (about \$600). This pay inequity is a result of perestroika, not a holdover from the "stagnation" period. The miners are, as might be expected, furious at this discovery. They will inevitably see that their worsening conditions and the management's improving conditions are the real meaning of perestroika.

In fact, strike committees in many areas have remained in place and there are reports that miners are considering organizing permanently to press for broader social and political goals. They are also ready to resume strike activity if the promised concessions are not forthcoming. In Vorkuta and the Kuzbas, strikes have resumed for short periods.

Many miners feel like those in Ukraine, as one Ukrainian Supreme Soviet deputy explained when reporting the new developments: "The miners of Donetsk trust nobody and nothing."

Whatever temporary illusions some miners may have, there is an understanding that their victory was not given to them from on high. They won by taking action themselves, independently of the official CP-dominated trade unions. They elected their own representatives to the strike committees and committed themselves to militant action until their demands were met. In so doing they have set an example for the rest of the Soviet working class, nearly all of which has lower pay scales and fewer benefits than the miners.

They have also set an example for workers in those countries where the capitalist class remains in power, in particular, the United States. Here in this country miners are also on strike (see "Pittston Strike: Pivotal Battle in Coal Field War," on page 7 of this issue), fighting against attacks on their living standards which, if anything, are worse than Gorbachev's perestroika. The principles which the Soviet miners used — self-reliance, rank-and-file democracy, and militant action — are universal. They work in every country, not just the USSR. U.S. politicians who, for anticommunist purposes, are glorifying the workers' militancy in the Soviet Union and Poland are taking a big risk for their class. After all, the pay inequities are far greater here than in the Soviet Union, and the police and extralegal violence brought to bear against U.S. miners have been worse as well. *And American workers are beginning to take notice.*

Implications for Soviet Society

The importance of this wave of strikes by Soviet miners cannot be overstated. The growing ferment and changes which we have seen in the USSR since the introduction of Gorbachev's glasnost policies are greater than anyone might have imagined possible even a few years ago. But, until now, the Soviet working class, the largest and among the most powerful in the world, has left the debates about how to solve the overall problems of society up to the politicians and intellectuals. Now it has entered the fray on its own behalf, and that will change things dramatically — because it is only the working people of the USSR themselves who can best understand and actually implement the necessary changes. The intellectuals and politicians cannot do so.

Already Soviet workers are beginning to get a grasp of what it will take to make the fundamental transformation needed if their genuine demands are to be won. Alison Mitchell writes in the same *Newsday* article:

"We have no classes in our society," Yura Kolesnikov, 32, of the strike committee, said sardonically. "But we have a layer of aristocracy who know before their

(Continued on inside back cover)

Repression Continues in China

As Does Economic and Political Collaboration with the West

by Tom Barrett

In the six weeks since the violent suppression of the Tiananmen Square democracy demonstration, the most remarkable collaboration between Stalinism and imperialism has occurred, revealing an astonishing commonality of interests and a shameless disregard for the most basic norms of human decency. The response of the world imperialist leaders—including George Bush—has revealed anti-communism's bottom line—the “bottom line,” that is, profits. As long as the Chinese government continues to keep its market open for U.S., European, and Japanese profit making, the imperialist centers will continue to do business as usual with Deng Xiaoping and his bloodstained gang. And Deng has made clear to the world that Chinese industry will continue to produce cheap manufactured products for the export market and that the contemporary version of the Open Door will not be closed. Even as the imperialist “Magnificent Seven” (the U.S., U.K., West Germany, France, Italy, Japan, and Canada) were “deploring” the crackdown at their Paris summit meeting in July, they were falling over each other to make new trade deals with the Beijing butchers.

The capitalist media have been abjectly compliant with Beijing's restrictions on news reporting. The Tiananmen Square massacre seems to have been forgotten after only six weeks. However, even though getting information is difficult, it is not impossible. A team from the U.S. Trotskyist newspaper *Socialist Action* was able, after the crackdown, to visit Chinese cities and gather information from working people who were surprisingly willing to express their indignation to foreigners. Many Chinese nationals in Hong Kong and even in the United States remain in communication with friends and family in their homeland and are able to provide facts which are not available from official news releases. The news media, however, are themselves big businesses and, as such, are more interested in good economic relations with China for big business as a whole than in the rights and well-being of China's billion people.

It is vitally important to the Chinese people and to working people everywhere that the world not be allowed to forget events of May and the crime of June 4. Revolutionists understood from the beginning that George Bush and other “free world” leaders would never provide any real assistance to the struggle for Chinese democracy. That should now be clear to everyone—far beyond the ranks of revolutionary activists. It is up to the worldwide labor and socialist movement to explain the truth about China and to act to defend those Chinese workers and students who had the courage to stand up to Stalinist tyranny in April, May, and June of 1989. No one else will do it.

The Arrests and Executions

In the weeks following the suppression of what has been called the “Beijing Commune,” hundreds of workers and students have been arrested. There has been a series of show trials; 29 workers have been executed, many publicly. Most of the charges involve resistance against the army on June 4 itself. It must be said that in many cases the defendants actually committed the acts with which they were charged. It must also be said that they were acting totally in self-defense, which is recognized by all to be one of the most fundamental human rights. They were no more criminals than those Chinese heroes who committed acts of violence against the Japanese invaders in the 1930s and 1940s, or the People's Liberation Army soldiers themselves during the civil war that followed World War II—the war which resulted in the creation of the People's Republic.

Though the bulk of the demonstrators and their leadership came from the student population, it has been workers who have been targeted for the death penalty. Furthermore, though there have been many arrests, the executions seem to have stopped. The objective of the operation has clearly been to send a message to the population. The method of the Chinese Communist Party bureaucrats is summed up in a Chinese expression, “Kill the chicken to scare the monkey.” The bureaucracy has no intention of physically wiping out those who support the democracy movement, for it knows that it cannot. The struggle to end political repression and official corruption and to give the Chinese masses real power in the People's Republic has overwhelming support in China's urban population. Chinese society cannot function without the cooperation of the working class and the intellectuals (in China, the term “intellectual” means anyone who has graduated from university) and those who will become intellectuals, that is, the students. The idea of the executions was to make an example of a few who had the bad luck to be of humble origin and to be caught in the act of fighting back against bureaucratic tyranny. The goal was to frighten others into submission.

It is, however, possible that executions are continuing without being reported. The Chinese government is not providing information on the whereabouts or conditions of the hundreds who have been arrested since the June 4 crackdown. Some of the execution victims showed clear signs of torture, and it is possible, even likely, that torture of prisoners is continuing. Chinese activists in the United States are reporting telephone death threats, mostly anonymous, which suggests that the government could be organizing

“death squads.” Even if the intent is only to frighten, the threats must be taken completely seriously.

The Situation of the Chinese Masses

Journalists have focused their attention, for obvious reasons, on the students and workers of Beijing. However, the Chinese population is a lot more than Beijing. Beijing is not even the largest Chinese city (Shanghai is); moreover, to this day the overwhelming majority of China’s people live in the countryside, not in the cities. One of the important lessons of history, confirmed by the events of June 4, is that the people of the capital cannot make the revolution alone (the conclusions Marx drew after the experience of the Paris Commune in 1871). In a predominantly peasant country, the working class and left-wing intellectuals must lead the peasantry, but they cannot make a revolution *without* the peasantry. And if the workers and left intellectuals hope to win the peasants’ support, they must address their actual needs and explain clearly how the workers’ interests and the peasants’ interests can only be served by their fighting together against the bureaucracy.

The July 19-August 1 issue of the social democratic weekly *In These Times* carries several noteworthy articles on the Chinese situation, one of which focuses on the Chinese peasantry. Alisa Joyce is its author, and she filed her story, called “Unease Reigns in Rural China,” from Changsha, the capital of Hunan. That is Mao Zedong’s and Hu Yaobang’s home province.

News travels slowly outside the cities in any country, especially an underdeveloped one, which China still is. However, Hunan knows what happened in Beijing, and students at Changsha’s Number One Teachers’ Training Institute (of which Mao Zedong is an alumnus) staged their own pro-democracy demonstrations during May ’89. There is confusion: people hear the official government version of the events, and they hear the Voice of America’s story. They are inclined to trust neither one. Joyce quotes a taxi driver: “The government says VOA is telling lies. VOA says the government is telling lies. It’s confusing for us. We weren’t there. We don’t know whom to believe.”

What Joyce demonstrates very clearly is that the basis exists for an alliance between the urban proletariat and intellectuals and the peasantry. Hunan province has not benefited from Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms. It is now becoming clear that it is the areas where industry is tied to foreign trade, such as Guangdong province bordering Hunan on the south, which are experiencing economic growth—not the areas such as Hunan itself where production is directed to the needs of the Chinese workers and peasants. Corruption, one of the targets of the Beijing protests, is the central issue of which the Hunanese are conscious. Joyce writes:

The principal gripe of the Hunanese is not a lack of democracy or freedom but the tremendous problem of what the Chinese call *guan dao*, or official profiteering. Lower, mid-level and high-ranking officials in China have little cash resources with which to exercise their power, but they do have control of scarce commodities. An unreformed—and currently unreformable—dual-

price structure in the Chinese economy of artificially low state-set prices and volatile free-market prices, often five to ten times higher than state prices, has established an easy foundation for profiteering and graft. . . . A kind of economic warlordism has arisen whereby officials control their own economic fiefdoms to the detriment of local people and local industry.

Joyce found both deep resentment and a certain demoralization caused by the defeat of June 4. However, those who have had direct contact with young Hunanese who had been studying in Beijing are rapidly drawing revolutionary conclusions. She quotes an elderly village woman: “Tell the world how our students died. This corrupt government must be overthrown.”

Political Revolution, Yes. But What Now? What Next?

The necessary Chinese revolution will overthrow the bureaucratized state and Communist Party but will retain the socialist property forms established following the 1949 revolution. A revolutionary leadership, grouped in a party which can become an alternative to the Stalinist CCP, needs to be organized within China. It will have to learn from its own experiences, as well as through collaboration with others outside of China and from the previous experiences that have been written down as part of the history of the workers’ movement. Revolutionists in other countries can therefore play an indispensable role in the developing political revolution by organizing concrete activity to aid the Chinese students and workers, and by sharing their knowledge, insights, and literature.

Militants throughout the world can help dispel feelings of isolation and powerlessness by not allowing anyone to forget what happened on June 4. Of urgent necessity is an international defense campaign, demanding no more executions, freedom for all political prisoners in China, and amnesty for all pro-democracy demonstrators. Only the workers’ movement and its allies on the left have any genuine interest in these issues. The imperialists are interested solely in their own profits. If the Chinese students and workers see that they have not been forgotten and that socialists throughout the world are willing and able to join in a united front on their behalf, it will be a significant force which can play a role in reinspiring the struggle within China.

Trotskyists have a special obligation to make the riches of the revolutionary Marxist library available to the Chinese militants. The emerging student and worker leaders will be far better armed in the future if they have an opportunity to study the Bolshevik experience in Russia, the struggle of the Left Opposition against Stalinism, and many other subjects on which revolutionary Marxists have written over the past decades. But this will not happen by magic: making these books available in China requires organization and work.

The Trotskyist movement can convince the Chinese revolutionists that our ideas are good ones through both logical persuasion and our example in action. Already it is clear that the Stalinist and social democratic parties are unwilling to, or incapable of, fighting for an amnesty in China. They have defaulted. The Fourth International must

take up the challenge. If it does so successfully, it will *earn* the militants' respect and cause them to take seriously our revolutionary Marxist program. In actual fact, Trotskyists in Hong Kong began work on behalf of Chinese political prisoners months before the events of May '89. They have been in the forefront of strikes and demonstrations against the bureaucratic repression since June. They have been able to get Trotskyist ideas into China as well as to broadcast the demands of the Beijing worker and student activists to the rest of the world (see *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, Nos. 64 and 65). They have set a good example.

In actuality, every revolution is an international process. Since capitalism entered its imperialist phase no country's economy or politics are exclusively its own. None of us, Americans, Chinese, Cubans, Russians, French, Nicaraguans, Palestinian Arabs, or anyone else, can go it alone. Past and current international defense and solidarity campaigns have had positive impacts in Latin America, Iran, South Africa, and most especially Vietnam. Vigorous solidarity and defense work throughout the world can be of invaluable assistance in overthrowing the bureaucratic tyranny of Chinese Stalinism. ●

July 25, 1989

The Significance and Lessons of the Antibureaucratic Revolutionary Struggle

The following is the text of an editorial from the May/June 1989 issue of October Review, a revolutionary socialist journal published in Hong Kong.

The struggle of students, workers, and citizens in Beijing and other major cities from mid-April to early June shook not only China, but also all the so-called socialist countries and the whole world. The struggle of the Chinese people is a severe blow to international Stalinism, is a part of the struggle of the people of all countries against the rule of bureaucracy, and is also a part of the struggle of the world toiling masses to become their own masters.

The crisis of world Stalinism is now extremely severe, and because the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is especially in decay and the tradition of bureaucratism especially strong, this crisis breaks out in China with extreme acuteness. To maintain their rule, the Stalinist bureaucracies have to usurp the revolutionary gains of the people in overthrowing the system of private property and suppress the people's right to determine their economy and society, which results in stagnant economic growth and intensified social contradictions. In China, the crisis of bureaucratic rule worsened even more after the death of Mao Zedong. After ten years of "open door" reform, the combination of capitalist economic factors and bureaucratic dictatorship intensifies corruption and decay, speculation and hoarding by bureaucrats, social polarization and imbalances in economic development. It is precisely these social contradictions reaching a breaking point that form the background to the recent massive mobilization of the masses.

One significant result of this struggle of the students, workers, and citizens is the thorough exposure of the reactionary nature of the CCP bureaucracy and the depth of its crisis. Even though the student movement from the beginning emphasized peace and rationality, and their demands for the regime to carry out changes within the existing system were reformist, yet, as proven by the facts, the CCP was reluctant and indeed unable to carry out the least reforms or make the least concessions. On the contrary, it used the

army, the tanks, and subsequently the entire repressive apparatus to launch a rule of terror, suppress the demands of the people, and beat back their mobilization. The bloody brutality is meant to declare to the people and to be written into history: the bureaucracy will not tolerate any action undermining its rule and will not consider all the serious consequences that the repression incurs. Taking part in defending this thoroughly decayed ruling caste is not just the so-called "Deng-Li-Yang Clique," but the entire bureaucracy, the bureaucracy that groups around itself all the reactionary forces and vested interests that can still be grouped together.

In fact, regardless of the subjective wish of the students, workers, and citizens to peacefully demand concessions from the regime, the contradictions between the rulers and the ruled had reached this state: under very intense social contradictions, the mobilization of the people made a breakthrough by opening a breach in the 40 years of highly repressive rule of the bureaucracy, and was gradually gathering its forces and starting to self-organize. With the masses mobilizing further, with the whole population out to block the army, with the resistance to the martial law declared by the bureaucracy, even though the subjective factor was still insufficient, objectively this accelerated the split within the bureaucracy, further undermining the already narrowed social base of bureaucratic rule. In blocking the entry of the army, erecting barricades, controlling important parts of Beijing, maintaining social order, etc., the people of Beijing mobilized massively; in some other major cities, large scale mass mobilizations also appeared. The scale and the duration of this spontaneous mobilization of the Chinese urban masses were unprecedented.

The events had reached a stage where either the people's political revolution to overthrow the rule of the bureaucracy continued to develop until it gained victory, or the counter-

revolutionary repression of the bureaucracy succeeded. The contradiction between the bureaucracy and the people could no longer be reconciled. The bureaucracy chose repression. Just before the massacre, the students and masses also learned that the only way out was to overthrow the current regime; the Tiananmen Square Command Center at the last moment made "down with the Li Peng false government" the single slogan, reflecting that they had come to grips with the objective revolutionary situation.

The people of the capital have written a heroic, solemn, and tragic new chapter in the modern history of China. Despite various weaknesses in subjective factors which led to the defeat of this developing political revolution, the political revolution by the people overthrowing the rule of the CCP bureaucracy has made an important advance, revealing thoroughly the weaknesses of the bureaucratic regime and demonstrating the main problems of the political revolution. The urgent task now is to draw a balance sheet of the tragic historical experience and learn its lessons, in order to continue with the struggle till the victory of the political revolution.

It can be seen from the current struggle that, with 40 years of one-party dictatorial rule consciously dividing and atomizing the force of the masses, it is very difficult to start to gather forces. The students successfully used mobilization tactics, first through the commemorating of Hu Yaobang, then through peaceful petitioning, hunger strike protests, and other methods to conduct independent mobilization and organization and develop autonomous student organizations in Beijing and in the provinces. Although in the beginning of the movement, some bureaucrats could have tried to take advantage of the movement for factional ends within the bureaucracy, the subsequent development of the student movement clearly shows that the students consciously avoided becoming the tool of a particular wing of the bureaucracy, but instead actively turned to the masses for support, especially to the workers. They recognized that without the participation of the working class the bureaucracy cannot be confronted.

The struggle in fact developed rapidly to a violent confrontation between the citizens and the regime. Citizens and workers not only mobilized on a large scale, but also formed the "Beijing Autonomous Workers' Federation" and the "Federation of all sections of the people of the capital," etc. The working class independently mobilized and organized, and began to display its potential strength, lead the masses

to grasp the historical opportunity, and break through many years of tight control and repression by the bureaucracy. This initially assembled force of urban masses with workers as the central core was not subjectively well prepared, yet when the situation changed sharply, it became a major force in confronting the bureaucracy.

The massacre and subsequent rule of terror indicate that when faced with the frenzied struggle of a regime in death agony, if the people insist on peaceful means, they will only be massacred arbitrarily. To overthrow a brutal regime possessing an army and a huge repressive apparatus, to remove the chief obstacle in the social and economic development in today's China, individual, unorganized, and aimless efforts are futile. It is necessary to rely on conscious and organized social forces, especially the working class which can control the economic arteries of the society, to widely and consciously organize and become active political forces. In order to advance the political revolution, it is necessary to have a revolutionary party with a program that clearly advocates the overthrow of the bureaucratic regime and the organization and mobilization of forces from various layers. Only in this way can the army be won over and the bureaucracy overthrown.

The era of political revolution to overthrow the rule of the bureaucracy has begun. Although the struggle of the masses has been temporarily repressed, the masses have awakened and have mobilized and the bureaucracy is in its death agony. It can be foreseen that the present counterrevolutionary repression will lead the bureaucracy into even deeper crisis, economic difficulties will be more insurmountable, concessions to regional power, foreign capital, and capitalist forces will be even greater, oppression and exploitation of the toiling masses will be more severe, and antagonism with the people more irreconcilable. The social contradictions that have triggered this revolutionary struggle will continue to deepen.

At the moment, under the counterrevolutionary repression of the bureaucracy, the most urgent task is the defense of the militants in this struggle from persecution and execution. At the same time, it is necessary to start with the defense of the people's right to live, combining the struggle for basic democratic rights with the struggle in defense of people's livelihood, so as to mobilize and organize workers and other social layers, and prepare well for the next high tide of struggle. ●

July 13, 1989

Trotsky Bibliography Available in U.S.

In our last issue we reported on a new edition of Louis Sinclair's bibliography of Trotsky's works published by Scholar Press in Britain.

For those interested in ordering it, the books of Scholar Press are distributed in the U.S. by Gower Publishing Company, Old Post Road, Brookfield, VT 05036.

Democracy and Revolution in China

by Steve Bloom

This article is based on a presentation given in Cleveland, Ohio, at a July 1 forum entitled "Which Side Are You On? The Chinese Government vs. the Student Democracy Movement." It has been expanded somewhat for publication in Bulletin in Defense of Marxism.

There are a number of different points of view about what happened in China between the middle of April and the beginning of June, 1989. Everyone agrees that these were events of historic significance. But beyond that there is not much agreement at all. What you think depends very much on your overall point of view, that is, as the title of the discussion this evening explains, which side you are on.

Within China itself there was a pretty straightforward confrontation between the masses of students and workers on one side of the barricades—those simply raising their collective voice to demand basic democratic rights and an end to corruption—and the privileged bureaucrats who run the country on the other side. The parasitic layer that rules China today perceived a fundamental challenge to its power, and in doing so the bureaucrats were a bit more conscious at this initial stage than those who gathered in Tiananmen Square.

These two basic viewpoints on events in China represent fundamental poles around which others in the world have defined their own perspectives. Those of us who support the Fourth International—the international revolutionary party founded in 1938 by Leon Trotsky and Left Oppositionists from around the world—have had no trouble deciding which side we are on. *We are for the students and workers* (even if their appreciation of the immediate tasks in the situation was not identical to our own). *We are for elementary human and democratic rights. We are 100 percent against bureaucratic dictatorship.*

Such a position is the only one possible for genuine working class revolutionaries. And our view on this is confirmed by the instinctive response of working people around the world, who have rallied overwhelmingly to the support of the Chinese democracy movement.

This broad rank-and-file solidarity with the democracy movement accounts, I think, for the overwhelmingly positive reaction to the demands of the Chinese masses by the organized radical movement in the U.S. and other countries—and the condemnation by most of the left of the government's massacre. It was very hard to oppose the efforts of the students and workers in Tiananmen Square if one has even a little finger in touch with the sentiments of the broad masses of people around the world. So a wide spectrum of the organized left, from social democrats to ex-Maoists, and even current Maoists, expressed their solidarity with the Chinese people and their opposition to the Deng Xiaoping government.

There are, however, a few exceptions, as noted on the leaflet for this forum: in this country the Workers World Party and the Communist Party USA. These groups are echoing the official Chinese government slanders which claim that the workers and students were "counter-revolutionaries," promoters of "anarchy" and "chaos." We will deal presently with the completely false assumptions that underlie these viewpoints. For now, we should simply note them as a sad commentary on the extreme state of degeneration attained by both the CP and Workers World Party.

Ernest Mandel Speaks in New York In Defense of Chinese Students and Workers

On July 11, more than 250 people attended a public protest meeting at the Parsons School of Design in New York City, featuring Ernest Mandel. Organized in the wake of the June 4 crackdown by the Chinese Communist Party against democracy demonstrators in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, the meeting raised the demand to "Defend the Chinese Students and Workers." In addition, Mandel and the two other speakers—Jin Xiaochang, a Chinese student resident in the New York area, and Jim Henley, who participated in a delegation that had recently returned from a trip to China—discussed the relation of the Chinese struggle to the fight for socialist democracy in China and around the world, along with the potential for a genuine revolution against the Chinese bureaucracy which could place governmental power in the hands of the masses.

Organizing for the meeting was initiated by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. Solidarity and Socialist Action both co-sponsored the event. The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* plans to publish the text of Mandel's speech in a future issue.

The attitude of the U.S. CP toward the democracy movement represented, along with that of the Chinese CP, one extreme on a continuum of views developed by the political heirs of Joseph Stalin. A more moderate appraisal was presented by Mikhail Gorbachev in the USSR, who offered cautious words of support for “democracy” in China, and even ended up deploring the use of violence. But Gorbachev understood very well that the mass movement in China had gone beyond the limits that were acceptable to any bureaucratic regime. He may have disagreed with the methods used by Deng Xiaoping to suppress the unrest, but the objectives he has in mind are identical.

We should also note the approach taken by George Bush and other imperialist politicians. They saw a golden opportunity to make some propaganda against communism and in favor of free-enterprise-style “democracy.” But this was completely cynical. Bush is no friend of democracy, and his real attitude can easily be shown by his actual policies in relation to South Africa, El Salvador, Palestine, and a host of other countries. Washington’s actions in support of totalitarian regimes around the world—so long as they are friendly to the interests of multinational corporations—give the lie to Bush’s posturing on China. The U.S. ruling class understands full well that a genuine, insurgent, democratic movement of the Chinese masses to take over their own country and run it in their own interests represents a far bigger threat to the objectives of world imperialism than does the Chinese Communist Party today.

The Viewpoint of Revolutionary Marxism

I will discuss the Chinese events this evening from the point of view of revolutionary Marxism—that current in the world which takes as its starting point the global struggle to liberate humanity from both capitalist exploitation and bureaucratic tyranny. Our current identifies heart and soul with the class instincts of working people around the world who hailed the struggle of the Chinese masses. But we also believe that it is necessary to go a step further. We have to develop a methodology that can help *advance* the struggle so that it can ultimately achieve its objectives.

The big question is not: “Should there be democracy in China?” The masses in China itself and around the world have answered this definitively. The most important problem is: *How* will the Chinese people conquer democracy?

It is necessary to protest against the military crackdown, against martial law, against the executions, and against the butchers of the Chinese Communist Party. But it is now clear to all that peaceful protest will not be enough to change things in that country. What is needed in China is a thorough revolution to oust the bureaucracy from power and allow the masses to truly control their own destiny. This will require the development of a more profound level of understanding on the part of millions, and there can be little doubt that such a development of consciousness is now taking place as a result of the events on and after June 3.

A genuine solution to the problem of democracy in China will require the creation of mass decision-making institutions of students, workers, peasants, and soldiers which can create a concrete alternative to present governmental forms.

And it will require the construction of a revolutionary vanguard party consisting of the most conscious elements among the Chinese people. Such a party can help to provide the necessary leadership for the broad struggle, and a programmatic understanding that will allow the movement to achieve its objectives.

Dynamic of Events

It is important to be clear about the objective dynamics of what took place in China during the crucial weeks between the first student demonstrations commemorating Hu Yaobang and the military crackdown. Some even then referred to a revolution taking place in China, and important elements of a prerevolutionary situation were certainly present. We saw a profound crisis of confidence in the regime among broad layers of the population. This was not limited to students and intellectuals. The working class had entered the struggle with its own demands. There was also a paralysis of governmental functioning, and the embryonic beginnings of alternative institutions to those of the old regime. Most indicative, there was a pronounced wavering in the military apparatus—especially among rank-and-file soldiers.

But one key ingredient was lacking. The consciousness of the masses was not revolutionary. The movement, in its overwhelming majority, was simply for reforms. No significant segment was calling for the overthrow of the present government. The most extreme demand was simply for the ouster of a few individuals most closely identified with corruption and repression.

So there was a contradiction between the actual problem posed by the democracy demonstration (that is: “who shall rule, the people or the bureaucrats?”) and the consciousness of the demonstrators themselves about the need for a revolutionary solution. This meant that time and experience were key elements in the situation before the crackdown. The longer the mass movement continued without the government yielding to its demands, the greater was the possibility that a genuine revolutionary current would emerge and that such a current would gain sufficient strength to represent a substantial challenge to bureaucratic rule.

Perhaps, in the early stages of the confrontation, this possibility could have been headed off by government concessions which, without endangering the power of the Chinese CP, might have defused the protest. But, for whatever reason, the CP leadership decided not to follow such a policy. And, of course, in its early stages it was not at all obvious that the movement would create the crisis that it finally did. By the time the protest had gathered a full head of steam it was quite impossible to defuse it with partial measures—though some attempt was finally made to do so. At the same time it could not be allowed to continue, given the risk of a genuine revolutionary development. The confrontation had to lead *either* to the smashing of the demonstration in Tiananmen Square by military repression, *or* to its escalation into a genuine insurrectionary movement.

The first waverings of the troops seemed to be pushing toward a revolutionary opening. But the masses weren’t yet prepared to move that far, and lacked a leadership which

could point the way. Under those circumstances it was just a matter of time before some military units were found who would, in fact, be able *and willing* to take action against unarmed civilians.

Counterrevolution in China?

The Chinese government, Workers World, the U.S. Communist Party, and a few others, continue to claim that there was a counterrevolution taking place in China. And even if this claim were not being made, there is certainly an *objective* question posed along these lines. We can say with assurance that there must have been *counterrevolutionary tendencies* within the mass movement. It is an historical law. No revolutionary dynamic can ever exist without a corresponding counterrevolutionary one. If you want to make a revolution, you simply have to run the risk of a counterrevolution. Another way of saying the same thing is that a progressive outcome to any struggle can never be assured in advance. *It always depends on the process of struggle itself.*

Sectarians and Stalinists will always point to such counterrevolutionary tendencies, no matter how little they actually represent in life, as an excuse for opposing real mass movements (and even for physically repressing them as in East Germany, Hungary, Poland, etc.). For revolutionary Marxists, however, the key question has to be: Which tendency is stronger, revolution or counterrevolution? What is the actual direction of motion in the situation? In this case no *objective* observer can claim that the *dominant* feature of the Chinese democracy demonstrations was *counterrevolutionary*—unless one chooses to identify “revolution” with the bureaucracy itself!

To begin with, let's look at the actual demand for democracy. This is completely progressive, something that is 100 percent in the interests of the working masses. But the Chinese bureaucracy is opposed to democracy. Its rule, its privileges are dependent upon a *suppression* of the masses, the imposition of *bureaucratic decision making* about all aspects of life. So the demand for democracy is leveled *against the bureaucracy*, and only if one identifies the

bureaucracy itself with the “revolution”—instead of seeing it for what it is, a cancerous growth on the revolution—can one say that the *main thrust* of the movement for democracy in China was counterrevolutionary.

And what about another demand of the movement—for an end to corruption and growing economic inequality in Chinese society? Who benefits from corruption and inequality? The bureaucrats primarily, along with a certain layer of petty producers who have emerged as a result of the economic reforms in that country over the last ten years. Such a demand can be called counterrevolutionary *if and*

only if one thinks that *bureaucratic* interest equals the interest of the revolution. It is a demand whose implementation would penalize both the bureaucrats and any forces which might actually favor a bourgeois restoration in China. It can only benefit the masses of working people.

Then there are the demands raised by the students directed toward an honest appreciation of Chinese history. And whose interest has been served by the distortion of history? This demand, too, is squarely focused against the bureaucracy, against the falsifiers of history who learned their trade in the Stalin school, not at all against the revolution.

Democracy! An end to corruption! Greater economic equality! An honest appreciation of history! That is a pretty good summary of the objectives of socialist revolution. They are all things that genuine socialists, genuine revolutionaries, hold dear. *There was not one demand raised by*

the demonstrators which would be best advanced by a return to capitalism in China.

On top of this we should look at the actual social composition of the protest, which was made up primarily of students and workers. There was little or no representation from the new layer of petty, would-be capitalists who might some day become the basis for a real counterrevolutionary movement in China. This, by itself, should be decisive in determining the overall character of the movement.

Any genuine mass movement is full of contradictions. This is inherent in the process of developing mass consciousness, and it cannot stop us from giving our wholehearted support to real mass struggles—especially those in which the ques-

The students' demands

1 To reevaluate Hu Yaobang's contribution and approve his appreciation of the great harmony existing between democracy and freedom.

2 To severely punish the thugs who attacked the students and the masses. Those responsible to present their apologies and compensation to the victims.

3 To speed up the publication of the Law on the Press, authorize newspapers written by citizens and guarantee freedom of the press.

4 State leaders must make public their incomes and inheritance, including those of their family, to the people and to the country as a whole. An inquiry to be held into corruption, with all the details published.

5 State leaders implicated in policy errors concerning education should make an official self-criticism in front of the whole people. The education budget must be substantially increased, alongside teachers' wages.

6 The campaign against “bourgeois liberalization” to be reevaluated, with total rehabilitation for those citizens who have suffered unwarranted injustices.

7 We strongly demand that there is an impartial and truthful assessment of this democratic and patriotic movement. ★

Students' Organizing Committee, Beijing University, April 21.

(From *October Review*.)

tion of governmental power is posed either in practice or due to the logic of events! This is true because there is an *objectively* progressive dynamic to any genuine struggle involving working people. Revolutionaries are *always* in favor of mass participation in politics—even when the masses might be wrong about some particular question, or even about many questions. It is only by going through the process of making their own decisions, and making their own mistakes, that the mass of working people and their allies can learn how to go about things the right way, *how to actually govern themselves*.

Patience Is Required

It is important to note that this kind of process takes some patience and understanding on the part of revolutionists. Working people are, in general, inherently conservative. They will look to the *least* drastic solutions, try them out first, and find that they fail before drawing ever more revolutionary conclusions as a result of their own experiences. The Russian Revolution of 1917 is the best example of this process, because it is best known. In the beginning, the Russian people simply appealed to the tsar for a redress of their grievances. Later they looked to a halfway provisional government. Only after months of struggle and disappointment with all partial measures did they turn to the Bolsheviks and a genuinely revolutionary solution to the crisis.

It might be more efficient if revolutions followed the general prescription of sectarians: a perfect leadership with all of the answers from the outset, and a mass movement that simply listens from the very beginning to such a genuinely revolutionary proletarian current and follows its lead. *But no revolution has ever taken place like that, and none ever will.* And if we stop to think about it for a moment it's just as well that such a scenario isn't possible. Because the real problem in the socialist revolution is not simply to overthrow the old regime and establish a new one. That's just the first prerequisite for accomplishing our goals. The more difficult part comes afterward.

We want to establish a new society where the masses themselves constitute the actual governing agent. This cannot be advanced very well unless working people have confidence in their own ability to govern—something that they can gain only in the actual process of revolution. A leadership that is right at one stage of the struggle can easily take a wrong turn at a later time. The only guarantee that the movement as a whole won't go off course is if the rank and file itself considers that it is capable of looking at alternative points of view and thinking the problem through.

The Chinese people were still at the stage, before the beginning of June, of petitioning those in authority for a redress of their grievances. What took place during the six weeks or so of the democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square and throughout the country was the first, necessary stage in the development of revolutionary consciousness on the part of the Chinese masses.

The contradictions were obvious. Tens, even hundreds of thousands marched through the streets singing the *Internationale*, the song of the world socialist revolution. (I kept wishing that the U.S. media would explain the significance of that song to those watching on TV in this country. People

must have thought it was some old, traditional Chinese hymn.) At the same time the mass movement was appealing to democracy in the United States and constructing a model of the Statue of Liberty.

The key to sorting this all through is to start with an appreciation of the capacity of the masses to overcome their present limitations under the influence of experience and objective pressures. There can be no substitute for this process in the course of a revolution. Our confidence in the ability of the mass movement to find the necessary road forward is based not on blind faith, but on concrete historical experience. This is probably the most fundamental thing that divides revolutionary Marxists from everyone else in society—others on the left as well as bourgeois thinkers. *We say, "All Power to the Chinese Students, Workers, and Peasants," and we mean it, heart and soul. We do not* require that the masses must *agree with us* before we will call for the power to be placed in their hands. And I might point out that in this we follow the lead of the Russian Bolsheviks in April 1917—who called for "All Power to the Soviets" even though the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries held a clear majority in those bodies.

We know that through a *genuine democratic process* (and only through such a process) the Chinese masses, along with their sisters and brothers in every country of the globe, can lead us out of the morass of oppression, exploitation, pollution, and misery that exists on the planet earth today.

International Dimension

This leads me to one of the most interesting points in all of this. The recent upsurge in China is a profound example of the interrelationship that exists today between working people and our allies in all parts of the world. Though the actual events which sparked the student democracy movement took place in China, I think it is reasonable to say that the Chinese tidal wave would never have occurred without the ripple effect of Gorbachev's reforms in the USSR.

The demands of the students for more "openness" and democracy in China took as a starting point what they saw taking place in the Soviet Union. When Gorbachev visited Beijing in the middle of May he was hailed as a hero. This is one of the little contradictions that the mass movement soon worked out. Because Gorbachev did not prove to be quite the fighter for democracy that the students had expected, and this was an important lesson for them in the overall dynamics of bureaucratic rule. As I mentioned earlier, Gorbachev was willing to talk about democracy, but when push came to shove he was as threatened by the movement of the Chinese masses as the Chinese bureaucracy itself.

Gorbachev introduced his glasnost reforms in response to developments in the USSR which are similar to the economic and social problems that were at the root of the economic reforms introduced in China ten years ago. The Chinese did not accompany their economic reform program with any political liberalization. Gorbachev, however, is attempting to combine economic reforms with a limited opening for the free exchange of ideas on economic and other social questions. He sees this as a necessity in order to break through the inertia of the present Soviet bureaucracy in

industry and agriculture, and he is taking a risk. But it is a risk that the majority of the CP leadership in the USSR considers absolutely necessary.

In part because it received a limited endorsement from the CP leadership, the dynamic that glasnost has unleashed in the USSR is still far more restrained than what has taken place in China. But the same tensions are bubbling beneath the surface. The reaction to glasnost has already gone well beyond the limits that Gorbachev hoped to set for it — especially amongst the citizens in some of the non-Russian republics. The possibility of an explosion like the one in China is always present.

So China was stimulated by the USSR, but once the Chinese events got going, they in turn made themselves felt in the Soviet Union. There has clearly been a feedback effect in terms of the common concerns of the Soviet and Chinese masses. Ernest Mandel — a central leader of the Fourth International and one of the world's foremost Marxist economists and scholars — reported in a recent issue of *International Viewpoint* that there was a demonstration of 100,000 in Moscow to support the Chinese student sit-in and hunger strike. We also have reports that Boris Yeltsen organized a meeting of 20,000 in Moscow to protest the crack-down in Tiananmen Square — the largest protest of any kind outside of Hong Kong. Would any of us have imagined, just two or three years ago, that such events would have been possible in the USSR? This is important for the defense of the Chinese demonstrators, but it is equally important for the growth of independent activity on the part of the Soviet masses themselves.

The events in the Soviet Union and China, along with the upheavals taking place in other bureaucratized workers' states like Hungary and Poland, have had a major impact on the thinking of working people in the U.S. and throughout the imperialist world. For the first time in decades it is becoming possible for them to visualize an alternative to capitalist society without the monstrous, bureaucratic, dictatorial distortion introduced by Stalin in the 1920s. There is a renewed credibility for the idea of a socialist system actually run and controlled by the masses of people themselves, which was the genuine vision of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

That vision was the cornerstone of the fight by Trotsky and the Left Opposition against Stalin in the 1930s. And it is a vision that has been maintained to the present day by our world movement, the Fourth International. It continues to be the most fundamental component of our programmatic perspectives.

As with mass consciousness in China and the USSR, the new mass awareness of this vision which we can detect in the imperialist centers is only beginning to emerge. It exists in embryo, with many, many contradictions and misunderstandings that will have to be worked through. People are confused by the myth — pushed hard by the im-

perialists — that “democracy” must mean “free enterprise.” They are confused by propaganda about the “death of Marxism,” and by assertions that events in the USSR, China, and Eastern Europe prove that “communism” has failed and that these countries are reverting to capitalism.

But history has a few surprises in store for the purveyors of such myths. It is not communism that has failed, as the bourgeois pundits are happy to proclaim, but Stalinism and bureaucratic dictatorship. And the solutions to the crisis do not lie in a return to capitalism, but in a further revolutionary advance — toward a genuine, democratic, revolutionary socialist society.

The final history of our epoch will be written by masses of people out in the streets demanding their rights — including, as the Chinese people are demanding, the right to govern themselves. The working people of China, the USSR, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Vietnam, North Korea, have not yet said their last word — nor have the workers of the United States, Britain, France, Italy, Germany, El Salvador, South Africa, Brazil, Korea, or the Philippines.

And we have complete confidence in the ability of these working people to find the right word to say when they finally do have their chance to be heard! That is why we have no hesitations whatsoever to declare ourselves squarely *on the side of the democracy demonstrators of Tiananmen Square.*

Future Developments

It is too early to know what the immediate future holds in store for China. Perhaps we will see a rapid resurgence of the struggle in response to the brutality of the ruling bureaucrats. Perhaps there will be a more or less extended period of downturn based on intimidation and terror.

But we can say for certain that the democracy movement in China is not dead. It will return, and when it does it will be more conscious of its tasks and more resolute as a result of this experience. China has been permanently transformed as a result of what has happened. There is no going back. In an important sense we might make an analogy with the 1905 revolution in Russia which, though unsuccessful, provided a necessary seasoning and experience for the masses and their leadership that proved essential to the victory in 1917. The Chinese Communist Party cannot kill the millions who participated in the hunger strike or who marched in support of democracy, or who simply stood on the sidelines and cheered. The consciousness of these people was raised by their experience, and such a rise in consciousness is not something that can be disposed of just because the surface manifestation of it — the marches and demonstrations — have been drowned in a sea of blood. The flame of democracy burns on in the hearts of the Chinese people. It is only a matter of time before it erupts once again in a conflagration that no military force on earth will be able to suppress. ●

Sandinista leaders on the Nicaraguan crisis

AT THE END of January the Nicaraguan government announced a drastic austerity programme in response to a situation of economic collapse, including an inflation rate of 20,000% in 1988, resulting in a drop in the purchasing power of the working-class of some 85%. The state budget was to be slashed by an estimated 44%, 35,000 military and civilian state employees were to be dismissed, credit was be tightened and subsidies abolished or reduced.

At the same time appeals were made to the Nicaraguan private sector for a new spirit of cooperation and the agriculture minister, Jaime Wheelock, explained that land expropriations were to cease. All this formed the backdrop to Daniel Ortega's visit to Europe in April in search of desperately needed economic and diplomatic assistance. Here we publish extracts giving the views of leading Sandinistas on these developments.

DOCUMENTS

"It is necessary to reinforce pluralism"

TOMAS BORGE, Nicaraguan Minister of the Interior, explains here the recent economic measures adopted by the Sandinista government.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY of increasing spending in health and education is objective. Unlike what happens in other social systems, where the absence of social programs is bound up with the nature of these systems, in our case this is against our will...

As for the use of market mechanisms, for a long time the theory of scientific socialism has gone beyond the idea of associating market relations only with capitalism, as if they were totally contrary to socialism. We could go back to Lenin's NEP and other historical instances to show that market and monetary relations are objective conditions. The problem is to use them in a conscious way and prevent them from operating in a blind way...

The danger of a distortion of values

exists. But the National Leadership was able to discern this threat in time. I think that if there is a time when we should be more demanding toward our forces, it is now. Thus, we have to demand a commitment to principles, to austerity, to honesty. If there is a time when we have to confront bureaucracy, egoism and other human deformation, it is now. And only revolution, and in the present case the Sandinista Front, can succeed. The National Leadership has a firm intention to exercise strict vigilance over the personal conduct and ideological purity of members of our organization.

"Economic collaboration is an objective necessity"

From the outset, we expressed our intention to build a mixed economy and political pluralism. The war, which is about to end, made it very difficult to put these aims into practice, but it did not put in question their validity. Now the military defeat of the counter-revolution makes it possible once again to stress these programmatic conceptions in conditions that are still difficult but new. Economic collaboration is an objective necessity of the post-war period. But it is also necessary to reinforce pluralism for the same reasons, because it would not be consistent to look toward implementing only one of these two points....

We think that the fundamental element of democracy is the people, but above all

the working people. Practice has shown us the close inter-relationship that exists between democracy and the working people.

This is the reason for the existence of mass organizations, which are the expression of democracy at a high level. It is strange that these forms of democracy, such as the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS), the workers' organizations, youth organizations and so on are being put in question as para-state organizations.

Democratization should open up new spaces

However, if people think a moment about this, they will conclude that these organizations are the product of authentic democratic action that developed in the struggle against the dictatorship and in the struggle against a backward dependent system. This is very important for the National Leadership, because the democratization efforts are intended to recompose the civil society and its organizations.

Over all these years, in addition to the 1984 elections, the people have exercised democracy and defended the motherland and its sovereignty. The democratization should open up new spaces for initiative by the revolution and the people's organizations. ★

[Barricada, March 7-8, 1989]

Restoration or democratic socialism?

ORLANDO NUNEZ is a Sandinista cadre and an advisor to the FSLN leadership on agrarian reform.

ON THE BASIS of the economic reforms in the socialist world and the collaboration policy in Nicaragua, people have begun talking about an alternative between restoring the previous capitalist system and the transformation possibilities of the socialist model applied in the twentieth century. We think that this alternative is part of the struggle and, facing the threats of restoration, we are inclined to rely on the possibilities of a democratic socialism that would select out the best of state socialism and the need for socialism based on the civil society.

The final stage of capitalism and the first stage of capitalism cross in the state.

Capitalism ages as state capitalism, while socialism is born as state socialism....

The socialist-oriented revolutions in our countries have entailed major state intervention to achieve political, social and economic changes whose urgency appeared in the course of the transformation process. Over time, we have realized that history has changed more rapidly than the economic conditions, and that a dysfunction has occurred between these two processes....

Problems faced by the revolution

Thus, the revolutions in power have had to do violence to their own societies in two respects:

a) State intervention in the economy (nationalization, planning and bureaucratization). The revolutions have done this precisely to transform the social relationships of production from above, given the limitations of the material conditions in which they developed.

b) The intervention of the party in the class (a single hierarchical party, authoritarianism and exclusivity) in order to remedy the previously existing social injustice (exploitation and the domination of one class over another). Often the party has had to serve as the agent for carrying out the tasks of popular classes with great socio-cultural limitations.

The points noted before lead us to recognize the existence of two rules, or laws, of socialist-oriented revolutions in underdeveloped countries.

a) If the transformation of the social relationships (political changes) goes faster than the development of the productive forces (material conditions), this gap will ultimately wipe out the changes and set back development.

b) If the degree of intervention by the state in the economy and by the party in the class is greater than the state's management capacity and popular participation, the gap arising will ultimately limit social and popular supervision of the state and set back democratization of the society.

All this has been necessary, and we believe that where socialist-oriented revolutions occur in a context of underdevelopment, we will see similar processes. However, it is also a good thing to become familiar with the limitations and contradictions of the first stage of such revolutions, and it is still better if we know how to surmount these conditions without abandoning the revolutionary and socialist road, as we are experiencing through the processes of rectification, *perestroika-glasnost*, reforms and so on.

Once socialist-oriented revolutions have completed their first stage, excluding the bourgeoisie from power and gaining economic and political hegemony for the people's state, they... must prepare themselves to open the way for the inde-

pendence of the civil society from the state and for general self-management of the popular classes in all arenas of cultural, economic and social life. In other words, this means moving on from state socialism to a community socialism, which would not eliminate the role of the state but would regulate it so that the adjustment processes would not lead us to the restoration of the free-enterprise economy and bourgeois democracy....

Sandinism, as a conception and as the practice of a mixed economy, of political pluralism and non-alignment makes possible a transition from one model of socialism to the other:

a) Radical transformations in the state and economy have created the objective conditions making possible revolutionary hegemony.

b) The FSLN's nature as a vanguard party, as a front of revolutionary unity and national unity.

c) The process of autonomy for the Atlantic Coast communities.

d) The massive participation of the people in defense.

e) The process of liberating women in the countryside and in the cities.

f) The broad and majority character, from the standpoint of production, of our popular classes (peasants, workers, tradespeople, and so on).

g) The immense experience of popular participation of all social, political, economic and cultural sectors of Nicaraguan society — peasant cooperatives, trade unions, Sandinista Defense Committees, health-service brigades, people's education collectives, associations, regional councils of all sorts, self-defense cooperatives, producers' associations, peasants' stores, women's stores, popular cultural centers, base groups of all religions, trading cooperatives, community movements, and so on.

A continuous campaign of education

Guaranteeing the transition involves the following: Reinforcing the class consciousness of the Nicaraguan people against the bourgeoisie and imperialism. Consolidating the previous transformations. Guaranteeing that the decentralization of the state coincides with the recovery by the civil society (the organized people) of all those state functions that can be taken over by community blocs, and the organization and advancement of all possible forms of association and cooperation among all the social, economic and cultural sectors of society. The launching of a continuous campaign of education, propaganda and dissemination of the new values of solidarity and cooperation against the old values of competition and aggressiveness in social relations. The advancing of Sandinism as a socialist alternative to the crisis of capitalism, and of state socialism....

This can be one of the ways of clearing away the positions of all those who, basing themselves on *perestroika* and on the processes of adjustment and stabilization underway, have raised the flags of scepticism, defeatism, demoralization, passive dissidence or petty-bourgeois reformism or the spirit of restoration and counter-reform.

We have to fight to show why things are the way they are, that it is capitalism that is in crisis and that state (authoritarian, developmentalist and bureaucratic) socialism is not enough to confront this crisis, and so we have to complement it by committing ourselves to democratic, decentralized socialism to the fullest extent possible, in which the civil society and the people will regain their independence and adjust it to modern conditions. ★

[*Barricada*, March 31-April 1, 1989.]

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Interview with Filipino Labor Leader

Roberto Ortaliz is the general secretary of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), the largest labor federation in the Philippines. After attending the Labor Notes conference in Detroit last May, he came to New York where he addressed a labor-hosted breakfast meeting held for him at Local 1199. During his week here, Ortaliz joined the pickets at Eastern Airlines and Tavern on the Green, a restaurant whose workers have since successfully concluded their strike. The following interview for Bulletin in Defense of Marxism was obtained by Sarah Lovell on May 27, 1989.

Q: Can you give us a little background about yourself and your connection with the labor movement?

A: I am Roberto Ortaliz, general secretary of the KMU — Kilusang Mayo Uno, May First Movement. I come from sugar plantations of Negros island where 60 percent of the sugar in the Philippines is produced. I was lucky. My parents were both schoolteachers, so we brothers and sisters were spared from working in the plantations. I had been a government employee and eventually worked with tax-mandated organizations. Then I participated in the social action activities of the Diocese of Bacolod, that's the capital city of Negros island, and that has been my starting point. I was encouraged by some Columban priests, very close friends, and I got involved with labor. I was able to undertake a 17-day labor seminar, and after that I wanted to organize workers, because in one of the labor seminars I was impressed by the way the laborers articulated their problems and possible solutions to their problems. It was a sort of initiation for me. So in 1971 I got involved with the National Federation of Sugar Workers. And then in 1974 I started organizing. I became vice president of the union in 1974 and became president in 1978 until 1987. I was renominated at the 1988 national convention of the sugar workers union, but since I was then already general secretary of the KMU, I could not hold the two jobs at the same time and I declined the nomination. I have been general secretary of the KMU since 1982. At that time all our labor centers were under attack. About 69 of our leaders and members were placed in jail, and I was appointed acting secretary. I went to the ILO [International Labor Organization of the United Nations] to complain of the harassment by Marcos during that time. And since then I have been general secretary of the KMU.

Q: When was the KMU founded, how did it survive under Marcos, and what were its expectations of the Aquino government?

A: Since its inception on May 1, 1980, the KMU has become the articulator of the economic and political demands of many of our workers. And I would say that the KMU inherited the traditional militant and progressive labor movement in the country and had been in the forefront of the workers' struggle and the people's struggle during Marcos. When the dictator Marcos was ousted in February of 1986, of course we were happy. There was this feeling of euphoria and aspirations and hopes. And we also were aspiring or we were envisioning that the repression and injustices would be ended. But we found out later that there was just a change of personalities in the government. The system is still there, and the structures left behind by the ousted dictator are still

there. As of now we are seeing an escalated attack on the people's organizations and leaders. During the election in 1986 we did not participate. There were democratic discussions; some of our affiliates participated, but the major part of the KMU did not.

Q: How does the KMU compare in size from 1986 until today?

A: Well, I would say we have been growing by leaps and bounds. This year we won a very big certification election in the Atlas copper mines, which is the biggest in all of Asia. There are about 10,000 workers. Last month we won another certification election in pineapple plantations of Dole, about 8,000-9,000 workers. And we also won in the certification election of the brewery workers of the San Miguel Brewery, one of the biggest in Asia, also.

Q: What are the current labor policies of the Aquino government, and what are the problems that you face?

A: As you know, the economic policies taken by the Cory government, when she took power, are the same economic policies as during Marcos. And because of the huge loans from the IMF and World Bank, which now amount to about \$30 billion, there are also many conditions and impositions. So in terms of labor policies, there is the so-called wage freeze policy. The wage now of industrial workers is about \$3.57 a day to \$4.00, if implemented. For the agricultural workers, it is about \$2.20 or less, also if implemented. And the poverty threshold of a family of six, which is the average Filipino family, is about \$8.00 a day. So our minimum wage is just a starvation wage. Of course, the trade union repression now in the country is more subtle, very sophisticated, and even institutionalized. There is collusion between corporations and the government and between the government and some of our trade unions. And in terms of human rights violations we had experienced a great many during Marcos, but now I would say, compared to the last two years of Marcos, the human rights violations have tripled or even quadrupled. And the proliferation of vigilantes or death squads is all over the country. They have been harassing progressive and militant trade unions. There are rampant illegal arrests, detentions, tortures, involuntary disappearances, and the so-called "salvagings." "Salvage" is military parlance for summary execution.

What's happening now? From the start we had demanded that this "democratic" government repeal all the anti-worker laws which were promulgated during Marcos, and this was promised to us during the first May Day celebration of the first year of this new government. But nothing has been repealed; nothing has been amended. And the irony is that

the anti-worker laws promulgated during Marcos were integrated into a new labor code which is even more repressive than that of Marcos. The new government, which initially promised to be the exact opposite of Marcos, is now getting worse than the old.

Q: Is there any labor group that still supports the Aquino government?

A: Well, like everything else, the labor movement in the country is also fragmented. During Marcos there was the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), which was set up by Marcos. And it was common knowledge that it was helped by the CIA and the AFL-CIO; during Marcos this was the only labor center recognized by them. As Marcos lost his credibility, so did this labor center, and it was considered a moribund organization. But its leader was elected senator [to the current Congress of the Philippines], so it is more or less very cooperative toward the government. And there are some small independent federations that are more or less pro-Aquino. But as events taught us: because of the social, economic, and political processes which are unfolding now many of them got frustrated and now they are joining the militant and progressive bloc of the labor movement.

Q: The AFL-CIO has supported the TUCP in the past. Does it continue to do so now?

A: As I was saying, the AFL-CIO has been supporting the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines. In fact, in 1985 there was an exposé in the *San Francisco Examiner* about this. There was supposed to be about \$3 million from the National Endowment for Democracy Fund of the U.S. Congress, which was given to the TUCP by way of the AFL-CIO's AAFLI (Asian-American Free Labor Institute). And this year there is a very reliable source which informs us that some amount was given by AFSCME (American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees) to the TUCP, supposedly to help organize teachers and other public workers. So there is ongoing help from the AFL-CIO.

Q: And what is its attitude toward the KMU?

A: Well, their attitude is one of accusation. First, that we are not a union. We are a union. In fact, we have about twice or even three times as many collective bargaining agreements as those of the supported federation. And the second accusation is that we are a communist-front organization. What I say, if articulation of nationalist and democratic demands could be considered as communist, okay, so be it. And well, they would say, the KMU is too political in its actions and words. Basing ourselves on the objective condition of the country, we know we are controlled politically, economically, culturally, and even militarily. Our aspiration is for a free and democratic Philippines, meaning we have to be free from foreign control and domination, especially this interventionist policy of the U.S. So, together with our economic and democratic struggles we have to be political, and we are involving sectors of Philippine society for changes, not palliative reforms.

During the initial months of this new government, we had great hopes, because one of those people appointed in the Cabinet was a very pro-labor minister, Agosto Sanchez. But because of his pro-labor stance he was eventually kicked out. And it is an irony that the assassination [November 13, 1986]

of my late chairman Rolando Olalia was the result of his pronouncement defending this new government, because there were rumors of coup d'état in the initial months of this new government. And my late chairman said that we would call a nationwide general strike if there would be such an event, and he was killed for that. Many leaders of people's organizations were murdered or just disappeared; these people had survived the repression during Marcos but were killed during this democratic government, this regime.

Q: How do you relate to other union centers, the peasant organizations, and to mass organizations like BAYAN and the National Democratic Front?

A: First, BAYAN is a multisectoral umbrella organization, and KMU is in the forefront. In our struggle as workers we have to unite with all sectors of society to obtain our goal. That's why we are engaged in a mass national democratic trade union center. National because we want to be free from control and domination of foreign interests. Democratic in that we are involving sectors of Philippine society in this kind of struggle, and we are envisioning a society that is run by the sectors of Philippine society participating in it. Regarding links with the National Democratic Front—we have been accused of that. But we do not have links with the National Democratic Front, because it is an underground movement, and we are legal. It is the reality that there is a national democratic movement in the country, a struggle going on in the country. And the borderline between the legal and the underground is just a thin borderline I would say.

Q: Would the KMU, if it were possible, consider running candidates for office in the Philippines?

A: Yes. But I would say it depends on political developments. I would say as of now we would not participate in electoral struggles. The composition of the present Congress is just landlords and big businesspeople. It's the same system which Marcos had left, just a change of names and personalities, and it is also an irony that many of the so-called Marcos loyalists are now in the government.

Q: You spoke before about the terrible human rights violations that have escalated under the Aquino regime. This is scarcely mentioned in the media here. How do you think this can be corrected?

A: The U.S. government has a big stake in our country, politically and economically, so that the projection of this new government is that it is a liberal-democratic government. But there is a news blackout in your country. It seems the real news is not told here. The projection here of the new government is that, well, we have to support this little lady because she has so many problems inherited from Marcos, and that there would be a communist takeover of that country if we do not help this little lady. But I would say communism is not the problem in the country. It is, I would say, the disparity in the distribution of the wealth of the country, because there are a few elite families who control the country. The vast majority of my people live in dire poverty. We want this changed. I would say that this is a very difficult process, because the ruling class of the country really doesn't want to change the status quo and because

(Continued on inside back cover)

OBITUARY

CLR James, writer and revolutionary

WITHIN the space of two months, death has removed from the scene two of the outstanding pioneers of Trotskyism in Britain — Harry Wicks in April [see p.26] and now CLR James. But while Harry remained a convinced Trotskyist all his life, James developed political and philosophical conceptions of his own which led him away from Trotskyism.

CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN

BORN in Trinidad in 1901, James' first interest was cricket — a sport once considered quintessentially English, but which his native Caribbean has long made its own. In the heated political debates that followed the First World War, James was caught up in the mounting criticism of the colonial regime. He was particularly drawn to the popular movement led by the Mayor of Port of Spain, Andre Cipriani. One of his earliest political writings was a biography of Cipriani, later published in a revised version as *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*.

Lancashire workers were his educators

In 1932 James arrived in England, settling in Nelson, a Lancashire town [in the north of England] with strong radical traditions. The industrial disputes that were going on at the time were to leave a lasting impression. As he was to say later, the Lancashire workers were his educators in the class struggle.

It was in Lancashire that he read Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, which led him on to the study of Marx, Engels and Lenin. From then on, James identified himself with the socialist revolution. He joined the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1934, where he was active in the Trotskyist Marxist Workers' Group, becoming their foremost polemicist.

Those of us who were around in those days can still remember his tall, striking figure and his fiery denunciations of Stalinism. Only once did the Communist Party pluck up courage to engage him in debate. In Islington Library in North London, he devastated the CP Speaker, Pat Sloan, himself no mean orator.

James displayed his qualities as a speaker and writer to particular effect

after Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia. His articles in the ILP journal *New Leader*, cutting through all the cant of the League of Nations, were among the best agitational material that he ever wrote. At the ILP's annual conference in Keighley, he succeeded in winning support for the line of workers' sanctions.

In 1936 his *World Revolution 1917-1934* was published. This was the first comprehensive study of the rise of the Communist (Third) International under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky and its subsequent fall under Stalin. Trotsky commented that it was a good book but that the author did not understand dialectics. This rankled with James and led him to an intense study of Hegelian methodology. The result was his *Notes on Dialectics*, in which he argues that it was Trotsky who misunderstood the dialectic and that his philosophy of history was flawed.

With Harry Wicks, Reg Groves, Henry Sara and others, James played a prominent part in the Trotsky Defence Committee, which was set up to counter the avalanche of falsehoods coming out of the Moscow Trials. Although he continued to play a role in Trotskyist circles he increasingly concentrated on writing and research.

A classic study of the first slave revolt in history

A novel about West Indian Barrack-yard life, *Minty Alley*, was published in 1936 and he was working on his magnum opus, his study of the first successful slave uprising in history, the Santo Domingo revolt.

The Black Jacobins is now acknowledged as the classic study of that epoch-making event. In 1938 he also published *A History of Negro Revolt*. After the unification of most of the British Trotskyist

groupings in 1938, James was one of the delegates to the Founding Conference of the Fourth International and was elected onto the International Executive Committee. In 1938, James left Britain for the United States and immediately plunged into the work of the American Trotskyist organization, the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), concentrating particularly on issues affecting Blacks. He spent some weeks with Trotsky in Mexico, where they discussed the question of an autonomous Black movement. Within the SWP he fought for a turn towards Black people.

A living legend in his later years

The outbreak of World War II and the crisis in the SWP over its position on the Soviet Union led James to develop his differences with Trotsky. For James, the signing of the Stalin-Hitler Pact was the conclusive evidence that the Soviet Union was no longer a workers' state which had to be defended. In collaboration with Raya Dunayevskaya, he formed the Johnson-Forest tendency, which developed theoretical positions that took them further and further away from the positions of Trotsky and the Fourth International. They argued that the Stalinist parties outside the Soviet Union were not the "tools of the Kremlin" but were "an organic product of the mode of capitalism at this stage". The Soviet Union was not a deformed workers' state in which the bureaucracy had usurped state power but state capitalist. His break with Trotskyism was now complete.

James was also active in support of the growing revolt against colonial rule, especially in Africa. Kwame Nkrumah was a protege of his and he was hopeful that Nkrumah would head the fight for a free and socialist Africa. He did not hesitate to break with Nkrumah when he saw where he was going.

In his later years CLR — as he was universally called — became something of a living legend. His room in Brixton in South London became a place of pilgrimage for Black revolutionaries from all over the world. His interests were widespread and cosmopolitan. A passionate love for Shakespeare and Beethoven vied with his devotion to cricket and his continued interest in revolutionary politics.

He remained an optimist all his life. On his 80th birthday, he told a young audience in Chicago:

"I will live to see the South African revolution. I don't think I will live to see the American revolution, but when you make your revolution I will find some way of coming to join you."

That revolutionary optimism, that unshakeable belief in the future of humanity was the characteristic which best sums up CLR James — thinker, writer, revolutionary. ★

From the Arsenal of Marxism

C.L.R. James has a well-deserved reputation as one of the most significant Marxist theorists to arise in the Americas. He also pioneered in developing insights into the history and theory of Pan-Africanism and the Afro-American experience.

For close to 15 years, James was an important figure in the Trotskyist movement in Britain, in the United States, and as a founding member of the Fourth International. Under the name "J.R. Johnson," and later "J. Meyer," he played a leading role in the Socialist Workers Party in the 1930s and '40s. When the SWP split in 1940, James temporarily joined the split-off led by Max Shachtman; as the Shachtmanites drifted in a rightward direction in the late 1940s, James led a sizable group back into the SWP.

*After James left the Trotskyist movement in the early 1950s (in part, over disagreements on how to characterize the USSR and People's Republic of China), he resisted the conservative drift affecting many intellectuals and continued to contribute ideas to the radical movement. The works which he produced in his Trotskyist years — his classic history of the Haitian revolution, *Black Jacobins*, his valuable study *World Revolution, 1917-1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International*, along with numerous articles and essays — remain an important resource for revolutionary socialists.*

*His initial research and analyses, combined with key discussions between James and Trotsky, resulted in the innovative perspective on Black nationalism presented in *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, edited by George Breitman. The essay we are producing here was first published in the December 1939 issue of the Socialist Workers Party's theoretical magazine *New International*.*

Revolution and the Negro

by C.L.R. James

The Negro's revolutionary history is rich, inspiring, and unknown. Negroes revolted against the slave raiders in Africa; they revolted against the slave traders on the Atlantic passage. They revolted on the plantations.

The docile Negro is a myth. Slaves on slave ships jumped overboard, went on vast hunger strikes, attacked the crews. There are records of slaves overcoming the crew and taking the ship into harbor, a feat of tremendous revolutionary daring. In British Guiana during the eighteenth century the Negro slaves revolted, seized the Dutch colony, and held it for years. They withdrew to the interior, forced the whites to sign a treaty of peace, and have remained free to this day. Every West Indian colony, particularly Jamaica and San Domingo and Cuba, the largest islands, had its settlements of maroons, bold Negroes who had fled into the wilds and organized themselves to defend their freedom. In Jamaica the British government, after vainly trying to suppress them, accepted their existence by treaties of peace, scrupulously observed by both sides over many years, and then broken by British treachery. In America the Negroes made nearly 150 distinct revolts against slavery. The only place where Negroes did not revolt is in the pages of capitalist historians. All this revolutionary history can come as a surprise only to those who, whatever International they belong to, whether Second, Third, or Fourth, have not yet ejected from their systems the pertinacious lies of Anglo-Saxon capitalism. It is not strange that the Negroes revolted. It would have been strange if they had not.

But the Fourth International, whose business is revolution, has not to prove that Negroes were or are as revolutionary

as any group of oppressed people. That has its place in agitation. What we as Marxists have to see is the tremendous role played by Negroes in the transformation of Western civilization from feudalism to capitalism. It is only from this vantage ground that we shall be able to appreciate (and prepare for) the still greater role they must of necessity play in the transition from capitalism to socialism.

What are the decisive dates in the modern history of Great Britain, France, and America? 1789, the beginning of the French Revolution; 1832, the passing of the Reform Bill in Britain; and 1865, the crushing of the slave power in America by the Northern states. Each of these dates marks a definitive stage in the transition from feudal to capitalist society. The exploitation of millions of Negroes had been a basic factor in the economic development of each of these three nations. It was reasonable, therefore, to expect the Negro question to play no less an important role in the resolution of the problems that faced each society. No one in the prerevolutionary days, however, even faintly foresaw the magnitude of the contributions the Negroes were to make. Today Marxists have far less excuse for falling into the same mistake.

The Negro and the French Revolution

The French Revolution was a bourgeois revolution, and the basis of bourgeois wealth was the slave trade and the slave plantations in the colonies. Let there be no mistake about this. "Sad irony of human history," says Jaurès, "the fortunes created at Bordeaux, at Nantes by the slave trade gave to the bourgeoisie that pride which needed liberty and

contributed to human emancipation.” And Gaston-Martin, the historian of the slave trade, sums up thus: though the bourgeoisie traded in other things than slaves, upon the success or failure of the traffic everything else depended. Therefore when the bourgeoisie proclaimed the Rights of Man in general, with necessary reservations, one of these was that these rights should not extend to the French colonies. In 1789 the French colonial trade was eleven million pounds, two-thirds of the overseas trade of France. British colonial trade at that time was only five million pounds. What price French abolition? There was an abolitionist society to which Brissot, Robespierre, Mirabeau, Lafayette, Condorcet, and many such famous men belonged even before 1789. But liberals are liberal. Face to face with the revolution, they were ready to compromise. They would leave the half million slaves in their slavery, but at least the Mulattoes, men of property (including slaves) and education, should be given equal rights with the white colonials. The white colonial magnates refused concessions and they were people to be reckoned with, aristocrats by birth or marriage, bourgeois by their trade connections with the maritime bourgeoisie. They opposed all change in the colonies that would diminish their social and political domination. The maritime bourgeoisie, concerned about their millions of investments, supported the colonials, and against eleven million pounds of trade per year the radical politicians were helpless. It was the revolution that kicked them from behind and forced them forward.

First of all the revolution in France. The Girondins, right wing of the Jacobin club, overthrew the pro-royalist Feuillants and came to power in March 1792.

And secondly the revolution in the colonies. The Mulattoes in San Domingo revolted in 1790, followed a few months later by the slave revolt in August 1791. On April 4, 1792, the Girondins granted political and social rights to the Mulattoes. The big bourgeoisie agreed, for the colonial aristocrats, after vainly trying to win Mulatto support for independence, decided to hand the colony over to Britain rather than tolerate interference with their system. All these slave owners, French nobility and French bourgeoisie, colonial aristocrats and Mulattoes, were agreed that the slave revolt should be suppressed and the slaves remain in their slavery.

The slaves, however, refused to listen to threats, and no promises were made to them. Led from beginning to end by men who had themselves been slaves and were unable to read or write, they fought one of the greatest revolutionary battles in history. Before the revolution they had seemed subhuman. Many a slave had to be whipped before he could be got to move from where he sat. The revolution transformed them into heroes.

The island of San Domingo was divided into two colonies, one French, the other Spanish. The colonial government of the Spanish Bourbons supported the slaves in their revolt against the French republic, and many rebel bands took service with the Spaniards. The French colonials invited Pitt to take over the colony, and when war was declared between France and England in 1793, the English invaded the island.

The English expedition, welcomed by all the white colonials, captured town after town in the south and west of French San Domingo. The Spaniards, operating with the famous Toussaint Louverture, an ex-slave, at the head of four

thousand black troops, invaded the colony from the east. British and Spaniards were gobbling up as much as they could before the time for sharing came. “In these matters,” wrote the British minister, Dundas, to the governor of Jamaica, “the more we have, the better our pretensions.” On June 4th, Port-au-Prince, the capital of San Domingo, fell. Meanwhile another British expedition had captured Martinique, Guadeloupe, and the other French islands. Barring a miracle, the colonial trade of France, the richest in the world, was in the hands of her enemies and would be used against the revolution. But here the French masses took a hand.

August 10, 1792, was the beginning of the revolution triumphant in France. The Paris masses and their supporters all over France, in 1789 indifferent to the colonial question, were now striking in revolutionary frenzy at every abuse of the old regime and none of the former tyrants were so hated as the “aristocrats of the skin.” Revolutionary generosity, resentment at the betrayal of the colonies to the enemies of the revolution, impotence in the face of the British navy—these swept the Convention off its feet. On February 4, 1794, without a debate, it decreed the abolition of Negro slavery and at last gave its sanction to the black revolt.

The news trickled through somehow to the French West Indies. Victor Hugues, a Mulatto, one of the great personalities produced by the revolution, managed to break through the British blockade and carried the official notice of the manumission to the Mulattoes and blacks of the West Indian islands. Then occurred the miracle. The blacks and Mulattoes dressed themselves in the revolutionary colors and, singing revolutionary songs, they turned on the British and Spaniards, their allies of yesterday. With little more from revolutionary France than its moral support, they drove the British and Spaniards from their conquests and carried the war into enemy territory. The British, after five years of trying to reconquer the French colonies, were finally driven out in 1798.

Few know the magnitude and the importance of that defeat sustained at the hands of Victor Hugues in the smaller islands and of Toussaint Louverture and Rigaud in San Domingo. Fortescue, the Tory historian of the British army, estimates the total loss to Britain at 100,000 men. Yet in the whole of the Peninsular War Wellington lost from all causes—killed in battle, sickness, desertions—only 40,000 men. British blood and British treasure were poured out in profusion in the West Indian campaign. This was the reason for Britain’s weakness in Europe during the critical years 1793-1798. Let Fortescue himself speak: “The secret of England’s impotence for the first six years of the war may be said to lie in the two fatal words St. Domingo.” British historians blame chiefly the fever, as if San Domingo was the only place in the world that European imperialism had met fever.

Whatever the neglect or distortions of later historians, the French revolutionaries themselves knew what the Negro question meant to the revolution. The Constituent, the Legislature, and the Convention were repeatedly thrown into disorder by the colonial debates. This had grave repercussions in the internal struggle as well as in the revolutionary defense of the Republic. Says Jaurès, “Undoubtedly but

for the compromises of Barnave and all his party on the colonial question, the general attitude of the Assembly after the flight to Varennes would have been different." Excluding the masses of Paris, no portion of the French empire played, in proportion to its size, so grandiose a role in the French Revolution as the half million blacks and Mulattoes in the remote West Indian islands.

The Black Revolution and World History

The black revolution in San Domingo choked at its source one of the most powerful economic streams of the eighteenth century. With the defeat of the British, the black proletarians defeated the Mulatto Third Estate in a bloody civil war. Immediately after, Bonaparte, representative of the most reactionary elements of the new French bourgeoisie, attempted to restore slavery in San Domingo. The blacks defeated an expedition of some 50,000 men, and with the assistance of the Mulattoes, carried the revolution to its logical conclusion. They changed the name of San Domingo to Haiti and declared the island independent. This black revolution had a profound effect on the struggle for the cessation of the slave trade.

We can trace this close connection best by following the development of abolition in the British Empire. The first great blow at the Tory domination of Britain (and at feudalism in France for that matter) was struck by the Declaration of Independence in 1776. When Jefferson wrote that all men are created equal, he was drawing up the death warrant of feudal society, wherein men were by law divided into unequal classes. Crispus Attucks, the Negro, was the first man killed by the British in the war that followed. It was no isolated or chance phenomenon. The Negroes thought that, in this war for freedom, they could win their own. It has been estimated that of the 30,000 men in Washington's army 4,000 were Negroes. The American bourgeoisie did not want them. They forced themselves in. But San Domingo Negroes fought in the war also.

The French monarchy came to the assistance of the American Revolution. And Negroes from the French colonies pushed themselves into the French expeditionary force. Of the 1,900 French troops who recaptured Savannah, 900 were volunteers from the French colony of San Domingo. Ten years later some of these men—Rigaud, André, Lambert, Beauvais, and others (some say Christophe also)—with their political and military experience will be foremost among the leaders in the San Domingo revolution. Long before Karl Marx wrote, "Workers of the world, unite," the revolution was international.

The loss of the slave-holding American colonies took much cotton out of the ears of the British bourgeoisie. Adam Smith and Arthur Young, heralds of the industrial revolution and wage-slavery, were already preaching against the waste of chattel-slavery. Deaf up to 1783, the British bourgeois now heard, and looked again at the West Indies. Their own colonies were bankrupt. They were losing the slave trade to French and British rivals. And half the French slaves that they brought were going to San Domingo, the India of the eighteenth century. Why should they continue to do this? In three years, the first abolitionist society was formed and Pitt

began to clamor for the abolition of slavery—"for the sake of humanity, no doubt," says Gaston-Martin, "but also, be it well understood, to ruin French commerce." With the war of 1793, Pitt, cherishing a prospect of winning San Domingo, piped down on abolition. But the black revolution killed the aspirations of both France and Britain.

The Treaty of Vienna in 1814 gave to France the right to recapture San Domingo: the Haitians swore that they would rather destroy the island. With the abandonment of the hopes for regaining San Domingo, the British abolished the slave trade in 1807. America followed in 1808.

If the East Indian interest in Britain was one of the great financial arsenals of the new bourgeoisie (whence the diatribes of Burke, Whig spokesman, against Hastings and Clive), the West Indian interest, though never so powerful as in France, was a cornerstone of the feudal oligarchy. The loss of America was the beginning of their decline. But for the black revolution, San Domingo would have strengthened them enormously. The reformist British bourgeoisie belabored them, the weakest link in the oligarchic chain. A great slave revolt in Jamaica in 1831 helped to convince those who had doubts. In Britain "Better emancipation from above than from below" anticipated the tsar by thirty years. One of the first acts of the victorious reformers was to abolish slavery in the British colonies. But for the black revolution in San Domingo, abolition and emancipation might have been postponed another thirty years.

Abolition did not come to France until the revolution of 1848. The production of beet sugar, introduced into France by Bonaparte, grew by leaps and bounds, and placed the cane sugar interests, based on slavery in Martinique and Guadeloupe, increasingly on the defensive. One of the first acts of the revolutionary government of 1848 was to abolish slavery. But as in 1794, the decree was merely the registration of an accomplished fact. So menacing was the attitude of the slaves that in more than one colony the local government, in order to head off the servile revolution, proclaimed abolition without waiting for authorization from France.

The Negro and the Civil War

1848, the year following the economic crisis of 1847, was the beginning of a new cycle of revolutions all over the Western world. The European revolutions, Chartism in England, were defeated. In America the irrepressible conflict between capitalism in the North and the slave system in the South was headed off for the last time by the Missouri Compromise of 1850. The political developments following the economic crisis of 1857 made further compromise impossible.

It was a decade of revolutionary struggle the world over in the colonial and semicolonial countries. 1857 was the year of the first war of Indian independence, commonly miscalled the Indian Mutiny. In 1858 began the civil war in Mexico, which ended with the victory of Juarez three years later. It was the period of the Taiping revolution in China, the first great attempt to break the power of the Manchu dynasty. North and South in America moved to their predestined clash unwillingly, but the revolutionary Negroes helped to precipitate the issue. For two decades

before the Civil War began, they were leaving the South in thousands. The revolutionary organization known as the Underground Railway, with daring, efficiency and dispatch, drained away the slave owners' human property. Fugitive slaves were the issue of the day. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was a last desperate attempt by the federal government to stop this illegal abolition. Ten Northern states replied with personal liberty laws which nullified the heavy penalties of the 1850 law. Most famous perhaps of all the whites and Negroes who ran the Underground Railway is Harriet Tubman, a Negro who had herself escaped from slavery. She made nineteen journeys into the South and helped her brothers and their wives and three hundred other slaves to escape. She made her depredations in enemy territory with a price of \$40,000 on her head. Josiah Henson, the original of Uncle Tom, helped nearly two hundred slaves to escape. Nothing so galled the slave owners as this twenty-year drain on their already bankrupt economic system.

It is unnecessary to detail here the causes of this, the greatest civil war in history. Every Negro schoolboy knows that the last thing Lincoln had in mind was the emancipation of Negroes. What is important is that, for reasons both internal and external, Lincoln had to draw them into the revolutionary struggle. He said that without emancipation the North might not have won, and he was in all probability right. Thousands of Negroes were fighting on the Southern side, hoping to win their freedom that way. The abolition decree broke down the social cohesion of the South. It was not only what the North gained but, as Lincoln pointed out, what the South lost. On the Northern side 220,000 Negroes fought with such bravery that it was impossible to do with white troops what could be done with them. They fought not only with revolutionary bravery but with coolness and exemplary discipline. The best of them were filled with revolutionary pride. They were fighting for equality. One company stacked arms before the tent of its commanding officer as a protest against discrimination.

Lincoln was also driven to abolition by the pressure of the British working class. Palmerston wanted to intervene on the side of the South but was opposed in the cabinet by Gladstone. Led by Marx, the British working class so vigorously opposed the war that it was impossible to hold a prowar meeting anywhere in England. The British Tories derided the claim that the war was for the abolition of slavery: hadn't Lincoln said so many times? The British workers, however, insisted on seeing the war as a war for abolition, and Lincoln, for whom British nonintervention was a life and death matter, decreed abolition with a suddenness which shows his fundamental unwillingness to take such a revolutionary step.

Abolition was declared in 1863. Two years before, the movement of the Russian peasants, so joyfully hailed by Marx, frightened the tsar into the semiemancipation of the serfs. The North won its victory in 1865. Two years later the British workers won the Second Reform Bill, which gave the franchise to the workers in the towns. The revolutionary cycle was concluded with the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871. A victory there and the history of Reconstruction would have been far different.

Between 1871 and 1905 the proletarian revolution was dormant. In Africa the Negroes fought vainly to maintain their independence against the imperialist invasions. But the Russian Revolution of 1905 was the forerunner of a new era that began with the October Revolution in 1917. While half a million Negroes fought with the French Revolution in 1789, today the socialist revolution in Europe has as its potential allies over 120 million Negroes in Africa. Where Lincoln had to seek an alliance with an isolated slave population, today millions of Negroes in America have penetrated deep into industry, have fought side by side with white workers on picket lines, have helped to barricade factories for sit-down strikes, have played their part in the struggles and clashes of trade unions and political parties. It is only through the spectacles of historical perspective that we can fully appreciate the enormous revolutionary potentialities of the Negro masses today.

Half a million slaves, hearing the words Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity shouted by millions of Frenchmen many thousands of miles away, awoke from their apathy. They occupied the attention of Britain for six years and, once again to quote Fortescue, "practically destroyed the British army." What of the Negroes in Africa today? This is a bare outline of the record.

French West Africa: 1926-1929, 10,000 men fled into the forest swamps to escape French slavery.

French Equatorial Africa: 1924, uprising. 1924-1925, uprising, 1,000 Negroes killed. 1928, June to November, rising in Upper Sangha and Lai. 1929, a rising lasting four months; the Africans organized an army of 10,000.

British West Africa: 1929, a revolt of women in Nigeria, 30,000 in number; 83 killed, 87 wounded. 1937, general strike of the Gold Coast farmers, joined by the dockers and truck drivers.

Belgian Congo: 1929, revolt in Ruanda Urundi; thousands killed. 1930-1931, revolt of the Bapendi; 800 massacred in one place, Kwango.

South Africa: 1929, strikes and riots in Durban; the Negro quarter was entirely surrounded by troops and bombarded by planes.

Since 1935 there have been general strikes, with shooting of Negroes, in Rhodesia, in Madagascar, in Zanzibar. In the West Indies there have been general strikes and mass action such as those islands have not seen since the emancipation from slavery a hundred years ago. Scores have been killed and wounded.

The above is only a random selection. The Negroes in Africa are caged and beat against the bars continually. It is the European proletariat that holds the key. Let the workers of Britain, France, and Germany say, "Arise, ye children of starvation" as loudly as the French revolutionaries said Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity and what force on earth can hold these Negroes back? All who know anything about Africa know this.

Mr. Norman Leys, a government medical officer in Kenya for twenty years, a member of the British Labor Party, and about as revolutionary as the late Ramsay MacDonald, wrote a study of Kenya in 1924. Seven years later he wrote again.

This time he entitled his book *A Last Chance in Kenya*. The alternative, he said, is revolution.

In *Caliban in Africa*, Leonard Barnes, another milk and water socialist, writes as follows: "So he [the South African white] and the native he holds captive go spinning down the stream fatally, madly spinning together along the rapids above the great cataract, both yoked to one omnipotent hour." That is the revolution, wrapped in silver paper.

The revolution haunts this conservative Englishman. He writes again of the Bantu, "They crouch in their corner, nursing a sullen anger and desperately groping for a plan. They will not be many years making up their minds. Time and fate, even more prevailing than the portcullis of the Afrikaner, are driving them on from the rear. Something must give; it will not be fate or time. Some comprehensive social and economic reconstruction must take place. But how? By reason or by violence? . . ."

He poses as alternatives what are in reality one. The change will take place, by violence and by reason combined.

'We Have a False Idea of the Negro'

Let us return again to the San Domingo revolution with its paltry half a million slaves. Writing in 1789, the very year of the revolution, a colonist said of them that they were "unjust, cruel, barbarous, half-human, treacherous, deceitful, thieves, drunkards, proud, lazy, unclean, shameless, jealous to fury, and cowards."

Three years later Roume, the French commissioner, noted that even though fighting with the royalist Spaniards, the black revolutionaries, organizing themselves into armed sections and popular bodies, rigidly observed all the forms of republican organization. They adopted slogans and rallying cries. They appointed chiefs of sections and divisions who, by means of these slogans, could call them out and send them back home again from one end of the province to the other. They threw up from out of their depths a soldier and a statesman of the first rank, Toussaint Louverture, and secondary leaders fully able to hold their own with the French in war, diplomacy, and administration. In ten years they organized an army that fought Bonaparte's army on level terms. "But what men these blacks are! How they fight and how they die!" wrote a French officer looking back at the last campaign after forty years. From his dying bed, Leclerc, Bonaparte's brother-in-law and commander-in-chief of the French expedition, wrote home, "We have a false idea of the Negro." And again, "We have in Europe a false idea of the country in which we fight and the men

whom we fight against. . . ." We need to know and reflect on these things today.

Menaced during its whole existence by imperialism, European and American, the Haitians have never been able to overcome the bitter heritage of their past. Yet that revolution of a half million not only helped to protect the French Revolution but initiated great revolutions in its own right. When the Latin American revolutionaries saw that half a million slaves could fight and win, they recognized the reality of their own desire for independence. Bolivar, broken and ill, went to Haiti. The Haitians nursed him back to health, gave him money and arms with which he sailed to the mainland. He was defeated, went back to Haiti, was once more welcomed and assisted. And it was from Haiti that he sailed to start on the final campaign, which ended in the independence of the five states.

Today 150 million Negroes, knit into world economy infinitely more tightly than their ancestors of a hundred years ago, will far surpass the work of that San Domingo half million in the work of social transformation. The continuous risings in Africa; the refusal of the Ethiopian warriors to submit to Mussolini; the American Negroes who volunteered to fight in Spain in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, as Rigaud and Beauvais had volunteered to fight in America, tempering their swords against the enemy abroad for use against the enemy at home—these lightnings announce the thunder. The racial prejudice that now stands in the way will bow before the tremendous impact of the proletarian revolution.

In Flint during the sit-down strike of two years ago seven hundred Southern whites, soaked from infancy in racial prejudice, found themselves besieged in the General Motors building with one Negro among them. When the time came for the first meal, the Negro, knowing who and what his companions were, held himself in the background. Immediately it was proposed that there should be no racial discrimination among the strikers. Seven hundred hands went up together. In the face of the class enemy the men recognized that race prejudice was a subordinate thing which could not be allowed to disrupt their struggle. The Negro was invited to take his seat first, and after the victory was won, in the triumphant march out of the factory, he was given the first place. That is the prognosis of the future. In Africa, in America, in the West Indies, on a national and international scale, the millions of Negroes will raise their heads, rise up from their knees, and write some of the most massive and brilliant chapters in the history of revolutionary socialism. ●

Coming Next Month

Lloyd D'Aguilar will present an assessment of C.L.R. James's life and his contribution to Marxism.

more schooling the woman had, the greater was the use of contraceptives. And the educational level of women went up significantly as more and more U.S. women enrolled in schools, graduated from high schools, and attended colleges. This rise in educational level is directly connected with the urbanization of U.S. society. The dramatic shift in population from the countryside to the city played a significant role in bringing married women into the paid labor force.

The conditions of urbanized women were very different from those of women in a largely rural society. The large families encouraged in an agricultural population are discouraged in an urban population by the necessities and problems of city life. Smaller families make it more possible for both parents to work. The complexities and structures of urban life offer all of its inhabitants a greater variety of choices in what to do with their lives as well as cultivating different social views than those arising in agricultural groups. The economic pressures of city life cannot be relieved by mothers cultivating little garden plots to supplement fathers' paychecks. In the city, the supplement to a wage is another wage.

Economic conditions in the U.S. after World War II made it more and more necessary for wives to add a second income to the family's resources. There's a common misconception that the steep rise of women workers originated during World War II. In fact, the biggest movement of women out of the home and into jobs took place *after* World War II. In 1944, at the peak of their wartime employment, there were around 20 million women in the labor force. This number dropped immediately after the war but then climbed higher and higher. By the middle of the 1950s the wartime peak had been surpassed. By the end of the 1950s the trend was clear: working for wages was becoming a normal part of women's lives; nine out of every ten women would be part of the labor force at some time of their lives.

At the beginning of 1960, close to 23 million women were working. This increase included a greater proportion of married and older women, and mothers with young children. One-third of all women jobholders were mothers, about 60 percent were married, and almost 38 percent were 45 years or older. All of these trends and facts signified a profound change in women's lives.

What did *not* change were the types of jobs held by women and the lower pay scales that went with those jobs. Service employment, clerical jobs, and teaching in elementary schools were still "women's work." The median wage of full-time female workers was about 60 percent of that earned by males.

Women were involved in new life patterns. New possibilities were emerging. But women faced attitudes and practices inherited from thousands of years of prejudice against women as a sex. And women were confronting problems created by employers' superexploitation of females as low-wage workers and a reserve labor force to be manipulated in order to maximize profits. But the economic necessity which drove women into the paid labor force also impelled them to fight against the sexist views and policies which kept them at the bottom of the job ladder.

Women Workers Fight Back

Women workers used many weapons in this fight.

The arsenal included new laws won by women and by the Black liberation struggle. There was the 1963 Equal Pay Act, the first federal law prohibiting sex discrimination in the workplace. There was Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act which barred job discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. There were Executive Orders barring discrimination by federal agencies and contractors. There were state equal pay laws and fair employment statutes.

Women all over the country filed complaints and instituted lawsuits both as victimized individuals and as part of class action cases. Between 1965-71, more than \$43 million in back pay and court costs were awarded to over 100,000 women not paid equally for the same work done by men. Of course, this was a tiny portion of the \$34 to \$52 billion women were cheated out of—but the victories resulted in immediate gains for many working women and had a longer-range impact in terms of boosting women's confidence and assertiveness in dealing with bosses.

Women took advantage of affirmative action programs to get jobs and training. In 1969, women's participation in apprenticeship programs jumped 72 percent over the previous year. More than 100 trades were involved in what was called an "invasion" of women into training programs for plumbers, operating engineers, ship fitters, aircraft and auto mechanics, sheet metal workers, machinists, carpenters, and so on.

The fightback spirit of women workers existed before the organized women's liberation movement erupted into national prominence. But the feminist movement encouraged and provided new resources for women battling sexism in the workplace. Established labor organizations paid more attention to the special problems of their female members, and there was an increase in groups formed by women workers. In the early 1970s, union-organized women's conferences were held around the country. In 1974, 3,000 women from 58 unions founded the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). These were some of the signs of the effects produced by the rising flood of women into the paid labor force, and increasing feminist consciousness—even though many women who broke into men-only jobs explained, "I'm not a feminist!"

Another effect of this changing situation was the escalation of demands voiced by women workers. Initially, women called and fought for equal pay for equal work. That remains a key issue—but in the 1980s important victories were won by women suing and unions striking for comparable worth. This issue is crucial for women because they are still trapped in a "pink ghetto" of low-wage jobs. The problem of the gap in earnings between men and women cannot be resolved through equal pay and affirmative action gains alone. As long as the bosses insist on restricting women to low-pay job categories, comparable worth battles will be necessary.

In her report to our last national conference Mary Scully presented a more comprehensive picture of the situation of

women workers in the 1980s. It was published in the June 1988 issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, and I urge you to read it to get a more rounded description and analysis.

Whether we consider the problems of superexploited working women or the oppression of women as a sex, it's obvious that much remains to be done to fulfill the demands of the struggle for women's liberation in the United States. As movement activists, as Marxists, and as an organization of revolutionary socialists, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency has to set its tasks for the period ahead.

F.I.T. Tasks Over the Next Period

1. Each local organizing committee (LOC) needs to review the situation in its city and region, consider the resources and assignments of its members, and determine how best to expand its participation in the women's liberation struggle.

Over the past five years, some comrades have been active in women's rights organizations and activities—but we obviously needed to increase our efforts in response to the dramatic rise in pro-choice activities over the past ten months. And we did respond by participating in and helping to build actions to support abortion rights and defend women's health clinics. This struggle continues to be the main avenue for mobilizing young women. And supporters of women's rights have become activated over this issue to a greater extent than for any other. The crucial nature of a woman's right to control her own body makes this a key struggle for us.

2. We must also be alert to other opportunities for engaging in women's liberation activities. For example, the renewed campaign for an Equal Rights Amendment could attract significant numbers of activists and may prompt mobilizations in the coming period. We should also pay more attention to the new feminist student groups which have arisen recently. A number of campus organizations were formed as part of mobilizing for the April 9 demonstration and they continue to be active.

Some F.I.T. comrades are active in union committees which deal with women's rights. The demand for comparable worth has been and continues to be a significant feature of union struggles as well as an issue raised by the women's rights movement. Over the past year increased attention has been paid to what is called "family issues"—demands for parental leaves, child care, and disability pay for pregnancy. Recent Supreme Court rulings on affirmative action issues show that this battlefield has been reopened for women and minority workers fighting against discrimination in employment and training.

3. The question arises: What feminist organizations would be most suitable for pursuing women's liberation activities? From the information received from comrades around the country, we know that there are variations from one city to another in terms of the existence or absence of coalitions or local groups, and the opportunities for serious involvement in chapters of national organizations such as NOW and CLUW.

Given the differences between one city and another, it's not possible to say that everybody should be active in any one

group. Each local organizing committee needs to check out the specific situation in its city and determine where energies can be focused for maximum results.

4. In the immediate period, our national priority activity is to participate in the NOW convention which will take place in Cincinnati July 21-23, and the mass pro-choice demonstration on July 22. As the initiator and organizer of the April 9 mobilization in Washington, D.C., NOW has come to the forefront in a way that has attracted many new activists. As the largest feminist organization in the country, NOW carries considerable authority and can be the determining factor in the strategy and direction of the women's rights movement.

5. LOCs must send information about events and about their own activities to the national center or the women's liberation commission.

F.I.T. members should feel responsible for relaying ideas to the center and the commission. Ideas about activities, about articles and pamphlets we could publish, about classes and forums we can organize, about conferences and meetings we can attend.

Individual F.I.T. members and LOCs should bring issues to the attention of our entire organization, our national center, and our women's liberation commission. One pre-conference discussion article describes differences over strategy and tactics in defending clinics against attacks by Operation Rescue and other anti-choice forces. Such debates should be taken up in an article for *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*—and reprinted as a valuable addition to our literature tables. Comrades should also write reports on various debates which take place in local coalitions and organizations, and these can be published in our internal information and discussion bulletins or sent out in mailings.

6. Our national center and women's liberation commission must promptly circulate information received from comrades as well as from other sources. This can be done through the F.I.T. Information Letter, mailings, internal bulletins, and *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.

7. All members should help provide materials to the publications committee so that we can have pamphlets and other literature which will attract the attention of the many new people involved in pro-choice and women's rights activities. We need F.I.T. literature for our own educational needs as well as to help educate activists we work with in various groups. We need literature to introduce activists to the basic Marxist approach to the struggle for women's liberation, the history of women's rights battles, and the F.I.T.'s analysis and strategy for current feminist campaigns.

8. We need to keep in close touch with the women's commission of the Fourth International. A point on women is on the agenda of the world congress, and the International Executive Committee has recommended that delegations to the world congress reflect the proportion of women in the sections. We need to continue to follow the work of the women's commission, contribute ideas and materials, and carefully consider the composition of our fraternal delegation to the world congress. ●

Capitalism Gets Its Priorities Straight

by Stuart Brown

Homelessness on the Rise!

Atomic Plants Pollute Environment!

Supreme Court Rules Against Affirmative Action, Anti-Discrimination Laws, and Abortion Rights!

Nation's Largest Oil Spill!

Gap Grows Wider Between Rich and Poor in U.S.!

Depletion of Ozone Layer Detected!

These are the kinds of headlines readers of daily newspapers in cities all across the country have gotten used to in the last few weeks, months, and years. One might think that such problems would stimulate remedial action by the president and Congress of the United States. But the silence from Washington has been deafening.

Then, last June, something really important happened—something that absolutely required urgent attention by our nation's leaders. It demonstrated that they could, indeed, spring into action when necessary: *The Supreme Court ruled that burning the American flag was a legitimate exercise of free speech and expression.* Now there's a threat to the very fabric of our nation!

George Bush immediately declared himself in favor of a constitutional amendment to rectify this terrible injustice. Congressmen, senators, governors of states, all jumped in with their own ideas on how to protect the Stars and Stripes from desecration. Some agree that we have to amend the Constitution. Others think that simply passing new legislation will suffice. But all are in accord that this is the most urgent of questions, requiring a rapid and decisive response from red-blooded Americans. *Protect the flag at all costs!*

And how about protecting women from butcher abortionists?

How about protecting (not to mention expanding) the rights of Blacks and other minorities—which have been fought for and won only by decades of sacrifice and struggle?

How about protecting the environment from nuclear pollution, oil spills, acid rain, ozone depletion, and the greenhouse effect?

How about protecting workers from the rising price of basic necessities such as housing, and guaranteeing that everyone who wants to work can find a decent job at a decent wage?

Well, of course, these things can't be resolved overnight. We'll have to study the problems and see if anything can be done.

* * *

At about the same time that President Bush and the U.S. Congress were turning their attention to the problem of flag burning—the most pressing point on their agenda—a federal judge who presided over the trial of Oliver North also managed to figure out the proper priorities of the capitalist system. In keeping with the norms of bourgeois justice he meted out a stiff dose of . . . probation. North is required by the court to never again lie, cheat, or steal in order to arm the contras in Nicaragua. If he complies with this mandate he will spend not a single day in jail.

If a Black, or Puerto Rican, or Chicano—in any ghetto in the U.S.A.—were to steal even a few hundred dollars, you can be sure that no judge would consider anything less than a prison term. And in the event that a weapon were used in the robbery that prison term would certainly be a long one.

Oliver North tried to steal an entire country away from its rightful owners—the Nicaraguan people. And he used more than one gun in the process. He was an accessory to the murder of literally thousands. Promise not to do it again, Ollie—or at least not to get caught again.

It doesn't pay to be a petty thief—or a petty killer—in this country. Do it big, and wrap yourself in the flag which, by God, we will keep those damn commies from burning, and it will pay off for sure. While the Nicaraguan economy and the Nicaraguan people continue to suffer from the blows dealt to them by North and his cronies, North himself can—as a direct result of his criminal activity—command a hefty speaker's fee for personal appearances. And he doesn't have to give up a single penny in order to compensate his victims.

* * *

The capitalist politicians and courts of the United States have shown once again that they know what the real priorities of this system are—priorities that defend the interests of our country's ruling rich.

It seems to me that it's long past time for working people to begin to get together and set a few priorities of our own. ●

Kutcher Memorial Meeting

I would like to thank all the comrades and friends who sent so many fine personal and political comments on James Kutcher's life for his memorial meeting held April 22nd. Each and every one of them should have been read at the meeting, but due to the time restriction on the hall and the lengthy program of four speakers and the showing of the film *The Case of the Legless Veteran* it was impossible.

A list of all who sent messages follows: Received from outside the U.S.: Pat and Marian Brain, Bob Fink, Gerry Foley, Eileen Gersh, Livio Maitan (for the United Secretariat of the Fourth International), Socialist Challenge/Gauche Socialiste (Canada), Louis Sinclair, Esteban Volkov. Received from the Fourth Internationalist Tendency: Cincinnati Local Organizing Committee (LOC), Cleveland LOC, Paul Le Blanc, Mary Scully, Evelyn Sell, Twin Cities LOC. Received from other Fourth Internationalists (of Socialist Action and Solidarity): Alan Benjamin, Asher Harer, Dave Cooper (for Los Angeles SA), Jeff Mackler and Nat Weinstein, Pat Quinn (for Chicago Solidarity), Adam Shils. From other political groups: Freedom Socialist Party, International Workers Party, League for a Revolutionary Party, U.S. Open Trotskyist Conference. From other individuals: Charles Curtiss, David Keil, Jim Lafferty, Herb Lewin, Roger and Alice McFadden, Howard Petrick, Joseph Rauh, Dan Rosenshine, Della Rossa, Melissa Singler. A message was also received from the Newark Teachers Union, one of the many unions that supported Kutcher's case against the government.

Of these messages only 14 (or excerpts therefrom) were read at the meeting. We regret that the circumstances of the memorial meeting made it impossible to read and/or acknowledge all of the messages.

Dorothea Breitman
New York

Militant Newspaper on China

When reading the *Militant* newspaper after the crackdown on the democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square I was struck by the same problem that Steve Bloom raised in his open letter to members of the Socialist Workers Party (July-August issue, page 9). No mention was made, in that paper's coverage, of the traditional call of the Trotskyist movement for a political revolution in China. What does the SWP think about that now?

But I was struck even further in subsequent weeks when all mention of the Chinese bureaucrats' massacre of workers and students disappeared from the pages of the *Militant*. At a time when the entire radical movement in the U.S. and around the world was discussing these world-

shaking events, and most were denouncing the continuing executions, the newspaper which reflects the views of the U.S. SWP responded with . . . silence!!

How far they have come from the revolutionary organization which I supported throughout the 1970s.

A Careful Reader
New York

Missouri Abortion Case

It is no surprise that a Missouri law provided the most serious challenge so far to the Supreme Court's landmark 1973 decision legalizing abortion.

This was the third anti-abortion law to pass that state's General Assembly which was ruled unconstitutional by lower federal courts and appealed all the way to the Supreme Court. The other two were rejected, but the anti-abortion forces in Missouri remained fanatically devoted to their cause.

Missouri's senators, Jack Danforth and Christopher Bond (Republicans), are anti-abortion, as are six of its nine members in the House of Representatives. The seventh is also anti-abortion, but not sufficiently so to satisfy leaders of the state's "Citizens for Life," an anti-abortion coalition. The governor, John Ashcroft, is adamantly anti-abortion. Four of five other statewide officials are as well and both houses of the state legislature have anti-choice majorities.

These politicians maintain their positions on this subject, or are elected for those positions, because of a powerful and well organized religious right in the state. Twenty-three busloads met at the St. Louis Arch last January 22 for an annual trip to Washington to march against choice, in commemoration of the 1973 decision.

This is one issue which both Missouri's Catholic and fundamentalist Protestant populations can agree upon. That is rare, in a state where anti-Catholic feelings and literature are still openly circulated in southern, fundamentalist, areas.

Governor Ashcroft is from Springfield, home of the Assembly of God, to which he belongs. The attorney general, Bill Webster — the person responsible for pursuing the case in the Supreme Court — is also from Southwest Missouri's Spofford area. This city is the home of Jerry Falwell's alma mater, and the former base for Jim and Tammy Baker, and Jimmy Swaggart.

Obviously, the battle facing pro-choice forces in a state like this is formidable. A national campaign in defense of the right to choose, with events such as the one being planned for November 12 in Washington D.C. is absolutely essential.

Jack Bresee
Kansas City

USSR Miners (Continued from page 13)

birth—they're not born but already they know—that they will be directors and [government] ministers."

He compared the conditions that led to the miners' strike to the conditions that led to the Bolshevik revolution, when the upper classes could not rule and the lower classes couldn't stand any more. "It caused a revolutionary solution," he said.

The idea that a revolution is required—to remove the bureaucracy from power and replace it with a government created and run by working people themselves—is beginning

to percolate in the Soviet Union and in many of the other workers' states where privileged bureaucracies have usurped power. Once this process begins there is the potential for a rapid explosion of consciousness. The next step will be the organization of an alternative political force, a genuine revolutionary proletarian party, which can help to organize a mass struggle for the overthrow of the bureaucrats—to create a workers' state that is truly worthy of the name.

August 5, 1989

Philippines (Continued from page 26)

they're being helped by the U.S. government. Millions of people say that the Philippines could be another Vietnam, could be another El Salvador, or could be another Nicaragua.

One of the purposes of my visit to your country is to try to establish bilateral links with unions here, so that they could be apprised of what is really happening in the country. The KMU believes that there is no border for international solidarity. We believe that an injury to one is an injury to all. That's why we would like to link up with trade unions here so that we could discuss common problems and help one another to solve them. Because we all realize the common enemy is corporate America and corporate Japan, not workers of the "third world" versus workers of the "first world" countries.

Q: Are you receiving some support from organizations in the U.S. labor movement now? What do you envision along these lines?

A: Yes, since 1983 we have been contacting trade unions here. There have been fraternal or bilateral links with some of your trade unions, especially local trade unions. Our plans are that there could be a twinning of unions in factories here which do business in the Philippines and workers who are organized by the KMU. We have the Hormel factory in the Philippines. Kimberly-Clark, Goodrich, Goodyear, you name it, we have it in the country. So, we are planning to forge

union-to-union links, center-to-center links, or whatever possible linkage we can forge. I must say that the best support that the trade unions here have given to the KMU was the recognition by some of your unions of KMU during Marcos's time, because had it not been for that recognition of KMU we could have been destroyed.

National centers affiliated with ICFTU were the first ones to recognize KMU, that is, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, mostly U.S. trade unions.

We have an impending strike in June, a nationwide strike, around the demand of a wage increase of about \$1.50 a day. But I called up last night, and I was informed that the strike started last Thursday, May 24, and about 249 unions have already walked out from their workplaces. And this will culminate either on June 1 or June 2. We need your moral, political, material, or financial support, because the KMU could be outlawed because of this nationwide action. We would need your response, so I would request that if this occurs that some sort of response network be set up, a protest and condemnation.

[The general strike was effective. On June 9 Aquino signed a new wage law raising the daily minimum wage by P25 (US\$1.25). According to the KMU, despite some flaws of the new wage law, the Filipino workers scored a significant victory in securing this wage increase and obtaining immediate action. The former daily minimum wage was P64.]

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