

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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South Africa

Since the deadline for this issue of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, Nelson Mandela has been released from prison and other important events have taken place in South Africa. We will carry a full report and analysis in our next issue.

Response to President De Klerk's Announcements

by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)

February 2, 1990—The struggle of the people of our country has always been to completely end apartheid and build a nonracial, united, and democratic South Africa. We are now seeing the death throes of apartheid and the birth pangs of a new South Africa struggling to be born.

By President De Klerk's and the National Party's standards, today's announcements were far-reaching and courageous. But in terms of the expectations of the majority of South Africans and the world, they fell short of what was needed. While the decision of De Klerk to unban the African National Congress, South African Communist Party, and other organizations is significant, and a victory for the people of South Africa, it still falls far short of the fundamental steps needed to end the political conflict in our country.

The cornerstones of apartheid still remain intact. The Group Areas Act, the Land Act, Population Registration Act, etc., still remain on the statute books. The Internal Security Act, the Public Safety Act, the Suppression of Communism Act, and many other repressive pieces of legislation still prevent free political activity in our country.

What De Klerk has announced still does not create the climate of free political activity called for in the Harare Declaration. An analysis of De Klerk's announcement shows that he has failed to meet six of the package of eight conditions set out in the Harare Declaration, and by the United Nations, as requirements for the commencement of a negotiated settlement to the South African conflict. (See attached table.)

The retention of the State of Emergency, albeit in an amended form, will still be used to crush peaceful democratic protest. This was seen in Johannesburg today when the South African Police used dogs, teargas, and batons to crush the joyful demonstrations of our people, thereby making a mockery of De Klerk's announcement.

De Klerk still has enormous powers under the repressive apartheid laws to rule us by edict, and even reimpose some of the measures which he lifted today.

We have never accepted restrictions placed on us. Our democratic structures will always put forward the political and economic aspirations of our people. At our congress in May 1988, to plan action against restrictions on us and other organizations, we argued that as long as apartheid continued in our country we would be plunged into a civil war and our economy would be ruined. This situation remains essentially unaltered.

South Africa will never know peace as long as our people don't have the right to decide their future. The only solution is for all South Africans, Black and white, to unite and commit themselves to build a nonracial, democratic, and united South Africa. We believe that it is only a democratically elected constituent assembly which can legitimately usher in this South Africa we are all longing for.

There cannot be half-measures at this critical time. What our country needs is a bold, comprehensive initiative to meet these objectives.

We call on De Klerk to release not only Nelson Mandela but to release all political prisoners. MK soldiers are prisoners of war, and if the war is to be ended, then these soldiers should all be freed.

We call on De Klerk to create the conditions of free political activity as enshrined in the Harare Declaration. This will serve as a real platform to forge a permanent and lasting peace.

Until then we call on all South Africans and the international community not to relax the pressure. Step up the struggle against apartheid so that the momentum of change in South Africa is not arrested. If we fail to do so, we will have tragically missed a historical opportunity to end the suffering and conflict in our country. ●

The Extent to Which President De Klerk's February 2 Announcements Meet the Requirements of the Harare Declaration for the Creation of a Climate of Free Political Activity:

Meets the following clauses:

- Ends banning and restrictions of organizations and people. (But still has the power to reban/re-restrict under

the Internal Security Act and the State of Emergency.)

- Ceases political executions. (But only suspended, pending investigation.)

Fails to meet the following clauses:

- Withdrawing troops from the townships.
- Ending the State of Emergency.
- Release of all detainees.
- Ending all repressive legislation, including Internal Security Act, designed

to circumscribe political activity.

Not clear on the following clauses:

- Unconditional release of all political prisoners.
- Ceasing all political trials.

Therefore a climate of free political activity clearly has not been created. Only two of the eight clauses of the Harare Declaration have been met, and even those are not unequivocal.

National Actions Planned for March 24

'End the U.S. War in Central America'

by Keith Mann

Recent developments in the anti-intervention and Central American solidarity movement point to some of the complexities and difficulties—as well as potential—for building a united mass movement in this country capable of ending U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean.

A national meeting of antiwar groups was held on Martin Luther King Day, January 15. That meeting, which was held in a Washington, D.C., church, was attended by around 85 people, with a broad geographical representation. Activists were there from as far away as Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Austin, Texas—though labor participation was extremely modest. The most important action taken was to call for a national day of protest on March 24—the tenth anniversary of the assassination of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero.

The discussion around this initiative was marked by a frank exchange of views on several of the most pressing tactical and strategic questions facing the anti-intervention movement today.

Many of the meeting's participants expressed an interest in conducting a civil disobedience activity as part of the protest. While there was wide agreement as to the political value of such a protest, a sharp disagreement broke out over the timing of the CD and its overall relationship to the demonstration. Some, who eventually won a majority, argued for holding the CD on the same day as the march, and in close physical proximity to the march route. Others argued that while the recent strike by coal miners against the Pittston corporation demonstrated the positive value of such actions, it was important to organize it in such a way as to maximize overall participation for the action as a whole.

Jerry Gordon, a veteran of the movement against the war in Vietnam and a representative of a four-state district of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), spoke to the problems that are raised for the union movement. He argued that his experience has shown how illegal civil disobedience actions too closely identified with legal street demonstrations can create a standoffish attitude among many working people. Workers are willing to demonstrate for a just cause but lack the time and money to engage in activities designed to lead to arrest, court appearances, and fines. Such actions connected too closely with the events themselves give conservative union bureaucrats an excuse to refuse to endorse the demonstration and to fail to mobilize their memberships to participate.

Furthermore, the holding of civil disobedience actions in such close temporal and physical proximity to legal marches also serves to dampen the enthusiasm and cut across the largest possible participation of the sizable Central

American and Caribbean population living in this country. People from these countries are often understandably the most outraged at the criminal role the U.S. plays in their countries. But their often precarious legal and political status as immigrants with political opinions at odds with those of the rulers here justifiably leads them to avoid illegal activity that could result in victimization—including arrest and deportation. It takes little imagination to envisage the treatment that a Salvadoran refugee and opponent of the death squad government of Alfredo Cristiani would receive if returned to that country. It is incumbent on the anti-intervention movement in this country to assure the largest possible turnouts at anti-intervention rallies and demonstrations, and especially to create an environment where Central American and Caribbean nationals can comfortably participate.

This is why civil disobedience events should be, as they traditionally have been, held on a different day, or at least a different time and location, from the march and rally themselves.

The January 15 meeting also took up another important question facing anti-intervention forces. There was a debate around including the demand for a negotiated solution to the civil war in El Salvador as part of the March 24 call. This demand is part of the current strategy of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador. The quest for a peaceful outcome to the conflict that has already resulted in 75,000 Salvadorans killed—mostly by the army and death squads linked to the government—the bad faith of the government at past meetings with the FMLN, and the need to further isolate the death squad government internationally make it clear and understandable why the FMLN would adopt this policy and raise this slogan. However, it is necessary for anti-intervention activists in this country to avoid raising any slogans that cut across the right of self-determination—no matter how well intentioned.

The current Salvadoran government is completely illegitimate—both in the eyes of its own people and as seen by many other countries in Latin America and throughout the world. It rests on an extremely narrow social base of land-owning families and a small capitalist class tied to and dependent on imperialism. Without massive aid from the United States, which has totaled nearly four billion dollars over the last ten years (around 1.5 million dollars a day) much of it in military hardware, this unpopular government would have fallen long ago. A call for a negotiated solution from anti-intervention activists in the U.S. would give backhanded legitimacy to the present Salvadoran government and to the U.S. role. It would reinforce the U.S. imperialist

Panama Coalition Formed in New York

Though not much has been done around March 24 in New York, a new coalition initially formed in response to the U.S. aggression against Panama has been organized. The core members consist of a large number of Central American and Caribbean organizations — mostly Panamanian and Dominican, political and community groups, as well as representatives of Cuban, Puerto Rican, and other organizations including activists from the English-speaking Caribbean. The coalition calls itself the Coalition Against U.S. Intervention in Panama, Latin America, and the Caribbean. It has established a structure, holds regular coalition meetings which have regularly attracted 35-40 participants, and has already succeeded in reaching out to campus antiwar groups with growing success. On February 3, the group held a successful meeting which attracted 200 people to a program entitled "The Intervention Continues." The film *The Fifth Frontier* was shown followed by an update from Panamanian activist Esmerelda Brown and an activist recently returned from Panama. A large meeting is planned for March 17 in a public school in Brooklyn around the theme: "A Day of Solidarity with the People of Panama."

One of the most exciting aspects of this coalition is that unlike most ad hoc coalitions that form around a specific action, this coalition hopes to remain intact for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, there is every indication that this coalition is serious about reaching out to broader forces. It has already expressed an interest in endorsing and, where possible, helping to build, the Romero/March 24 action as well as a recently formed group called the Welcome Mandela Committee. This augurs well for the prospects for building a united democratic, mass anti-intervention movement involving some of the sectors that have often been absent from the movement. There is much work ahead. And as recent events have shown, auspicious beginnings and verbal and written declarations of intent are not always translated into reality; but the potential is clear.

A key task of antiwar activists today is to find a way to create links of political solidarity and practical collaboration between the different wings of the movement as it exists and to draw new forces into the movement.

K.M.

claim that Central America is part of "our backyard" — that George Bush has a right to take part in negotiations over the future of the region.

A similar question arose with regard to Nicaragua before the contras were defeated militarily and politically by the Sandinista government and the Nicaraguan people. In the midst of the destructive U.S. financed contra war, the Nicaraguan government called for negotiations with the United States. As President Daniel Ortega put it, the Sandinistas wanted to deal with the "ringmaster" (the U.S.) and not the "clowns" (the contras). As a way of spotlighting the fact that the contras were nothing more than a mercenary band of murderers and traitors to their people, and that it was a foreign power — the U.S. — that was responsible for their existence, the Sandinistas' call for negotiations with the Yankee government represented a plausible political overture.

It is the right and duty of the Sandinistas to lead their revolution as they see fit. But their tactics for Nicaragua cannot determine the course of our struggle here. A campaign by the North American anti-intervention movement calling for negotiations, rather than for an unambiguous "U.S. Out — No Aid to the Contras!" would have accepted the imperialist claims that it has a right to intervene in the region. Even from the point of view of advancing the Sandinistas' or the FMLN's efforts to secure negotiations, a

demand for the complete withdrawal of U.S. aid and support puts the greatest pressure on Washington.

The greatest help that we can give the revolutions in Central America is to tap the enormous anti-intervention sentiment in this country and opposition to U.S. support for foreign dictators. We need to build a powerful movement in the streets that can reflect that sentiment. Unfortunately, the majority decision at the January 15 meeting to include the demand for a negotiated solution — even though as a secondary demand — is an obstacle to that end.

Another area of discussion and debate centered around the breadth of the call. It was eventually decided that the action would have an overall Central American regional focus. It would center on El Salvador and Nicaragua, but also include as secondary demands the end to the occupation of Panama and no military aid to Guatemala. To the degree that the region as a whole is taken up by the call these are positive developments, but the freshness of the brutal invasion of Panama, and the ongoing occupation of that country, merits more than the small-type notice which the meeting agreed to give it.

The March 24 date had originally been set as a national target at a meeting reported on by Jean Tussey in the December issue of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. That meeting, held in Washington, D.C., October 8, attracted a somewhat smaller turnout than its January counterpart — but a larger representation from the labor movement. Tussey's article referred to the meeting "as a significant advance in the historic process of unifying the movement." Her positive assessment of that gathering was echoed by other experienced antiwar activists who had been favorably impressed by the level of serious political debate, the breadth of the forces involved, and the apparent commitment to action of the participants. A five-person administrative committee was established as well as a larger working committee involving representatives of all national antiwar organizations and local coalitions willing to work on the series of actions proposed as a national calendar by the meeting. A name was also chosen — the National Actions on Central America (NACA).

However, to the disappointment of many activists who looked to the NACA as the potential nucleus of the sort of anti-intervention coalition so badly needed in this country (at minimum, a vehicle to organize some immediate protest against U.S. foreign policy in Central America over the next few months), nearly nothing was actually done to implement the projected actions of the NACA in many key cities — including New York. For all practical purposes, the positive and ambitious plans of the NACA remained a dead letter.

While the NACA plans remained unfulfilled, the murderous character of U.S. foreign policy in the region was once again being revealed for all the world to see. The U.S.-supported contras in Nicaragua stepped up their attacks against unarmed peasants and church workers killing two nuns (including an American) on New Year's Day. Six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and the housekeeper's daughter were murdered in cold blood by a Salvadoran army

(Continued on page 32)

Mexican Auto Workers Under Attack

In our February issue we published a brief report of an armed attack on workers at the Ford Motor Company plant in Cuautitlan, Mexico. The attack continues under various forms. The following updated account is taken from reports by Daniel Cohen in Mexico City.

Mexico City, Feb. 8—Strikers at the Ford plant in Cuautitlan are being replaced by scabs recruited by the Ford Workers Union affiliated to the Mexican Federation of Labor (CTM), culminating a months-long struggle by the 3,500 production workers there to recover wages and bonuses still owed them.

Trouble began last year when the plant management fired most members of the democratically elected executive committee of the local union. Management had the backing of the general secretary of the national Ford Workers Union, Hector Uriarte Martinez. When Ford subsequently announced a 70 percent cut in the Xmas bonus at this plant, the workers appealed to Fidel Velazquez, general secretary of the CTM, for help against Ford's illegal withholding of bonuses and profit-sharing entitlements. They also asked for democratically controlled elections in their national union, supervised by CTM, to oust the corrupt Hector Uriarte.

Velazquez promised help and pretended to open negotiations with Ford. Rumors of a settlement soon circulated. But Velazquez failed to appear for formal confirmation of the agreement. While this turn of events was being explained at the plant site by the shop committee that had met with Velazquez, armed provocateurs attacked the workers.

On Friday, January 5, thugs beat six workers outside the plant and 15 inside. Two were hospitalized. Early the following Monday morning a large body of armed men entered the plant, rounded up and isolated the maintenance crew on duty, donned company work suits, and began selectively attacking workers as the regular shift reported for work. In the melee that followed eight workers were shot and three hospitalized for other injuries. Three of the armed thugs were captured and confessed that they had been hired by Hector Uriarte and given company work suits by the plant management, thus establishing collusion between the general secretary of the national Ford Workers Union and Ford. The workers occupied the plant and refused to leave until those guilty of the attacks were brought to justice and their right to elect their own bargaining representatives recognized.

On January 10 Cleto Benigno Urbina died of the bullets he received when he reported for work that morning only two days before. This shocking development brought momentary expressions of sympathy for the workers from the government, and outraged others. Investigations were promised but nothing was done to expose the criminals. The daily papers ran front page stories and the AP wire service sent news dispatches. Messages of support arrived from Ford workers in other countries including the U.S., but this was not enough to force the government of Carlos Salinas de Gortari to conduct a serious

criminal investigation nor to bring Ford to the negotiating table with the workers in the plant.

A strong police force using heavy weapons and helicopters to intimidate the 2,000 or more workers who had occupied the plant "persuaded" them to leave, but the workers continued their strike and organized mass demonstrations at the plant site. Meanwhile some form of negotiations continued.

On January 15 Fidel Velazquez announced that "there is no agreement but we continue negotiating." Ford, while continuing to meet with Velazquez and other top CTM officials, asked the Federal Mediation Board to "reanalyze labor relations." This was, in fact, a request for a nonunion shop.

At the end of January the CTM leadership agreed to formally recognize the strikers' popularly elected negotiating committee and gave assurances that when the workers returned to their jobs there would be no reprisals against them and new union elections would be held at an unspecified future time. The back-to-work date, however, was specific, February 6.

On the morning of February 6 more than two thousand heavily armed state troopers showed up at the Ford plant, the same kind of force that was used in mid-January to clear the strikers out of the plant. This time the purpose was to deny the strike leaders access to the plant, fill the jobs with scabs, and start production again.

Ford has played a cautious game throughout, hiding behind the CTM national leadership while claiming that the strike is the result of "internal union feuding." It is, however, an indisputable fact that Ford conspired with venal officials of the Ford Workers Union to plan the armed assault of January 8. Even Fidel Velazquez declared that "workers' failure to return to work is the direct responsibility of Ford's refusal to sign an agreement," according to one of the daily papers here, *Uno Mas Uno* (Feb. 7). This has not deterred the CTM officialdom from continuing to collaborate with Ford to break the strike.

Ford is presently sending armed thugs to the homes of Ford employees, handing out severance notices to the first of over 2,500 workers. CTM officials are helping to find replacements, hoping in this way to reach a sweetheart agreement.

The strikers continue to hold demonstrations and daily marches, including an all-day affair last Tuesday (Feb. 6) during which several hundred marched the 15 miles from the Cuautitlan plant in the State of Mexico to Mexico City's main plaza. According to press estimates over 3,000 workers assembled there. Outpourings of support from neighborhood and school organizations are strong, consisting of food collections and local demonstrations of solidarity.

Workers at the Ford plant in Chihuahua (northern Mexico) who produce four-cylinder motors for export to the U.S., Canada, and Brazil maintain their week-long strike for wage increases and improvements in working conditions. This Chihuahua plant employs 800 workers. Two other Ford plants, at Sonora and

Hermosillo, have been inactive recently with workers assigned only to maintenance and training chores. At all three of these Ford factories support for the Cuautitlan struggle is forthcoming. This, of course, strengthens them all.

Though worker morale remains high at Cuautitlan the decision by Ford to fire most of the work force creates a new and more difficult situation. It becomes increasingly clear that this is not an isolated incident, nor did it begin with the brutal shooting of workers in January. It is part of a general labor policy agreed to by the government of Carlos Salinas and the management of industrial enterprise in this country. Foreign investors, especially those from the U.S. like Ford, demand what they call "stable labor relations." This means low wages, a sufficiently skilled and controlled labor force, and no strikes. With all this Salinas is in complete agreement. He also wants to get rid of the old "labor bosses." Joaquin Hernandez Galicia (aka La Quina), head of the oil workers union, was arrested on charges of illegal possession of 200 submachine guns and stores of ammunition.

This does not mean that the workers have gained new protection, but it has encouraged them to try and organize new unions under their own control, and to democratize the established unions.

Ford and other major corporations are trying to eliminate all union control over their operations, and hope to accomplish this through the existing unions by gradual steps. In the Ford factories, as a result of a defeated strike a couple of years ago, each plant has a separate agreement. And plant management seeks completely subservient union officials (of the Hector Uriarte type) to help impose its wage system and work rules, leading eventually to the elimination of the union. The result at this stage is an average wage in the Mexican auto industry of about \$1.30 an hour. Conditions of work are determined exclusively by plant management. Regardless of the eventual outcome of the Cuautitlan strike, the struggle of auto workers against these conditions will continue.

It is obvious that auto workers in the U.S. have a big stake in the struggle for democratic unionism and higher wages here in Mexico. Everything produced here by Ford is in competition with or supplementary to its U.S. output, often the two operations merge to turn out a single product. But in this process more and more of the work is shifted to Mexico because of the drastic wage differential. Auto workers in the U.S. have supported strike struggles here in the past, and the expressions of solidarity from locals of the United Auto Workers in Detroit are greatly appreciated by the strikers in Cuautitlan. Detroit workers must be reminded that this struggle is far from over.

For further information contact: Democratic Workers Movement of Ford Motor Company, Dr. Lucio, 103 Edificio Orion, A-4, Desp. 103, Mexico D.F., Mexico. By phone (in Spanish): Manuel Fuentes, the workers' attorney, 011-525-578-1556. ●

To Put Aside Ideology and Polarization in Order to Reach a Real Coordination and Reconciliation

The following is an interview with Sergio Ramírez Mercado, vice president of Nicaragua and vice presidential candidate of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in the February elections. It was first printed in the Nicaraguan newspaper La Crónica and was reprinted in Managua's El Nuevo Diario in two parts, on the 7th and 8th of January, 1990. The Bulletin in Defense of Marxism believes that this text reflects both the positive and negative sides of Sandinista perspectives today and that it is therefore important to reproduce it for the information of our readers. Translation is by Justiniano Liehl.

La Crónica: Does the U.S. invasion of Panama produce an imbalance in international relations in Central America?

Sergio Ramírez Mercado: More than an imbalance in Central America, what it affects is the entirety of relations USA vs. Latin America. This can be perceived in the reaction of the Peruvian government which withdrew its ambassador from Washington; likewise the declarations of the Colombian government have been very hard. Similar reactions have been produced in the governments of Chile and Brazil. This points up a very pronounced sentiment against the interventionist policy that the USA is applying to Latin America.

The problem here is rooted in the repetition of the same policy. It's the identical black-and-white film of 1910-1912, and regardless of the figure of Noriega, the USA is acting as an international policeman. It intends to decide what may or what may not happen in a country. Here is where I see the deep damage in relationships between the USA and Latin America.

The deterioration of relations between the USA and Latin America is even more apparent in the perspective created by the new relations between the USA and the Soviet Union. These new relations have given rise to expectations that inter-American relations would be ordered in a different manner, that is to say, in a sort of "North American perestroika" towards Latin America: a new policy that would determine a new type of relations where each country would be able to organize itself as it wanted, always advancing towards a democratic consolidation but without this type of brutal intervention. It seems to me that the destruction of this hope is an even greater damage than that produced by the invasion, because we have gone back to the old starting point, destroying any type of advance that could have been produced.

LC: To what would you attribute this lack of renewal in the North American policy?

SRM: The change in political mentality that has occurred in the Soviet Union has never been produced in the USA. The Soviet Union is heading up a substantial change from one political model to another, but besides, it is trying to define a new type of international relationship not just with its allies but also on a global plane, and obviously this implies a change of mentality.

There is no change in the USA, and the invasion of Panama is proof of this. This change of mentality would be necessary in order to have effective convocation in Latin America, and to have credibility; above all, applying a new policy that would achieve credibility in Latin America.

But applying policies like that used in Panama only achieves a strengthening of tensions. Here in Nicaragua we see what has happened in Panama as a reflection of what could happen to our country, and we are convinced that no fundamental change has been produced in the USA, and that conditions for a new type of relation with the USA do not exist, since, as the North Americans themselves say: "It takes two to tango." So we see that a change of will on the part of Nicaragua is not sufficient, nor is our will for ending tensions with the USA sufficient. This has to be reciprocal. But just the contrary has occurred. What happened in Panama is a warning as to what the USA is prepared to do. When they don't like a system or a government, they arrogate to themselves the right to decide if elections were valid or not, no matter how much they have been certified by the OAS [Organization of American States] or the United Nations.

LC: In your opinion, is the USA approaching the year 2000 with weak leadership?

SRM: It seems to me that the Soviet Union is realizing a great operation of economic and technological renovation. They really needed a true revolution in their political system and their international relations in order to advance and face the year 2000. They had to recuperate from the obvious technological abyss between them and countries of peak industry like Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany. The steps that the Soviet Union has taken in that direction are really audacious.

Europe will enter this process to the extent that technological investments for a "war of the galaxies" are no longer necessary; to the extent that the systems of strategic defense are dismantled and the regular forces both of the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] and the Warsaw Pact are reduced. It is in this respect that the USA remains on the defensive, and it seems to me that it does so for a fundamental reason. The North American economy nurtures its growth on a large military industrial complex, and to the extent that it is no longer necessary to make large investments for military technology nor for the production

of arms, to that extent the North American economy loses its source of growth.

This means that the economic system of the USA ought to be democratized, to pass through a fundamental change. This would also involve a change in the concept of democracy. It would no longer be the democracy of the large consortia, of the big transnationals, of the big power groups, but a democracy of greater participation.

Another necessary aspect is that the USA ought to change its mission and its policy towards Latin America. The USA cannot continue to pretend to impose its concept of democracy on the Latin Americans. The elections in Paraguay have not meant a democratization of that country; nor does the change of government in El Salvador imply that a democracy has been set up in that country. With the exception of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, in the rest of the countries of Central America it's the armies that continue in power and they are the ones that continue to have the last word. Under this circumstance, what is fitting for the USA is to no longer interfere with the indigenous processes of democratization in the region. The USA should not continue to abort the changes that the people want to produce. Nevertheless that's not occurring. The USA is not applying a perestroika, neither internationally nor domestically.

The result of this North American apathy is that the Soviet Union, West Europe, and Japan, for different reasons, are going to reach the year 2000 better prepared for competition.

Japan has at its disposition a social organization that permits it to go on making big technological leaps; its organization of labor and production permit it to make more intense use of its technological development, and it counts on a very well established sphere of influence in Southeast Asia. Western Europe has a system of social and political coexistence more stable than that of the USA. As Eastern Europe changes its political system, it's not copying the North American system, but rather it's reflecting the system of Western Europe.

In my opinion, when these countries that previously were in the Soviet orbit repair their political situation and pass over into an open political system of participation, of periodic elections, of normal regimes, then these countries will have the chance to blossom forth economically faster than the Soviet Union. This is so because the Soviet Union has a bureaucratic apparatus of such extraordinary dimensions due to the tradition of the country, heavier and much more difficult to dismantle and then restructure in order to convert it into a more agile body. But in the cases of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Germany, they are going to surge up with very much tranquility and in a relatively short lapse of time they are going to reach top technological production, new organization of work, and greater stability and economic growth.

These changes in Eastern Europe are going to contribute decidedly to a unity with Western Europe, and a unified Europe that functions harmoniously will not be interested in confronting a supposed Soviet threat, since the Soviet Union itself is asking for the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact and NATO. Europe is not going to be all that interested in maintaining relationships with a far-off ally such as the USA. Evidently the North Americans are not interested in nor do

they consider beneficial a unified Europe when this implies diminution of their hegemonic power.

But all these changes in Europe do not imply solutions to the problems of our countries of the third world. Nor will there be any bettering of the economic and social situation for those countries that continue to be tied to the tail of the USA as long as the USA doesn't change the terms of cooperation with Latin America and the third world. Our problems are going to keep on getting more acute: the foreign debt, injustice in the terms of exchange, disaccumulation, flight of capital. For these reasons, the tensions between us and the USA are going to continue to exist.

Finally I would like to say that I don't believe that Latin America and the third world are going to benefit from this repairing of relations between the Soviet Union and the USA.

LC: How can Central America and especially Nicaragua confront this new international context?

SRM: This involves a structural problem. The poor countries, our Latin American countries, are going to have great difficulty in abandoning this ground, which is called an "economy of desserts," without structural changes. The structural changes are necessary in order to empower a series of economic and social forces that have always been marginal and that have never had to participate in the national project. The first thing is to break down those schemas that have obstructed the participation of national majorities in the social and economic life of our countries.

The materialization of this change depends not only on what occurs within our countries, but also in the world recomposition, about how international economic relations are going to be arranged in the 21st century. The developed capitalist world has to come to realize that, without structural changes, what's going to come about here will be violence; I see it already at the door because unfortunately the developed world does not want to repair the third world. I insist that the changes that are taking place in Europe have nothing to do with the urgency and deep needs that exist in the poor countries of Latin America, and I believe that it would be a grave error to think that, as a spinoff, changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are going to produce changes in the third world and especially in Latin America while the USA doesn't change its policy towards Latin American countries. As long as it doesn't change international economic relations, Latin America will continue being a time bomb; as long as it continues to support the weight of the foreign debt, of the injustices of international economic relations, of poverty because of the prices of our products, the lack of changes in land tenure and the distribution of wealth.

I believe that from this point of view, Nicaragua finds herself in better conditions than other countries to confront this situation. I believe that in the case of Nicaragua the immediate material results are not the framework to judge this process. It's not a matter of evaluating whether we have already produced welfare and wealth, since a series of specific circumstances exist to impede the results of structural change being attained. Nevertheless these changes were necessary to prepare Nicaragua for a type of interna-

tional economic relation and a different internal social economic behavior. This means that we are better prepared by structural changes that the country has gone through, such as the productivity of the land, for the possibility of structuring a just distribution of wealth in order to enter into a new situation that is comparable neither to that of El Salvador, nor that of Honduras, nor that of Guatemala.

LC: Do the changes in Eastern Europe influence the relations of cooperation that those countries have maintained up until now with Nicaragua?

SRM: We still can't know that. Nevertheless I do believe that there are several elements that are necessary to consider. These countries are not changing towards the right; they are not allying to North American policies; they are not changing into pro-North American, nor are they imitating the North American life style. Recently in the *New York Times* I read an interview with one of the leaders of the renewal forces of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). It was the case of a novelist who affirmed that this is the last opportunity that the GDR has before being devoured by McDonald's. That's a very succinct phrase that explains it very well. It means that they are not rejecting socialism, but want to add the democratic element to it; but they do not want to pass over to become part of those countries that nurture their economies on the exploitation of other countries. They assume that socialism is a better system than capitalism, but obviously with an internal democratic participation duly organized.

With that background we can examine what will be the future relationships between these countries and Nicaragua. There were groups shouting slogans favoring Nicaragua when huge masses of people poured into the streets of Berlin and Leipzig in the GDR. They even sang a piece of rock music that had been composed here in Nicaragua by a famous rock singer from the GDR. The song is called *Search for the People*, and one of its verses goes like this:

Oh little Nicaragua, don't send us your coffee
Don't send us your bananas; don't send us your sugar,
but rather send us your "FACE THE PEOPLE."¹

Actually, that song had been forbidden in the GDR, but once all these changes began, that song was heard on all radios.

We must also take into consideration that the youth and the intellectuals and the people involved in changing the internal direction of the countries of Eastern Europe have always been conscious that in Nicaragua the struggle has been for different forms of social change. That's why I believe that the people who are presently taking charge of the governments of these countries will not take a hostile attitude towards Nicaragua.

I think it is perfectly legitimate to imagine that we'll have relations with them similar to those we maintain with Sweden, which is a profoundly social democratic country. I would call our relations with Sweden strategic because they believe in what we are doing. That's why their cooperation is disinterested, definite, firm, and continual to such a degree that they even convoked a recent material aid conference and offered their country as host. Sweden's cooperation

within Nicaragua is obvious on all sides, in the cultural and productive fields, and finally there's a very profound identification between them and us. Nothing prevents me from thinking that we can produce similar relationships with the GDR, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, especially if those countries, if the new leaders of those countries, become deeply conscious of the reality of poor countries and don't fall into the egocentrism that is characteristic of capitalist countries.

I recently read news about the visit of Lech Walesa to Venezuela where at the end of the visit he said: "Now I have come to know that Venezuela which they had never shown me — Venezuela of the poor and miserable." Such a statement in the mouth of Walesa, whom they have tried to make appear as a pro-North American rightist, demonstrates that he has a great sensibility for the situation of poor countries. This gives us the measure of how the leaders of Eastern Europe are going to carry on their relations with countries like Nicaragua. Truthfully I have no fear.

LC: Do you believe that the changes in Eastern Europe will also have an impact on the Cuban political system?

SRM: That's a complicated question. You must remember that Cuba has always been a member of COMECON and a strategic ally of the Soviet Union. In this they are different from Nicaragua, since we have never been part of COMECON, nor have we had a centralized economy that would permit such a participation, nor have we ever been a military ally of the Soviet Union in the sense that Cuba has historically been.

On the other hand, the changes that are taking place in Eastern Europe, even within the Warsaw Pact (to the extent of issuing an official statement affirming that the intervention in Czechoslovakia was an error to be condemned), are very profound changes that imply, besides the reorganization of their international relations, also that the ruble will become a trade currency and that the market will have a greater influence on the regulation of economic life. Beyond doubt, all these changes will affect Cuba. Or else, Cuba will remain isolated defending what Fidel considers its principles. I believe that he believes firmly in its principles as he asserted in one of his recent speeches that Cuba might just remain alone defending its socialism.

LC: What do you see as the agenda for Nicaraguan society in the decade of the '90s?

SRM: Assuming that peace will be a vital element, I believe that in the first place we will try to consolidate the social political system that we have set up in Nicaragua in this decade. That is to say, really strengthen this political system of free democratic participation, of mixed economy, and of nonalignment. As a first step it's necessary to launch an economic reconstruction of the country. For this it is necessary to think first of all of a coordination of all social forces after the elections. This is necessarily the first step: a coordination that is serious, real, separated from the electoral noise and from electoral antagonisms, where everybody will sit down and seriously think what it is that they should do. It is here where there should be established a relationship

between the government and the civil opposition, where the opposition that would go to the National Assembly would have a truly stable role, and respected as such by the government.

National coordination ought to give Nicaragua sufficient stability to attract financial and technological resources not just from government-to-government cooperation, but also from multilateral organizations and investors. All this is to create more employment, reactivate the economy, and put an end to the causes of instability and then create central points of development all over the country. I would even go so far as to say that economic stability would also bring about political stability, and in this way in the next ten years, until we reach year 2000, we could go forward to an economic development that, although it would not transform us into creators of technology (that's not possible), would however empower a development that would permit us to make use of the technology that is being produced.

We can achieve this by making use of the wealth of Nicaragua, changing the old idea that Nicaragua is a poor country into the realization that we are a country that has been reduced to poverty. Better than any of the other Central American countries, Nicaragua enjoys a privileged situation to empower her few economic riches, from petroleum down to the resources of the mines and forests, of fishing and farming. An adequate management of these resources would permit us to create better living conditions for the populace and offer levels of life that our people deserve. I am certain that if we have peace and national coordination we will achieve these goals.

When I speak of coordination and reconciliation I speak about making a very great effort to set aside everything that leads to polarization; that means to put aside ideological questions and lay out a common base to achieve true political coordination. With this I don't want to say that we are going to dissolve the normal contradictions that exist in a pluralist society, but that the polarization which we have ought to disappear. An important element in order to reach this objective is the improving of our relations with the USA. Insofar as one sector exists, even though a minority, that believes that we can gain something from an antagonism—Sandinista Front vs. USA—just that long the polarization will be nurtured, because the Sandinista Front is going to accuse that sector of an alliance with the USA. For these reasons, I believe that the role of the USA is very important. I also believe that such a sector ought to have the perspective of contributing to stabilization so that all social and economic forces can work in security and harmony. But this can only be achieved with the absence of antagonism.

LC: Do you consider that the UNO² is an interlocutor capable of contributing to this process of coordination?

SRM: I don't want to be pejorative or negative. I see the UNO changing so as not to say dissolving. I see it changing abruptly after the 25th of February because of the very nature of the UNO. It cannot continue forever as the National Opposition Union. The very word "opposition" reveals a transitory will in the face of a determined circumstance.

What I would like to see, at least this is my hope, is a lineup of the real forces of the country and not a kind of opposition

and antagonism to the Sandinista Front. I believe that after the elections there's going to be an alignment by ideological affinities: Christian socialists, liberals, conservatives, all of which are the forces existing in the country as opposition forces to the FSLN.

You can't deny that some miniscule groups who achieve seats by virtue of their participation in the UNO will be represented in the National Assembly, even though they would never have entered the National Assembly had they participated on their own. That's why the representation in the National Assembly will not really be representative of what each group could have achieved individually.

At any rate, I believe there will be a rearrangement of the opposition, there'll be political realignments and I believe that's very healthy for the country, and I'm sure it's going to happen.

LC: Do you see the tone of the electoral campaign contributing to such a postelectoral arrangement? Ought we to see the campaign as a sort of parenthesis?

SRM: We should distinguish the electoral campaign from that which will have to be the political experience after the elections. Unfortunately these elections are colored by elements of confrontation that are inevitable as a result of the war and antagonism between Nicaragua and the USA. If these elements would disappear, it seems to me that the political life of the country would necessarily be different.

LC: What's your prognostication about the results of the elections?

SRM: I believe that we are going to win with a considerable majority which will permit us to maintain an absolute majority in the National Assembly. I believe that the parties that form the UNO are going to win a sufficient number of seats that will grant them a degree of representation as parties of the opposition. I cannot say the same about the parties that are not part of the UNO because the election is polarized. I would not like to harm these parties by extemporaneous declarations made beforehand, but it seems to me that their opportunities are very limited. It's too bad. But I feel that not even the alliance of the PSC [Social Christian Party] and the PPSC [Popular Social Christian Party] has a big chance.

LC: Can we imagine that the FSLN would enter the Socialist International?

SRM: Yes, it's certainly imaginable.

LC: Would the process of democratization that you described have repercussions within the FSLN as a party?

SRM: These elections are changing us into a true political party, a party that's not closed, not limited to strict membership, but rather a party that, while resorting to the vote, is resorting to another type of political adherence. This indicates the evolution of the Sandinista Front: we have reached out to the electorate with greater power, with clearer ideas,

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What Is at Stake in Poland

A Reply to Samuel Adams

by Steve Bloom

In the last issue of this magazine an article appeared entitled "Which Way for Poland and Solidarity?" by Samuel Adams. While we can all agree with its author about the need for a clear, revolutionary Marxist alternative to the program of the present Solidarity-led government in Poland, Adams's approach oversimplifies both the social forces at work in Poland today and the historical roots of the current crisis in that country. As a result, rather than contributing to clarity on the question raised in its title, the article actually reinforces the primary ideological mystification being developed by the international bourgeoisie: that Poland and Hungary in particular, with the rest of Eastern Europe following close behind, have abandoned "communism" and are resolutely on the road to a "restoration of capitalism."

On the surface of things this idea may seem reasonable. Virtually every reform-minded current in Eastern Europe and the USSR — whether it developed within the old bureaucratic parties or in the anti-Stalinist opposition — is now talking about the virtues of a "market economy." The Hungarian Stalinists changed the name of their party, adopted a "social-democratic" program and the perspective of privatizing the economy. Lech Walesa and Tadeusz Mazowiecki say explicitly that "restoration of capitalism" is their plan to bring about an economic recovery for Poland.

Adams takes these declarations as the starting point for his analysis. His lead paragraph reads:

With the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, international capitalism is hell-bent on reversing the collectivist measures taken in the region and restoring capitalism. U.S. imperialism is in the lead in making this happen, and Poland and Hungary are the prime targets. Lech Walesa and his grouping in Solidarity are promoting this as an alternative to socialist democracy for Poland.

It is wrong, however, to equate the "alternative" that "Walesa and his grouping in Solidarity are promoting for Poland" and the program of the international bourgeoisie. Adams is right about the objectives of the imperialists. He is wrong, however, to imply that the present Solidarity leadership is promoting the *same* goals as international capitalism.

Descriptions by political leaders of their own perspectives have never been decisive for Marxists in determining the significance of particular policies. And they certainly cannot be decisive in determining the social character of states. If they were, then Great Britain would have made the transition from capitalism to socialism and back again several times in the last half-century — whenever there was a change between a Tory and a Labor government, or vice versa. Indeed, many

people may have just such a misconception. But that is hardly a legitimate basis for a serious class analysis of British society.

The bourgeois ideologues who are today touting the "victory of capitalism in the cold war" rely on a similar superficial understanding of events in Eastern Europe in general, and in Poland in particular. But if we take the trouble to scratch below the surface of government declarations, we will find a reality which is far more contradictory — and which therefore requires a far more profound analysis.

Goals of Solidarity, Goals of Imperialism

Adams explains the present objectives of Walesa and Mazowiecki very well: "Solidarity's program is to encourage production and efficiency by lifting controls and letting prices rise, restraining wages and keeping any increases below climbing inflation, ending subsidies to industries and allowing layoffs and bankruptcies." Contained in this sentence is the key difference between the Solidarity leadership's program for Poland and that of the international bourgeoisie. It is captured by the words: "to encourage production and efficiency." That is indeed the goal of Solidarity. But is it the objective of the imperialists? Not at all.

The imperialists could care less about production and efficiency in Poland. Their program is to move that country in the *opposite direction*. They want to *discourage* the development of an independent Polish economy producing in an efficient way in order to satisfy the needs of its population. If the Polish government continues to follow the dictates of the International Monetary Fund, the country could well attain a genuine semicolonial status — or at best end up like Brazil or Mexico. That is a far cry from the "Swedish model" so often held up by the reformers in Eastern Europe. This dichotomy of objectives between the present Polish government and the international bourgeoisie — between the independent development of the economy and its subordination as a profit-extracting machine for the imperialists — is an *absolute objective fact* which will be far more fundamental in shaping the future of Poland, and even of the Solidarity government, than all the declarations made by Lech Walesa.

Walesa and Mazowiecki, like all pragmatists, will not be able to appreciate this reality until it jumps up and bites them. But what is going to happen when their idea of promoting economic development for Poland through an efficient market economy in alliance with international capitalism collapses under its own weight? And this is likely to occur sooner rather than later. These pragmatic thinkers will then

be forced to make a choice: either 1) change their *policy* of alliance with the international bourgeoisie to impose austerity, or 2) change their *social goals*— genuine goals— of economic development and prosperity for Poland.

It is *possible* (even if by no means certain) that under these conditions we will see a sharp change in the way these leaders approach the problems of Polish society. And this *is* possible precisely because the Solidarity government is *not* a bourgeois government. It is an empiricist, petty-bourgeois government—still based on a mobilized working class in a deformed workers' state—that has completely lost its bearings due to a lack of historical knowledge and an absence of real working class political consciousness. Even if the program pursued by Walesa and Mazowiecki does not change under the pressure of events, there will certainly be divisions within the present leadership, new currents which develop inside and outside Solidarity, discussion and dissension amongst the Polish workers, etc., etc.

On the other hand, *no* wing of the international bourgeoisie will change its policies when Poland fails to develop according to the plans of Walesa and Mazowiecki. They will, in fact, remain united in demanding a further deepening of the present policies. That's because the interests of imperialism— unlike the interests of Walesa and company, and certainly unlike the interests of Solidarity as a whole— lie ultimately in the *institutionalized* exploitation of the Polish working class.

What exists between imperialism and the Polish government, at least for now, is merely a tactical alliance, a convergence of immediate policy, not any kind of fundamental convergence of interests. The imperialists understand this very well, despite their propaganda barrage, and we have to understand it too— and explain it if we want to successfully analyze events in Poland today.

One of the most important keys in all of this is the social character of Solidarity—its roots amongst the Polish workers. This is not an incidental fact, but shapes and limits the options that Walesa and Mazowiecki can carry out. This mass of working people remains their only social base. Despite the lack of democracy at present within the Solidarity movement— which Adams correctly points out in his article— Walesa has retained an overwhelming popularity in the country (certainly up to the time of the formation of the present government) because of the role he played in the creation of Solidarity in the early '80s and in the fight against Jaruzelski's martial law. The formation of the Mazowiecki government was hailed by the vast majority in Poland as a great victory for democracy— as indeed it was, even if that victory had its limits.

The reason why Walesa and Mazowiecki consciously formulate their present social objectives as *the development of economic prosperity for Poland* is precisely because they know that they must bring this about to maintain their base of social support. They have only a limited time before their popularity is gone forever. They must produce the goods or lose their present opportunity.

It is also important to keep in mind that Solidarity began life as a trade union organization. Though it has long played the role of a broad social movement, it has never really made the transition to a political party. This lack of political ex-

perience on the part of the Polish workers contributes greatly to the general unevenness and lack of clarity in the present situation. And this, in turn, increases the likelihood of sharp turns and major shifts even by the present government.

Contradiction Manifests Itself in Life

The fundamental contradiction between the interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie and the objectives of the Solidarity government is not some vague abstraction which might have an impact at some time in the future. It is already having an effect today— even before the Walesa/Mazowiecki program to privatize the Polish economy has taken its first significant steps.

Last May Barbara Piasecka Johnson, a Polish-American businesswoman, announced plans to purchase the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, birthplace of Solidarity. Superficial journalists the world over— whether of a bourgeois or leftist persuasion— have pointed to this as a clear application of Walesa's plan to convert Poland to capitalist free enterprise.

But the January 19 *New York Times* carries a rather interesting story. It explains how negotiations around this purchase have been going on for months, and in the end “a spokesman for the Polish Government called Mrs. Johnson's offer for the sprawling 340-acre yard ‘a joke.’” Reportedly, Ms. Johnson, in a style typical of U.S. industrialists, made a few modest demands as a precondition for her purchase. First of all she offered a price of only \$3 or \$4 million. Government spokeswoman Malgorzata Niezabitowska declared, “Whatever its condition, it's surely worth more than that.” Second, Johnson proposed a 50-cent per hour wage and a ban on strikes for a period of five years, to which Solidarity officials (yes, some of the same folks who say they are for capitalism) expressed their indignation. At this point the deal has fallen through. The plan is now to create a joint-stock company, under government control, with provision for investment by foreign capitalists and shipyard workers. That alternative too faces a few objective obstacles.

The incident is revealing. The Polish government clearly did not function like a bourgeois government acting in alliance with the imperialist ruling classes. When was the last time such a bourgeois government rejected a proposal for investment from abroad because the price was too low, the wages offered insufficient, and a no-strike pledge demanded?

A superficial analysis based solely on the Solidarity leadership's own programmatic pronouncements cannot help us to understand what happened here. We need to look at the material reality rather than ideological declarations. Faced with *real* capitalism *in action*, even the present Polish government had to rethink its agenda. The *genuine material interest* that the Solidarity leadership has in developing the economy came into conflict with a counterposed *genuine material interest*— one that a particular Western capitalist has in making maximum profits. The result confounds the oversimplified view of Poland today presented by Adams and many others.

The fact is that Poland is a risky investment. If capital is going to be attracted by the Walesa/Mazowiecki team it will be necessary to allow capitalists to make superprofits. Super-

profits, however, require superexploitation of the Polish workers and of Polish natural resources. But such a process is completely incompatible with the development of the economy in the interests of the Polish people, which Solidarity is committed to. And besides, the government remains too close to its social base amongst the workers to allow such a thing. As a result the great capitalist adventure could not even get off the ground.

John Davis, American ambassador to Poland, summed up the bottom line from the imperialist point of view: "This is a less happy outcome than many had anticipated. . . . But every deal has to be treated on its own merits." Loosely translated this says: Sorry, but profits are more fundamental than ideology.

Samuel Adams does acknowledge this general difficulty when he writes in his article, "Walesa's hopes for massive U.S. investments are not likely to bear fruit, certainly not in the short run. Most U.S. investors consider the Polish economy too risky now for investment." But this most important idea is not developed any further. It is purely incidental to his overall analysis, an afterthought, a few lines in the context of many paragraphs about the "procapitalist program" of the present government. That relationship should be completely reversed. Material reality has to be the cornerstone of our analysis, and purely ideological pronouncements made by leaders put in their proper, subordinate place.

There is, of course, a real danger in the Polish situation, but it is different from the one Adams implies. It is false to claim that Walesa and Mazowiecki have already started Poland on the road of capitalist restoration in alliance with the international bourgeoisie. But there is still a strong possibility that — unless a mass, conscious, proletarian alternative to the present leadership develops in time (either as an opposition within Solidarity or in the form of a new organization of Polish workers outside of Solidarity), one which can pose a genuine, socialist alternative — the present policies of the Walesa leadership may allow the growth of *genuine* bourgeois forces within Poland itself, and will so undermine the fighting ability of the Polish masses and the Polish workers' state that a real bourgeois restorationist danger could emerge. In all likelihood, such a danger would pose itself *in opposition* to the present government rather than as its ally. Pragmatists such as Walesa, though *capable* of recognizing such a danger in time and changing course, cannot be *relied* on to do so. From this point of view I have no argument whatsoever with Adams when he cites the absolute necessity of a clear alternative leadership for working people in Poland.

Socialism, Capitalism, and 'the Market'

One major confusion is important to clear up when discussing Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe — the simple use of terms like "capitalism," "communism," "socialism," and "the market." If we can clarify these concepts and what they actually mean it will shed some light on our present discussion.

In the general parlance of the U.S. and international bourgeois press "socialism" or "communism" equals the system

that has existed in the USSR, China, Eastern Europe, etc. under the last six decades of bureaucratic domination. "Capitalism," on the other hand, is talked about as if it were equal to "a market economy," so that the idea of "transition from communism to capitalism" is commonly expressed in the phrase "transition from communism to a market economy."

Decades of Stalinist ideology reinforce these two false definitions — communism equals bureaucratic rule, market economy equals capitalism — and so, not surprisingly, most leaders of the opposition to Stalinism in the bureaucratized workers' states also accept these ideas. And the problem is compounded by the allied notion, long-held in many circles, that "communism" equals "dictatorship" and "capitalism" equals "democracy." The aspirations of the masses in the East for democracy, then, become identified in the public mind with the desire for "capitalism," an idea repeated over and over by the mass media.

But, as most readers of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* are aware, socialism/communism does not equal bureaucratic rule; quite the contrary. Nor is democracy incompatible with socialism. Democracy is, in fact, an absolute prerequisite for genuine workers' rule. And further, though this is not so well understood, "market" and "capitalism" are also not the same thing by any means. No transitional society can long survive and increase economic productivity without reference to the market. Certainly this is true in Eastern Europe where the workers' states are still based on a relative economic scarcity and exist in the context of a world dominated by imperialism. The effort to dispense with the market, in a completely artificial manner, was one of the distortions of Marxism introduced by Joseph Stalin in the USSR. The question is always what kind of market, for what purpose, and controlled by what social forces. (Much more needs to be said about this, but it is beyond the scope of the present article.)

The ideological confusion around all of these questions has, obviously, not spared Lech Walesa and Tadeusz Mazowiecki. They have only the vaguest idea of what socialism and capitalism really are. But isn't it obvious, then, that their declarations about making a transition from one to the other can't have much scientific value? Samuel Adams isn't alone on the left in failing to appreciate that fact. But this only makes his failure that much more serious. In a situation where ideological confusion is rampant, the primary task of a revolutionary Marxist analysis must be to cut through the fog and shed some light which can help working people in the U.S. and around the world to understand what is really happening.

Solidarity and Jaruzelski

Another point also deserves some attention here. The Adams article begins by postulating a clear convergence of perspectives between the imperialists and the Walesa leadership of Solidarity. Later, however, Adams asserts that there has also been a convergence of policy and interests between Walesa and the old-line Stalinist regime in Poland. Yet both of these things cannot be true at the same time. If they were then we would have to believe either 1) that the

imperialists or the Stalinists or both are acting in a way that is completely opposed to their own fundamental interests, or 2) that all of a sudden the interests of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Poland has *genuinely* converged with the interests of international capitalism. (We all know that such a convergence has long been the dream of Stalinist ideologues, but it has never quite worked out in practice because of a certain clash of material interests between the bureaucrats and imperialism.)

The Adams article explains, correctly, how the Jaruzelski leadership made a decision to carry out a bold maneuver — involving Solidarity in the government in order to use the authority of Walesa and company to impose an austerity which was necessary to pay off the debt the bureaucracy had incurred to the imperialist banks. Adams then states, “The new Solidarity was permitted to surface, but at a price. At the ‘round table’ discussions that ensued, *Solidarity became part of the ‘establishment’* in exchange for which it agreed to a number of concessions” (emphasis added).

Later this line of thinking is developed even more clearly:

Incidentally, just as the Stalinists needed Solidarity, so Solidarity — with its present orientation — needed the Stalinists as enforcers of an austerity program and to appease the Kremlin. That is why Walesa and his group supported Jaruzelski’s election to the presidency and why they agreed to the retention by the Stalinists of their absolute authority over the army and the police.

But a genuine social pact between the Stalinists and Solidarity was not concluded at the round table discussions. And it is at least an extreme oversimplification to say that “Solidarity became part of the establishment.” That was Jaruzelski’s aim, of course. But it was hardly guaranteed when the agreement on the elections was concluded. It is hardly guaranteed even today. That’s why there was a vigorous struggle between Solidarity and the CP during the election campaign and in the early days of parliamentary maneuvering that led to the election of Jaruzelski as president and Mazowiecki as prime minister. The compromise on the part of both Jaruzelski and Solidarity which created the present coalition was necessary precisely because there was a real social conflict. The electoral pact and the later governmental formula reflected two things: 1) the weakness of the CP in relation to Solidarity, and 2) the timidity of the Solidarity leaders who could not conceive of taking power in their own right, who feared a head-to-head clash with the old apparatus.

The existence of real social tensions in Poland — and not only between the present Solidarity government and the old bureaucracy — is well illustrated by the subsequent breakup of the Stalinist party itself. On January 29, the Polish United Workers Party voted to dissolve. A number of rival factions can be expected to emerge. Like CPs throughout Eastern Europe, whose ability to unify the entire bureaucracy was based on their monopoly of power, the Polish party finds itself unable to hold together now that its monopoly has been broken. Conflicting interests of different bureaucratic layers will find expression in competing political organizations. (Here, by the way, is where we might look for *real* capitalist restorationist tendencies to emerge.) The idea of a conver-

gence between Solidarity and the Polish “establishment” is precisely backward. What the round table discussions indicated (of course the process began long before) was precisely the disintegration of the “establishment” in Poland.

This takes me to a second major problem with this section of the Adams article. It is absolutely wrong to assert that the CP and Solidarity “need” each other in “just” the same way. The distinction here is very important. Jaruzelski and the Stalinist bureaucrats *need* Solidarity on account of a material reality. The Solidarity government is their only hope of stabilizing the present economic situation in a way that can still preserve some semblance of the present social order with its privileged position for the bureaucrats. Solidarity, however, “needs” its agreement with Jaruzelski only because of its own programmatic weakness. *There is no material necessity whatsoever.* Had Walesa chosen to confront Jaruzelski rather than compromise with him, the Polish United Workers Party would quite probably have collapsed just as rapidly as the bureaucratic ruling party did in neighboring Czechoslovakia.

The assertion by Adams that Walesa needs a military and police force run by the Stalinists in order to enforce his austerity program cannot hold up under examination. If the military and police under the command of Jaruzelski had been able to enforce austerity there would have been no need for the pact with Solidarity in the first place. The only hope that exists — and it is certainly a slim one — to get the Polish workers to accept austerity comes from the *moral prestige* of Walesa. If that fails, then repression is unlikely to succeed now any more than it did during the time of martial law. In fact it is less likely to succeed, given the subsequent experience of the Polish masses with even a taste of democracy and the broad upsurge in the rest of Eastern Europe. If repression becomes necessary for the Walesa government to carry through its economic policies, then it has already lost the battle — completely and definitively. (Besides, if Walesa needs to resort to repression why wouldn’t an army and police force organized under the leadership of Solidarity be just as effective — or even more effective — than one organized by the old, hated, Stalinist bureaucrats?)

History of Solidarity

One of the more disturbing aspects of the Adams piece is a possible implication he draws about the history of Walesa and the Solidarity movement in Poland. Speaking about the Polish leader’s recent trip to the United States the article declares:

Walesa was toured as the champion of free enterprise trade unionism. He told the AFL-CIO, “Such is the fate of a Polish trade unionist: he has to launch a publicity campaign for private entrepreneurship.” Some U.S. radicals who had donned Solidarnosc T-shirts, participated in pro-Solidarity rallies, and trumpeted Solidarity as the wave of the future were understandably taken aback by this. *But if the origins and evolution of Solidarity are examined, its present course can be understood* (emphasis added).

He goes on to discuss the positive features of the workers' revolt that sparked the formation of the union in 1980 and of the program adopted by the delegates to the first, and only, Solidarity congress in 1981. Then he comments on the role of the Walesa leadership during these *early* days of Solidarity. Adams's attitude here seems quite different from the positive points he has just made about Solidarity's rank and file:

But from the beginning serious questions existed over the direction Solidarity was headed. Its leadership was strongly influenced by clerical and reactionary nationalist pressures. They looked to U.S. imperialism and its labor lieutenants for guidance and help. Lane Kirkland and Irving Brown, a well-known CIA agent working for the AFL-CIO, were invited to speak to Solidarity's 1981 congress. While the Polish authorities did not permit them to attend, the AFL-CIO leaders established strong ties with Solidarity, providing it with over \$5 million, which the federation had received from the U.S. government, and opening an office for it in Brussels.

There are two points which seem to be implied by this section of the article: 1) there was a distinction between the positive and progressive activity of the Solidarity rank and file and the conservative leadership "strongly influenced by clerical and reactionary nationalist pressures," as well as by the AFL-CIO and the CIA. 2) The present policies of Walesa and Mazowiecki are a direct result of these reactionary influences which affected them as far back as 1981. ("If the origins and evolution of Solidarity are examined, its present course can be understood.") Both of these ideas are wrong.

The Walesa leadership was a genuine, organic reflection of Solidarity as a whole during its early days. It was not Walesa alone who was "influenced by clerical and reactionary nationalist pressures"—nor was it just the Solidarity leadership. They were not the only ones with illusions in the AFL-CIO or U.S. imperialism. These ideological problems ran all through Solidarity and the Polish working class, from top to bottom. But the reverse was also true. Walesa did not become Solidarity's leading figure by accident. He was an audacious individual around whom the organization coalesced because his personal courage, his willingness to confront the Stalinist bureaucracy, personified the essence of Solidarity's greatest strength—its commitment to independent mass action by the workers, relying only on themselves and fighting for their own interests.

Both of these contradictory realities have played a role in shaping the Solidarity that exists today. The ideological confusion of the early days has, obviously, continued. In many ways it has intensified. But it would be a severe mistake to think that this was an inevitable outcome flowing directly from the "clerical and reactionary nationalist pressures" which were there at the start. There has been a vast discussion and debate about a wide variety of questions during the last decade in Poland. A great many points of view have been put forward, ranging from genuine revolutionary Marxist ideas to outright reactionary ones. The outcome of that ideological struggle—even the influence it has had on central

leaders such as Walesa—was by no means predetermined. The particular reality that we see today is a consequence of a great many factors—both objective and subjective—that have shaped the Solidarity movement over the past decade. Not the least of these was the defeat the movement suffered as a result of Jaruzelski's coup, which strongly reinforced more conservative trends and dampened revolutionary currents.

Nor should we conclude that the present state of ideological consciousness on the part of the Solidarity leadership is definitive. Things are still in flux. Not so far below the surface the living contradiction between real mass action by the workers and a broad lack of ideological clarity—which has stamped Solidarity from the start—continues to play a role. The Solidarity of ten million workers marching and striking together to advance their own cause is not dead by any means, even if the formal organization has become a shadow of what it represented in 1981. This reality is helping to shape the present in the form of continuing strikes and protests by working people, as well as through an ongoing discussion about program and perspectives. Though they are still a small minority there are those within the Polish workers' movement who are posing a clear, proletarian alternative to the present course of the Solidarity leadership.

In fairness to Samuel Adams I have to add that there seems to be a contradiction between the ideas I have cited here, expressed by him on the first page of his article, and a section at the very end where he quotes Daniel Singer, who writes enthusiastically about Walesa's role in the early days of the Solidarity movement. It is, therefore, not completely clear what Adams actually thinks about the Solidarity movement and its leadership in its formative years. One current of thought—advanced by sectarian groups—says that it was fatally flawed from the outset because of the "clerical and reactionary nationalist pressures" on a leadership which "looked to U.S. imperialism and its labor lieutenants for guidance and help." On the other hand, virtually every revolutionary Marxist analysis of the time, especially that of the Fourth International, hailed the rise of Solidarity as an extremely progressive event despite its obvious contradictions. For our part we see no reason whatsoever to revise this positive judgment.

How the Crisis Will Be Resolved

The programmatic confusion of the Solidarity leadership and the Polish workers continues, and it is a serious problem. On this Adams and I have no disagreement. The situation is well illustrated by what happened at the Lenin shipyard after the workers heard about the details of Ms. Johnson's offer to buy it. We quote again from the report in the *New York Times*: "An article in *Sztandar Mlodych*, the communist youth daily, reported recently that workers had taken down a photograph of Mrs. Johnson that had been posted at the shipyard gates, and replaced it with one of Pope John Paul II." Obviously we still have a long way to go before the Polish workers really begin to understand what is happening, and what they can do about it.

But if we want to help clarify a solution to this reality we must first truly comprehend it ourselves—in all of its con-

traditions and complexities. We must know what its roots are, as well as the material constraints upon it. The situation cannot be reduced to cardboard cutout formulas such as: the ideological struggle against Lech Walesa's capitalist restorationism.

Solidarity's present leadership has a different agenda from both the imperialists and the old "establishment" in Poland. Its interests and program are not the same as either that of Western capitalism or any wing of the bureaucracy, no matter what labels they or anyone else want to put on their ideology. The policies of Walesa and Mazowiecki converge with the needs of imperialism or the old bureaucracy on particular points, and diverge from them on others. Jaruzelski puts up with the situation because he has no choice. The imperialists try to use the contradictions of the Walesa leadership to push things as far as they can and do their best to reinforce the overall ideological confusion. Walesa's program also deviates from the objective interests of the Polish workers, who still have illusions in the present leadership to some extent (as well as illusions in U.S. imperialism and the Pope, as we have seen). But the workers are also extremely angry and have already begun to rebel. As yet they have no alternative. Discussion and debate continue.

It is that continuing discussion and debate by the mass movement, combined with continued actions undertaken by the workers to defend their own interests, which hold the key to overcoming the present situation. It will take many experiences such as the one with the purchase of the Lenin shipyard before the problem is thought through and a clear revolutionary proletarian alternative current of thought can

emerge and win a mass following. This will obviously be a process that takes time, and it will be filled with false starts and wrong turns. That is the inevitable course of any genuine mass upsurge. But if revolutionary Marxists hope to see the process through to the end, we have no choice but to be patient with it, helping as best we can to advance an overall understanding, and knowing that we cannot substitute our own historical perspectives and program for the experiences working people themselves have to go through.

Above all revolutionary socialists cannot panic or be stymied by superficial formulas about the "restoration of capitalism" in Eastern Europe. We need to remember that the workers' states that were formed there after World War II have some real substance, and cannot be eliminated via a simple ideological change on the part of the government. Even if the market reforms and foreign capitalist investments increase dramatically from what we have so far seen, there will still be no task for the revolutionary proletariat in Poland or Hungary other than that of a *political* revolution—as opposed to the far more profound social revolution that is required to overthrow capitalism in other parts of the world. There is not yet any Polish or Hungarian bourgeoisie which must be ousted from power.

It may be that the formation of such a capitalist class could take place over a period of several years—but it cannot be conjured into existence by the rhetoric of government figures. This means that there is time for the workers in Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe to develop the necessary leadership and find a road out of their present impasse. We must have confidence in their ability to do so. In the final analysis there is no other solution. ●

Nicaragua (Continued from page 8)

and with a strategy that is more political than ideological. I insist on this difference which for me is very important. In ideological terms we have tried to substitute the masses for the individual, and for us this has been a very important step. We know that electors are individuals, not an amorphous mass in which, ideologically, one might often try to find a political panacea.

Another aspect that marks our evolution as a party is the selection of our municipal candidates. We have proclaimed as our candidates persons who are not card-carrying members of the Sandinista Front because we are only 40,000 strong as members of the Sandinista Front, and with that number we wouldn't win even three seats in the National Assembly. That's why we have come down to very important political exploration, judging who could be our candidates that would assure triumph in determined municipalities. In this way we have included on our ticket producers and cattle raisers as long as they were very representative in the territorial dimension even though they were conservative. These persons have access to determined social sectors where the Sandinista Front as a party in the strict sense has no entrance. This has been one of the boldest transformations that we have experienced for a party that is thought of as a vanguard as we have traditionally considered ourselves (I admit that this concept has been useful and I don't disqualify it). But at the hour of standing up electorally we are coming down to the political reality, making true alliances with different social and political sectors of the country, and determined to give these alliances a strategic character in order to contribute to the national consensus which is a necessary instrument to achieve a national reconciliation.

LC: Is it predictable that within the immediate future the Sandinista Front would normalize its institutional life, that is, hold congresses, open their statutes to the public, and even declare publicly their rules of decision making?

SRM: Yes, that process is predictable in the coming years. We have had very pragmatic trials in this sense in the conventions. Our conventions have not been electoral masquerades, but rather real mechanisms; the consultation to determine the list of candidates to the National Assembly, the municipal conventions—all of these are procedures that we are institutionalizing in the future as mechanisms for consulting our bases. I believe that this process will have to find a matrix in the coming years because by definition we are assuming a true political party with permanent juridical mechanisms.

LC: In case of losing the elections would the Sandinista Front maintain its will to contribute to this process of national coordination?

SRM: It's a very remote possibility, but since we are participating in an electoral process the possibility of losing exists. But win or lose, the Sandinista Front is the same. ●

Notes

1. This is a reference to regular public forums in Nicaragua, called "Face the Nation," where Sandinista leaders appear and respond to questions posed by ordinary Nicaraguan citizens.

2. The UNO (National Opposition Union) is the right-wing opposition coalition in the Nicaraguan elections.

National Struggle and Political Revolution in Armenia and Azerbaijan

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

This is Part 1 of a 2-part report on the social and political situation in the Caucasus region that served as the backdrop to the Kremlin's military invasion of January 1990. Part 2 will examine the events from January 1989.

On January 15 this year, by an emergency decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, 11,000 army, navy, and KGB security police forces were dispatched to the Caucasus. Martial law was declared in effect in the Armenian Republic, the Armenian Nagorno-Karabagh Autonomous Region in the Azerbaijan Republic, on the Soviet-Iranian border in the Nakhichevan Autonomous Region of the Azerbaijan Republic, and in two towns in Azerbaijan: Granjda and Khanlar. By late January, the number of troops sent to the region was nearly 30,000, more than half of them occupying the Azerbaijan capital, Baku.

The Presidium's decree charged that the developments in the Caucasus amounted to "attempts to topple Soviet power by means of arms, to forcefully change the state and social system of the USSR." It also stated that "extremist groups are organizing mass disorders, provoking strikes, fanning national enmity. They are committing bold criminal acts, mining roads and bridges, shelling settlements, taking hostages." As Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov put it: "The authorities won't allow this to become a civil war between the Azerbaijanis and the Armenians. The conflict must be solved with the help of military force."

In this case, the cure is worse than the illness. In fact, the cure was the cause of the illness in the first place.

Information as to what is transpiring in the Caucasus is extremely unreliable, confused, and limited. Foreign reporters were banned from the region, and the Soviet journalists who are allowed there seem to be incapable of getting or reporting verified facts. As has been the case since the Caucasus region entered the political scene two years ago, rumors abound. They feed on the absence of reliable public information and have contributed and still contribute to the mass hysteria the region has witnessed. Even the most incendiary and unlikely reports are often repeated in the official press, sometimes with skepticism, sometimes without.

The major corporate media in the USA have tended to echo official Kremlin announcements. The invasion was necessary to "contain ethnic hostilities," we read, although neither martial law nor Ministry of Interior troops have been able to protect Azeris or Armenians from goon violence over the past two years. We are told of "centuries of old ethnic vendettas," "centuries of old religious strife," "centuries of violence" between the predominantly Moslem Azerbaijanis and the predominantly Christian Armenians. Such phrases invite readers to dismiss the struggles as a feud among ignorant primitives who deserve each other and who, without

the benevolent civilized and rational intervention by the Kremlin's (Russian) forces to control them would kill each other off.

History of National Struggles

The Caucasus region has been periodically invaded by outsiders for the past 1,000 years and more: Arabs, 8th century; Turks, 11th century; Genghiz Khan, 13th century; Turks again, 16th century; Persia, 17th century; Russia, 19th century; British, Turks, Germans, and Russians, 20th century. And the region, like most others, has had its share of social conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors as well as between the native population and the occupiers. Pogrom-type incidents that occurred over the years have often been perpetrated by repressive local landlords and wealthy elites against working poor, regardless of nationality. In addition, repressive state powers such as the Russian tsar inspired pogroms against Armenians as it did against the Jews in the early years of the century. The Turkish authorities committed massive atrocities not only against other Turks but against Armenians and other national groups in the region. Most horrendous was the massacre of up to 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman Turks in 1915.

All the people of the Caucasus suffered great losses during the Russian civil war (1919-21) against the White counter-revolutionary armies and their imperialist backers and occupation forces. And, of course, the Armenians and Turks, like other peoples of the Caucasus, suffered particularly severely during the Stalin period when the forced collectivization, the purges, and the mass deportations of the mountain peoples caused the death of many millions. The central feature that has characterized the history of the peoples of the Caucasus over the centuries and until today is that they have been oppressed by one power or another. It is these occupying powers, whether of the feudal, bourgeois, imperialist, or Stalinist variety, which have unleashed violence against one nationality or another in this region, not some alleged "interethnic strife."

On the other hand, there are many examples of heroic collaboration of Azeris, Armenians, and others against their oppressors. A prime example was the Baku Soviet in 1918, led by Armenian Bolshevik Stepan Shaumyan, which defended a fledgling workers' and peasants' government against both Azeri and Armenian landlords and capitalists. When the Baku Soviet was unable to survive, 26 of its leaders,

including Shaumyan and Alexei Japaridze, an Azeri, were apprehended by the Social Revolutionaries and executed without trial by the British occupying force under Major-General Thompson. When the bourgeois Turkish forces occupied Baku after the fall of the Baku Soviet, 10,000 Armenians were among those massacred, along with their Azeri comrades, while trying to defend the city.

In fact, there is no evidence of “centuries of religious wars or ethnic vendettas” among Armenians and Azeris per se. That is not to deny that Armenians in Azerbaijan have recently been forced to flee their homes as a result of near-pogroms directed against them. The Azeris who have fled Armenia were also the victims of a terror campaign. The same is true of more than 10,000 Meskhets who were forced to flee the Fergan region of the Uzbek Republic in June 1989. (The Meskhets—deported from their homeland in the Caucasus to Central Asia en masse by Stalin in 1944—had up to then been living peacefully with the native population.) Centuries of ethnic vendettas do not explain why thousands of refugees from the Caucasus were forced to flee their “dwellings” (a large number of them were living in freight cars) in the Novy Uzen region of Kazakhstan in June 1989. The causes of these problems lie elsewhere.

Roots of the Crisis Lie in Bureaucratic Tyranny

Then who or what is behind these massive gangster attacks? What process is unfolding? The current human tragedies have social roots. They are the product of an accumulated economic, social, and cultural stagnation that has resulted from decades of totalitarian, Russian chauvinist rule by the Stalinist bureaucratic caste. The local-level pillars of Stalinism in the USSR—the local party, government, and economic rulers—like those on top, have been accustomed to acting with impunity. Through the decades of Stalin’s terror and repression they benefited from plundering and profiteering; it is their way of life. These bureaucratic layers now find themselves in the midst of populations that are waking up. All sorts of groups and movements are taking shape as people seek to try to utilize the new democratic openings in the USSR. And these movements have undoubtedly gained additional inspiration from the massive rebuke to Stalinism in Eastern Europe.

Awakened masses working to take control over their lives are a deadly threat to the continuation of these local “mafias” and apparatchik fiefdoms—which Moscow has sanctioned and protected since the degeneration of the Russian Revolution in the 1920s. Democracy, national self-determination, workers’ control over the economy, these are not in the interest of the apparatus on any level. There can be little doubt that it is this corrupt layer that is behind the recent wave of goon attacks. Pitting Azeri against Armenian helps confuse the issues and avoid the inevitable. Meanwhile, the great protector in Moscow benefits by this “interethnic rivalry” since such local conflicts disorient the independence movements and give Moscow an excuse to intervene when their local allies can no longer maintain control.

This is what happened in the Caucasus in January 1990. The shipment of tens of thousands of troops into Baku by the Kremlin will do nothing to improve the situation for the

masses of either Azeris or Armenians. There is every reason to believe that the presence of these occupation forces will, however, galvanize the nationalist and social movements of both peoples toward massive resistance. Moreover, it is creating problems in the rest of the USSR. Opposition among Russians who don’t want to be involved in this military aggression was so intense that by January 19, just four days after the invasion was launched, “the Kremlin abandoned its emergency mobilization of army reserves . . . after an outpouring of protests from Russian parents unwilling to see their sons involved in such a conflict. As a mother from Stavropol, Gorbachev’s home region, put it: ‘We don’t want the people of those republics to call us occupiers. We don’t want another Afghanistan.’”²

Nagorno-Karabagh

Among the widespread areas where glasnost has led to the growth of massive movements of non-Russians against Russification and for their national rights, the Caucasus region has been the scene of the most sustained activity. The vanguard in the struggles that have unfolded in this region has been the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabagh, which is demanding the right of self-determination. Their struggle has exposed the limits of the Stalinists’ tolerance for openness.

The Nagorno-Karabagh Autonomous Oblast is an area about the size of the state of Rhode Island, with a population of approximately 160,000, of which 80 percent is Armenian.³ Historically an Armenian region, Nagorno, or Mountainous, Karabagh was one of three Armenian regions declared part of the larger Armenian Republic by the Azerbaijan Revolutionary Committee in Baku—the Bolshevik revolutionary government of workers and peasants—December 1, 1920. However, six months later, the Bolshevik Party’s Caucasian Bureau under Stalin’s control reversed this and declared Nagorno-Karabagh and Nakhichevan, another Armenian region, part of the Azerbaijan Republic. Bureaucratic policies of neglect as well as Russification over the next 50 years have reduced the Armenians in Nakhichevan to only two percent of the population which allows it to now be referred to as an Azeri region “cut off from the Azerbaijan Republic by a strip of Armenia.” However, the Nagorno-Karabagh population remained predominantly Armenian, despite the local bosses’ anti-Armenian prejudices and their periodic violence against Armenians.⁴ Throughout the Stalin period, despite the repression and terror, the demand for reunification with Armenia continued to inspire a movement there.

By February 1988, a movement for self-determination in Nagorno-Karabagh and the growing movements for self-determination in Armenia merged forces. The Armenians had begun the year before to organize against the widespread pollution of their air and water by such enterprises as the Nairit Scientific-Production Complex located in the suburbs of Yerevan. It had not only polluted a large share of the republic’s water supply but led to a variety of lung, heart, and other ailments, and a high rate of stillborn births and birth defects in newborns. For example, half the babies born in the industrial regions of Yerevan are either

stillbirths or so suffer from birth defects that they die within 40 days or are permanently disabled.⁵ There was also a large movement demanding the 880-megaton nuclear power plant located just 25 kilometers from the republic's capital Yerevan be closed down, and it subsequently was. It came to be recognized as a deadly threat to the population, situated as it was in an earthquake-prone region — especially after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

Since its inception, the struggle of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabagh has met with stiff resistance from the Stalinist apparatus. Although some of the most blatantly corrupt party bosses have been dismissed by the Kremlin and replaced from time to time, the apparatus remains in place. While the mass movement, with its demonstrations, petitions, and strikes pushed a majority of the local bureaucrats in the Nagorno-Karabagh parliament to sanction the demand for reunification with the Armenian Republic in late February 1988, it was not until June 16 of that year, after ongoing demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of Armenians supported by strikes in both the Armenian Republic and Nagorno-Karabagh, that the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian Republic voted to request that the Azerbaijan republican apparatus relinquish its claim on the Nagorno-Karabagh region.

Two days later, on June 18, the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan Republic firmly under the control of the local Stalinist apparatus voted to retain its control over Nagorno-Karabagh, reflecting the sentiments of first secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, Kyamran Bagirov. When he addressed a crowd of thousands in Baku June 13, 1988, he said: "I would rather part with my wife than with Nagorno-Karabagh."⁶ The first secretary of the Communist Party's Nagorno-Karabagh District Committee, V. Kevorkov, had declared in February, to an assembly of party functionaries in Stepanakert, "We will die, but we will not give up Karabagh. . . . I will turn Karabagh into an Armenian graveyard."⁷

The Kremlin replaced Kevorkov before the end of February. It has, however, over the past two years, maintained essentially Kevorkov's position against the "Armenian nationalist extremists" who want self-determination for Nagorno-Karabagh and has refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Armenian demands. This easily allows the Kremlin to blame "extremists on both sides" for any conflicts that arise.

Azeri National Struggle

In addition to the struggle of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabagh and the Armenians in Armenia for self-determination, the struggle of the Azeris and others in the Azerbaijan Republic to rid themselves of the rulers imposed by the Kremlin has also been building over the last few years.

Akshine Alizade, an Azeri and the first secretary of the Board of Composers Union expressed his sympathy for the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabagh while indicating some shared reasons for discontent among Azeris, in an article in *Izvestia*, December 2, 1988: "The people's pain has built up and now the steam is beginning to be released. I remember the terrible living conditions in Baku. I myself, until I was 40

years old, had to write music in a one-room apartment for my family of four. And nobody cared! In school, I was taught neither the history of my people nor its culture; the Azeri language was only offered formally and in a superficial way. The gaps in my education had to be filled later, outside the schools. Without even living in Nagorno-Karabagh, I can say with certainty that there is no opera, no concert to listen to there; the youth are deprived of contact with their culture."

In Azerbaijan itself, glasnost seemed to be making slow progress in penetrating through the encrusted Stalinist apparatus whose corrupt, heavy-handed methods of control are legend. Due to the Azerbaijan Republic's strategic importance as a producer of oil and oil-drilling equipment, the Kremlin has no intention of taking chances by extending its liberal-sounding rhetoric to the region. Instead, it has relied on the most reactionary elements to keep the popular movements in check.

It was not until the summer of 1989 that an organization like the Azerbaijan Popular Front (APF) emerged, articulating in some way the massive popular discontent; and the APF only managed to gain recognition through a month-long strike of railroad workers.

Political Revolution

The experience of the Caucasus region in the Russian Revolution of 1917 is important to remember when considering present-day developments. The peoples of the region never experienced the full exuberance and hope of the revolution as the workers of Petrograd and Moscow did. It was only after the imperialist-backed bloody counterrevolution had been defeated by the Red Army — at the cost of the lives of hundreds of thousands of Caucasus Communists and others — that Soviet power was established there. Moreover, the Red Army in the Caucasus was under the direction of Stalin, with such people as Ordzhonikidze, Beria, and Kirov taking positions of authority. Their later crimes against the revolution as a whole had an ominous beginning in the heavy-handed, antidemocratic way they administered the region during the immediate post-civil war period.

Lenin's last writings on the nationalities question were his response to early manifestations of such abuse in late 1922. They were directed toward placing the revolution solidly on the side of the non-Russian victims. That is why these writings apply so aptly today. Recent events are the historic consequences of the bureaucracy's defeat of Lenin's recommendations and proposals in 1922-23 and of the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky which was suppressed in the late 1920s and '30s. Their struggle in defense of proletarian democracy and internationalism against the usurpation of power by the Stalinist bureaucratic apparatus represented the continuation of the battle Lenin had begun. The ruling bureaucratic caste, now as then, at both the national and the local levels, is a deadly threat to the survival of both the Azeri and Armenian people as well as a consistent obstacle to the fulfillment of their just aspirations. The caste of bureaucratic rulers will need to be overthrown and replaced by democratic workers' and peasants' rule in order to adequately address the people's problems.

In the present situation, the Azeris and Armenians need to organize themselves in independent soviet republics so as to begin to break the stranglehold of the central Stalinist apparatus that props up the local bosses. This is a major phase of the political revolution in the Caucasus region and elsewhere in the USSR. There is more and more evidence that the masses in the Caucasus region have essentially come to this conclusion; and that the policies of the Kremlin and its local henchmen have been directed precisely toward forestalling such an eventuality.

Let us examine briefly the recent background to the January invasion by reviewing some high points of the struggle over the past two years.

Two Years of Struggle

From February to July 1988, the mass mobilizations in Nagorno-Karabagh and Armenia, accompanied by periodic strikes, failed to win concessions from the Kremlin. Moscow's response was to send troops into Stepanakert and other regions of Nagorno-Karabagh and into Yerevan and other cities of Armenia, and to impose martial law to try to stop the growth of independent popular mass organizations. Armenians had protested frequent goon attacks organized by local bosses in the Nagorno-Karabagh region. But their protests were not addressed. It was the power of these local bosses that the troops were defending.

In the case of the Sumgait attack in late February 1988, although Armenians had a number of witnesses who testified that it was well coordinated and that the attackers were supplied with names and addresses of Armenian targets, no effort was made to punish the real organizers. Dozens of people were arrested and sentenced. But those higher-ups who were responsible were not included.

Every effort was made by the Kremlin to discredit the Armenian movement, with the central press slandering local Armenian activists as "extremists." Troops continued to occupy Yerevan, protecting government buildings, and curfews were imposed to limit the movement's ability to organize effectively. Despite the presence of troops and tanks, the strikes and protests continued in the Armenian regions throughout the spring and into the summer of 1988. Although there were reports of violence against civilians, the movement was not intimidated into silence.

The failure of the 19th Party Conference in late June and early July 1988 to address the problems in the Caucasus—either the Nagorno-Karabagh problem or any other economic, social, or political problem—led to renewed protests in three capitals of the region, Baku, Stepanakert, and Yerevan.

Speaking at the 19th Party Conference, the new first secretary of the Armenian Communist Party, Soren Arutyunyan, described some of the social crises that have resulted from the bureaucrats' policies: "Our social conditions are very bad," he said. He spoke of the substandard conditions with respect to housing, childcare, hospitals, polyclinics, in consumer goods and in cultural institutions. "Many families, particularly in Yerevan, still live in dilapidated, temporary houses, and in cellars. Food production has not increased. A large percentage of our able-

bodied population is not occupied with social production. The problem of water and the ecological situation remain serious."⁸

Abandoning expectations of any support from the Kremlin, the Nagorno-Karabagh parliament declared itself independent and reclaimed its historic name, Artsakh, on July 12, 1988.

The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, on July 18, 1988, in its promised review of the situation, voted unanimously to reject the Nagorno-Karabagh legislative decision to withdraw from the Azerbaijan Republic. Even the Armenian member of the Presidium failed to support it. The deputy chairman of the Presidium, Pyotr N. Demichev, who had made frequent trips to the Caucasus to oversee the crisis, threatened to close the enterprises that were on strike in the region if the workers did not return to work.⁹

The massive movement in Armenia, in support of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabagh, then began meeting regularly. Strikes began in the Armenian Republic and in Nagorno-Karabagh demanding reunification of the two regions. In July and August 1988, troops were reinforced in both regions and martial law imposed. But the movements did not stop.

On September 9, a million people filled the streets of Yerevan calling for unification of the two Armenian regions. A general strike began September 17, demanding an emergency session of the Armenian parliament to discuss the matter. One-third of the Armenian legislators signed a petition in an emergency session calling for the transfer of Nagorno-Karabagh to Armenia. But on September 21, the Armenian authorities rejected the appeal. More Interior Ministry troops and army vehicles were dispatched to Nagorno-Karabagh, Yerevan, and 16 regions of the Armenian Republic on September 21, and martial law conditions were in effect. But strikes continued. Already by then, 20,000 Azeris had fled Armenia, some of whom were being settled in Nagorno-Karabagh, particularly in Shusha, a city inhabited predominantly by Azeris that is located less than ten miles from the capital of Nagorno-Karabagh, Stepanakert.¹⁰

By mid-October, a few concessions had been granted to the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabagh. They could receive the Armenian television broadcasts from Yerevan, more telephone lines were to be installed, and a new highway from northern Armenia to Stepanakert was promised.

But reports were also surfacing that plant managers were dismissing workers on the basis of their nationality. Armenians were being dismissed by plant managers in Shusha and Azeris were allegedly being dismissed by plant managers in Stepanakert, predominantly Armenian although those in power were not Armenian. More refugees were the result, since loss of job meant loss of housing.

Such massive dislocations aroused anger, fear, and resentment. However, despite a state of martial law and the presence of additional reinforcements of troops from Moscow, the authorities behaved as if they were powerless to call these plant managers to order, protect the dismissed workers from reprisals, give them back their jobs, and guarantee that they had homes! This was all happening under the nose and under the protection of martial law! Yet

it was reported in the press as if it were an act of nature, beyond the state's control.

While strikes continued throughout the region in September and early October, in mid-October a mass meeting in Yerevan's Opera Square voted for the suspension of strikes in expectation of a positive response from the Armenian Supreme Soviet scheduled for November 21.

In preparation for the meeting of the USSR Supreme Soviet scheduled for late November 1988, mass movements began developing throughout the country as people sought to press their economic and social demands. A series of constitutional amendments were up for a vote. The Kremlin was encouraging people to write letters to express their points of view. Millions preferred a more direct approach—demonstrating in the streets. The Supreme Soviets of the republics were to meet to vote on the amendments in the weeks preceding the meeting of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

Much attention was focused on the Estonian Republic whose local Supreme Soviet on November 16 offered its own amendment: for its parliament to have veto power over legislation of the USSR Supreme Soviet that applied to the Estonian Republic. Such an amendment would make it possible to veto ecologically damaging industrial projects such as the Kremlin has been preparing for it. As data recently available has shown, there are many such projects already in existence, and the right to stop them is truly a life-and-death question. (*Moscow News* regularly reports examples, many of which have served as a focus of public protests.) Across the Union, activities were organized in support of the Estonian amendment.

Mass demonstrations in the streets of Baku starting in mid-November were fueled by such environmental and health issues. The petrochemical industries in the Baku region have caused deadly pollution problems.

Legitimate Demands

The Armenian Supreme Soviet opened on November 21. It adjourned and postponed further meetings without making any decisions. By then more troops had been dispatched to the region. On November 22, it was announced that these demonstrations were growing massive in Baku. Troops had also been sent there and martial law declared. A few activists announced a hunger strike against the troop occupation and their protest inspired the movement's growth.

While the central press has consistently presented the Azerbaijan movement as an anti-Armenian mob, and while the apparatus has been consistently anti-Armenian and has gone out of its way to turn the movements against each other instead of against the Stalinist bosses, and while the apparatus has worked to make retention by Azerbaijan of Nagorno-Karabagh the central issue, the people of Azerbaijan were mobilizing themselves around their own, legitimate demands. It is this part of the movement that the Kremlin has sought to derail.

As the demands of both Armenians and Azeris seem to indicate, there was support for a resolution, like one passed by the Estonian parliament, that would give the republic the power to veto decisions of the USSR Supreme Soviet. There

were also widespread expectations that the Supreme Soviet would pass measures to improve the deteriorating living conditions in the region.

On December 1, 1988, the Supreme Soviet accepted a set of constitutional amendments offered by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, including measures for the reorganization of the government and electoral process. But nothing emerged from the meeting that addressed the pressing economic and social problems of the day. The Estonian resolution on the rights of the republics was rejected. None of the deputies from the Caucasus even supported it. Gorbachev's declaration that the parliament's decisions had opened "a new chapter in the development of soviet statehood on the basis of democratization and popular self-government" rang hollow and made people mad.

In the Caucasus this anger was intensified due to the docility of their deputies before the ruling central apparatus. Mass, round-the-clock protests broke out in all three republics.

Moskovskiy Novosti in its December 4, 1988, issue reported on the demonstrations in Baku. Its reporter's coverage was typical of those of the central press that had so outraged the Azeris and the Armenians. It repeated gory rumors without establishing fact—feeding fears, prejudices, and misunderstanding. Toward the end of the article, however, the reporter did manage to include a few substantial demands that had been mobilizing thousands in the streets for "days on end":

The people are demanding the truth about the corruption, and the punishment of those who have presided over the gross illegalities for years; they want an improvement of the ecological situation in the republic, and of the conditions of life and work. They demand that the people's history be returned to them, their history that was distorted by textbooks since the times of Stalin and cut off from the present-day youth by two arbitrary changes of the Azerbaijani alphabet so that now one can rarely find anyone who is able to read not only the books from the early part of the century, but even the inscriptions on their grandparents' grave-stones.

The Azeris have had three different alphabets since the revolution: Their Arabic alphabet was changed to Latin by Stalin in 1927 and Latin to Cyrillic in 1937 creating an awesome obstacle to communication, knowledge of history, and cultural continuity.

Bureaucratic Manipulation

The occupying troops of the Ministry of the Interior consistently tried to disperse the demonstrators. Two Azeris and one Armenian were killed by troops in Baku in the early morning of December 4. But by then, the republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan were already in deep crisis.

Under the watchful eyes of the Ministry of Interior a mass of refugees was created. Between roughly November 21, 1988—that is the day the minister of interior ordered in the troops—and December 1, 50,000 Azeris had arrived in Baku and about 50,000 Armenians had arrived in Yerevan, ac-

according to the party newspaper *Pravda*. The government newspaper, *Izvestia*, which began covering the events in the Caucasus November 25, provided only the barest information as to what issues were behind the massive disorders.

For example, although the *Izvestia* reporter noted on November 27 that the *Izvestia* offices in Baku were inundated with agitated inquiries of "Why aren't you writing about what is going on in Baku? Why are you hiding the truth from the people?" the articles never did give more than a naive, tourist-type account. The November 27 report ended with the lines: "Now, as these lines are being written, the voices of one speaker after another, magnified by a megaphone, resound over the square," without a hint as to what these speakers were talking about.

In describing the mass protests in Yerevan and other cities in the Armenian Republic, November 26, in the midst of martial law, the reporter did note that the speakers' remarks concerned "amendments to the Constitution of the USSR, carrying out decisions of the directive organs about Nagorno-Karabagh, and some problems of the republic's life" but gave no details as to what the "problems" were.

The extent to which the central press had distorted the events was evidenced by the fact that at certain points local printers in Azerbaijan simply refused to print *Izvestia*, the government paper, because it either failed to report the events or reported them in a way that was distorted and false.¹¹ In Armenia, circulation of *Pravda* dropped from 36,000 to only 1,600 in October of 1988, at the height of the popular mobilizations.

Finally, on November 28, 1988, *Izvestia* reported the causes of the protests in Baku: "They want the enforcement of the all-Union laws. In July the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet affirmed that Nagorno-Karabagh remained part of Soviet Azerbaijan. A program for the socio-economic development of the region was adopted. Hundreds of millions of rubles were allotted for this. In fact, neither the decision nor the program have been implemented. . . . The reason [for the demonstrations] is the inaction of the organs of power, Republic and Union. That is what brought these people into the square. . . . 'Our movement is not anti-Armenian, anti-Soviet, or anti-socialist,'" one protestor was quoted as saying. When asked why the five activists in the square were on hunger strike, the protestor answered: "They say that they will cease when the tanks are withdrawn from the city."

It was obvious — from repeated calls to return to work and to classes — that strikes were still widespread despite the martial law. Refugees continued to arrive.

The *Izvestia* reporter in Yerevan wrote on November 28 that the situation was still "complicated." "The fundamental demand of the people is to guarantee the security of the Armenian population of Azerbaijan. Around 7,000 refugees have arrived. They are placed in rest homes, resorts, and with relatives. This increases the tension. In recent days in Leninakan, Kirovokan, and other cities of Armenia meetings have taken place." By then the curfew affected Baku, Nakhichevan, and Kirovabad as well.

By November 29, 1988, 1,400 had been arrested in Yerevan and 867 in Baku.

On November 29, the *Izvestia* reporter in Baku went to the Regional Party Committee building that is now a military

headquarters. Major A. Kozyaichev reported that "there are now two main problems: Mass firings of Armenians and inquiries as to how to leave the city. . . . If people were fired illegally (and many such cases exist) we immediately establish order. . . . People are arriving from Armenia having left everything they had behind."

It would seem that those responsible for the "illegal firings" could have been easily located and removed and their actions rescinded. But this was not done because those doing the firing were part of the bureaucratic order the troops were there to defend.

The November 30 *Izvestia* report stated in its last paragraph that in Armenia and Azerbaijan rumors were circulating that *officials* in both republics had ordered that Azerbaijanis in Armenia and Armenians in Azerbaijan must leave the republics within 24 hours. The report went on to say: "This is too ridiculous to be believed or refuted. . . . We affirm that this is false!" But the report also stated that Armenians had heard the rumor that such a warning had been on Azerbaijan television! Whether it was rumor or fact, its appearance in the official press spreads confusion at best, or feeds panic.

On December 1, 1988, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR lamely resolved that talks should be conducted toward the normalization of the situation, that the republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan should establish "peace and normality," and called on workers on both sides to forget their troubles and "work for perestroika."

The *New York Times* report of December 7, just a day before news of that day's earthquake had been received, said that: "official information services in Armenia and Azerbaijan put the total number of refugees at about 156,000." It was later admitted that the number was almost twice that.¹²

Who bears responsibility for this? Was it irresponsible "nationalist extremists"? Was it "interethnic vendettas"? The Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers themselves exposed this fraud. On December 6' *Izvestia* published a resolution from these bodies "On Impermissible Actions of Responsible Individuals of the Local Organs of the Azerbaijan and Armenian SSR Forcing Citizens to Flee Their Place of Residence." It stated that:

Local organs for the implementation of law are not, in many instances, applying required measures to restore order and are not resisting actions of extremist elements [who have been] taking actions leading to mass eviction and exodus. . . . These actions are taking place with the connivance and frequently with the direct involvement of individual local party, government, and economic officials." The resolution cynically condemned these "violations," demanded the law be upheld and that the persons guilty of such violations be fired and expelled. It called for assistance to the refugees so that people "can return to their homes and work."

Two officials were subsequently relieved from their duties in an outlying region of Azerbaijan. But in the year since

(Continued on page 27)

Lloyd D'Aguilar's statement in this article that "it now seems quite plausible, especially in the case of Poland and Hungary, that capitalism could be restored without there being any violent counterrevolution" raises an important theoretical problem that is currently being debated on the left. For a different assessment on this question see "What Is at Stake in Poland" by Steve Bloom, on page 9 of this issue.

The Bulletin in Defense of Marxism wholeheartedly agrees with D'Aguilar that "the bureaucracy has certainly helped to make the conditions riper for the restoration of capitalism." We also agree with his conclusions about the impact of diplomatic agreements between Bush and Gorbachev on third world struggles.

National Liberation Struggles as a Casualty of Ending the Cold War

by Lloyd D'Aguilar

Malta was his first summit meeting, and George Bush was determined not to allow Mikhail Gorbachev to upstage him as he did with his predecessor, Ronald Reagan. Taking note of events in Eastern Europe, he went to the summit with a pledge to "once and for all end the cold war." Bush did not want to be seen, in other words, as the lone cold war warrior dragging his feet while the people of Europe were speaking their minds in the streets.

To be sure, such sentiments are being widely echoed throughout the Western media, though some sections are cautioning that it might not be in the West's best interest to diffuse tensions with the "socialist bloc" countries. After all, wouldn't this make the need for NATO redundant? And what about the arms industry which feeds off this constant state of war preparedness? Fear is being expressed that many companies, especially the smaller ones, might go under if there is a reduced demand for weapons of destruction.

Clearly it would be naive to accept at face value any talk emanating from the West about ending the cold war. Superficial observation alone reveals that the cold war serves very deep political and economic needs, not to mention psychological ones. Ending the cold war is much more than the symbolical tearing down of the Berlin wall and being able to travel, as important as those measures might be. Much deeper issues are at stake — especially for the "third world." After all, the cold war might have originated in Europe, but it is on third world terrain that it has mostly been fought so far. This article argues that the US ruling class is not really serious about ending this aspect of the cold war, and examines how the new relationship between the US and the USSR is likely to negatively affect the struggle for political and economic self-determination in the so-called third world.

Origins and Basis of the Cold War

It is only necessary to briefly repeat what are the origins and basis of the cold war. Its origins lie in the post-World War II antagonisms which developed between the Western allies and the Soviet Union over the de facto division of Europe into respective spheres of influence. (World War II

it should be pointed out is being used here only as a demarcation point — since there already existed tensions between the Soviet Union, then the only existing workers' state in the world, and the rest of the imperialist powers, who at first tolerated Nazi Germany in the hope that it might become a beachhead for undermining the Soviet Union and Soviet influence in the German workers' movement.) The Soviet use of its "influence" to drive the old East European ruling classes from power and to restructure these economies along Soviet lines was not well received by the capitalist powers. This new economic and political bloc would soon evolve into a military bloc as well, creating a potential rival to US military might. As the new dominant imperialist power after the war, the US saw itself as having a mandate to check what it labeled "Soviet expansionism." They were prepared to go to any length to combat this "evil empire" (as Ronald Reagan later was to call it), including the use of nuclear weapons. It did not help either that their former wartime ally had emerged from the war enormously popular in the eyes of Western workers. Still inspired by the October revolution many revolutionary situations erupted throughout Europe as the workers tried to install their own Soviet system. That these workers were betrayed in many cases by leaderships which owed their allegiance to the USSR is indeed ironic — but not unconnected to the concerns of this article.

The US was prepared to live with the new reality in Europe, but was resolved at all costs to frustrate the national liberation struggles in the colonial countries. Vietnam became the real test of that resolve, but Cuba, the Dominican Republic, the Congo, and other countries also felt the effect of the big stick. The basis of US compulsion to maintain control over the neocolonial world is twofold. On the one hand it has huge investments in those countries, and needs access to their markets, raw materials, and military bases. The second aspect has to do with the dynamic nature of the anticolonial struggle: the demand for independence, control over natural resources, land redistribution, etc., invariably raises the need for the liberation forces to move beyond the capitalist framework in order to achieve their minimum democratic program, i.e., what is taken for granted in Western capitalist countries.

In the normal equation of things the Soviet Union is seen as the hidden combatant, even when it is not a direct competitor for market or for raw materials. That's because its social system is seen to represent the alternative model (i.e., state control and planning of the economy in order to limit the impact of the world market) that the liberation forces would be forced to implement if they seriously seek to break the grip of imperialist control. Preventing a linkup between the "socialist bloc" and the third world thus became a primary obsession of the United States. Now that an agreement on nuclear military matters has been reached the "superpowers" have considerably eased the threat of nuclear war and created the conditions for exploring other areas of cooperation. As Gorbachev said before his meeting with Bush, he wanted their discussions to lead to "a new constructive step in the movement from mutual understanding to *mutual action*." [emphasis added]

This desire to reach agreement is driven on the part of the Soviet Union by the need to divert resources to an ailing economy threatened by social upheaval. It also coincides with the coming to power of that section of the Soviet bureaucracy, personified by Mikhail Gorbachev, which sees the development of "market socialism" as the safest way to right the wrongs of bureaucratic mismanagement of the economy. Now that a military "understanding" has been reached, and Bush has indicated that greater economic cooperation will be forthcoming, it is the neocolonial question which demands agreement for "mutual action."

What Should an 'End to the Cold War' Mean?

If the US is serious about ending the cold war, then this ought to have tremendous significance for the third world. Governments have been overthrown, destabilized, and leaders assassinated, or kidnapped—like Gen. Manuel Noriega of Panama—because they were perceived to be moving toward the Soviet camp, or had refused to continue playing ball with the US. Right-wing totalitarian governments, military dictatorships, and all forms of terrorist groups (such as the contras in Nicaragua, Unita in Angola), are supported, on the other hand, insofar as they are prepared to serve US interests.

The key question therefore becomes whether social eruptions—i.e., popular rebellions which are a response to poverty, military repression, etc.—will continue to be treated by the US with hostility simply because they may have socialist leanings, or threaten immediate U.S. military or economic interests. Or will the US now allow third world countries, especially those in her "backyard," to pursue their own path of development and self-determination, as the Soviet Union is presently doing in regard to developments in Eastern Europe. Why should this not become the litmus test of US sincerity to end the cold war? It was, after all, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, along with noninterference by the USSR in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and now Romania which has convinced the West that the Soviets were serious about beginning a new era and that the cold war was really coming to an end.

Despite initial widespread optimism, events seem to suggest that ending the cold war for Bush and the United States ruling class is really a one-way street. The first example of this was the reaction of the United States to the events in El Salvador and the way in which this influenced their approach to the Gorbachev/Bush summit. The legitimacy of the FMLN-led war against the Salvadoran military, the guarantor of right-wing death squads, is dismissed out of hand. Bush had the audacity to call upon Gorbachev to show good faith by making sure that all arms to the FMLN would be cut off. That Gorbachev showed a willingness to cooperate is cause for even greater concern.

Gorbachev has not been willing to publicly challenge the US on its Central American policy, thus bolstering Bush's calculation that a bold military strike could be launched against Panama without risking any serious diplomatic or political consequences. He was right. Moscow denounced the invasion, but was not prepared to create any major embarrassment for the US.

The US concept of ending the cold war seems therefore to be: "Yes—we applaud the movement towards a market economy in Eastern Europe, but the degree of our financial cooperation depends on your going the last mile to help stamp out all non-US controlled insurgencies in the third world and in the Latin American region, in particular." The really crucial question now becomes: Will the Soviet Union go the last mile in helping the US achieve its objective of stifling liberation struggles in the third world?

Consequences of Stalinist Politics

The first thing that should be said in response is that there are no ideological or political principles held by the Kremlin bureaucrats which would prevent the Soviet Union from collaborating with the US police role throughout the world. It is only a question of the degree to which Moscow is willing and able to carry out such a role. The Soviet Union has, after all, long dropped its commitment to bringing about world socialism by revolutionary means. Stalin made this plain not long after Lenin died, when he proclaimed that the USSR had already achieved socialism—the famous "socialism in one country" thesis—and thus could build a communist system, contrary to the teachings of Marx, without it being part of a worldwide socialist system. The resulting modus operandi was a quid pro quo deal with Western capitalist countries where the Soviet Union would hold back on support to the anticolonial revolution in exchange for Western capitalist business.

This position has not changed essentially to the present day, though there have been occasions when circumstances have forced the USSR to provide material and political support to fledgling anticolonial revolutions—Cuba, Vietnam, Angola, etc. That they have done so does not contradict the above statement that they have abandoned the goal of world revolution. This seeming contradiction is only a reflection of the fact that objectively, despite the conservatism of the bureaucracy, Moscow still has a lot to gain both in material and political terms from the triumph of the neocolonial revolution over imperialism. There are thus oc-

casions when the extremism of US policy creates a moral imperative to which they must respond.

The October revolution has affected world history in such a profound way that despite the 180-degree turn on its revolutionary heritage, the USSR is still being called upon for assistance by revolutionary forces struggling against imperialism. This sometimes dovetailed with Soviet realization that their need for self-preservation vis-a-vis the cold war required the further extension of their sphere of influence. The Afghanistan invasion could be cited as the most recent, though we would hasten to add, misguided example of Soviet reaction to feelings of encroachment. In many respects, therefore, the Soviet Union has had much in common with the third world insofar as it *has* also been the object of imperialist aggression.

What is different about the current situation is that the ideological and political bankruptcy of the Soviet regime combined with the current economic pressures have created the conditions for them to move away from being a passive supporter of liberation struggles to one of more conscious cooperation with the counterrevolutionary policies of the US. This could very well tip the scales in a very decisive way against certain national liberation struggles. Providing assistance for US counterrevolutionary policies does not mean having to join US invasions. A further reduction of military and political aid to the remaining popular insurgencies and revolutionary governments, as a pragmatic matter, would be a severe blow—especially in the cases of Nicaragua and El Salvador (even though Moscow is not directly assisting the FMLN). There is already indication that in Southern Africa the African National Congress (ANC) has been somewhat weakened by the way in which the Angola/Namibia deal was brokered. As Peter Blumer says in the December 11, '89, issue of *International Viewpoint*:

The nature of the USSR's support for the ANC has thus changed. Having been the trump card in the ANC's diplomatic and military policy for 20 years, Soviet aid is now entirely directed towards the project of a short-term negotiated settlement with the apartheid regime. And, if De Klerk is accelerating his overtures, it is because, at the international level, he enjoys new conditions and guarantees.

Reasons for Policy of the Bureaucrats

The extent to which the USSR will now increase its cooperation with the US in settling "regional conflicts" depends in part, we believe, on the degree to which the Soviet bureaucracy is willing to deepen Soviet economic integration into the world market. The more concessions they grant to Western capital (not just to local capitalist forces), the greater the leverage that the US will have in being able to wring concessions on global political questions.

The impetus for making a deal stems from the fact that the Soviet bureaucracy is on the defensive as far as its workers are concerned. After decades of repression designed to reinforce the ruling position of the party and the bureaucracy, the masses are now beginning to stir and to show signs of self-activity. Perestroika has yet to produce any positive results for the workers and the problem of consumer

shortages remains widespread.¹ Gorbachev is therefore under tremendous pressure to satisfy the consumer demands of the workers. The self-interest of the bureaucracy dictates a short-term expediency of granting concessions to capital while leaving the bureaucracy intact with its power and privileges.

As to how far the bureaucracy will go in granting concessions to local and foreign capital, this is directly connected to an outstanding theoretical debate in the far left movement about whether capitalism *has been* restored in the Soviet bloc. Though one is persuaded by the argument that capitalism in all its manifestations has not been restored, it now seems quite plausible, especially in the case of Poland and Hungary, that capitalism could be restored without there being any violent counterrevolution as has been argued.² In any event, whether violent or not, the bureaucracy has certainly helped to make the conditions riper for the restoration of capitalism.

The main point however is that whether the restoration is partial or complete these countries are now without question moving more directly under the sway of Western capitalism as they open up to investments and to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It is reported for example that Western Europe and other "industrial democracies" have pledged \$6 billion to Hungary and Poland. Poland has now in fact signed an agreement with the IMF which is already having a severe impact on the standard of living of the working class.

National and Racial Conflict

Politicians in the East and West countries are now talking about the re-creation of a "united Western civilization" while Gorbachev has joined the fray with a call for a "common" European home.

So what does this denouement in the cold war mean for the third world? Should we become paranoid and view this as the final thrust for the unification of the "civilized" white race against the peoples of color? To be sure these fears are not all unfounded. Racism and anti-Semitism have far from disappeared in the East. There are reports of Nazi elements and "skinhead" types surfacing in the popular demonstrations in East Germany. We see the bitter hostility being demonstrated towards the minority Turks in Bulgaria.

The world also recently witnessed the ugly incidents of African students being attacked in China—with the complicity of state authorities. National oppression continues to rage throughout the whole region, though it is fair to say that for the first time the nationalities and minorities are fighting back in a real way. Will the Soviet Union grant the nationalities their right to secede as provided in the constitution or will force be used to crush their resistance? This is a very crucial component of the current struggles. The natural third world fear in all of these developments is that if racism and national oppression triumph then there would be even less sensitivity to the racism practiced by the imperialist powers towards people of color outside of Europe.

One other paradoxical situation has been recent calls for the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel as a sort of atonement for having condoned anti-Semitic practices

against Jews. One wonders what this will mean as far as an attitude towards the Palestinians and their struggle for self-determination against the Zionists is concerned. In the Middle East the Soviets are certainly giving signals that they intend to assist the US in selling the Palestinians short.

Now that scapegoats are being sought to explain the economic crises of these postcapitalist countries, it is most unsettling that Cuba might become one of the victims. It is not uncommon for Soviet intellectuals, even at the highest levels, to call for a cutback in the support that is provided to Cuba, as if the Cubans are taking bread out of the mouths of hungry Soviet children.

This attitude towards Cuba is not an isolated instance of intellectuals trying to peddle ideas but reflects signals coming from Moscow to the effect that Cuba is a liability in the scheme of rapprochement with Washington. To undermine even further Cuba's internationalist stance, given its heroic assistance to the Angolans, its commitment to Nicaragua, and its willingness to confront US imperialism in the Latin American and Caribbean region, would certainly be one of the real casualties of ending the cold war. There is nothing that would give Washington more delight than to see Cuba brought into line by Moscow.

Cuba has become so leery of developments taking place in the East that Castro has banned Soviet publications [*Sputnik*, *Moscow News*], misguidedly we believe, because it is claimed that these publications seek to undermine socialism. Castro has expressed his opposition to perestroika and glasnost. The expressed fear is that glasnost and perestroika go hand in hand as a disguised attempt to reintroduce capitalism. That Castro should reject democratization of the USSR and Cuba is unacceptable, even though one would support his rejection of perestroika and support his continued attempts to assist liberation struggles in Africa and Central America. This is the best example of why it is absolutely necessary for revolutionaries to be clear in the way they assess the stakes, from a class point of view, of the developments under way in Eastern Europe and the USSR.

Third world liberation does, therefore, have some cause for concern about the way the balance of forces line up at the moment even while we support the process towards greater democratic freedoms. We support glasnost (i.e., democratization in the USSR) even while recognizing that the present short-term balance of forces do not favor proletarian internationalism. There is no other way in which the forces who favor proletarian internationalism will come to the fore. Developments in Eastern Europe are far from settled, and while it is important not to fall into the trap of impressionism by making hasty conclusions, it is one's duty to call attention to the possible short-term consequences of the ongoing upsurge, and the dangers it presents for the third world component of the international working class struggle.

In conclusion we may summarize the following points:

● 1) On the ideological level, though it appears that the final nails are now being driven into the coffin of the idea that socialism is an alternative to capitalism, this is far from being the case. It is a confusion which nonetheless affects the entire workers' movement, but has a more unsettling political effect in the third world where poverty is in the extreme, and the

need for social change is most pressing. It still remains part of the popular consciousness that socialism has a much greater chance of success in an industrial environment and thus the point will not be lost that it is the workers in the industrialized countries who now seem to be rejecting socialism.³ Revolutionary Marxists need to redouble their efforts to address the question of what the workers in Eastern Europe are really rejecting.

● 2) At the level of propaganda, in view of Gorbachev's noninterventionist handling of the situation in Eastern Europe, the authoritarian and militaristic response of the US to national liberation struggles will expose it even more for its imperialist nature and thus make its cold war rationalizations for its actions less plausible and less acceptable to the American people. Hopefully this will stimulate the US left into adopting a bolder posture of opposing US foreign policy and demanding that it follow the standard set by the Soviet Union in regard to the rest of Eastern Europe.

● 3) An intellectual challenge has been forced upon the Stalinist left in the third world in terms of a need to conduct an urgent reassessment of their heritage. While we do not necessarily expect this reassessment to lead in the direction of revolutionary conclusions we would at least expect a serious debate on the Stalinist dogmatic concept of a one-party workers' state. Revolutionary Marxists should take full advantage of this opening and boldly initiate discussion.

Finally, without doubt, we are entering a new stage in the struggle for a world socialist society. Despite the contradictions and the groping which we see in Eastern Europe, we should never forget this is nonetheless part of an irreversible process that will inevitably result in the workers achieving political power, at long last, giving a new impetus to workers' struggles not only in the third world but in the imperialist countries as well. Revolutionaries are challenged to take maximum advantage of all the openings which have thus been created. ●

Notes

1. It is in this context that it is doubtful that Gorbachev and the Communist Party can continue to indefinitely resist the call for a repeal of Article six of the constitution which guarantees the party monopoly over state institutions. Its repeal could very well bring forces to power who are even more amenable to accommodating the US.

2. See Ernest Mandel's article in *International Viewpoint* No. 172. He categorically rules out the possibility of a peaceful restoration of capitalism. While I agree with his assessment of the difficulties involved in a "spontaneous" restoration of capitalism as a result of a widening of "market mechanisms," I believe his analysis inadequately takes into account the contradictory nature of the current level of worker consciousness (totally opposed to the current system which denies them basic consumer goods), and who could sanction out of ignorance, a selling-out of the means of production to Western capital, as is happening in Poland, in the hope that Western style capitalism might bring prosperity. This would not in the short run, at least, pose any threat to the position of upper-level bureaucrats.

3. It will be argued that it is Stalinist bureaucratic mismanagement and not socialism which is being rejected, and though this is true, it is much too mechanistic a response. The present level of consciousness in Eastern Europe has deep roots in the years of repression which will not be easily overcome, and which cannot be dismissed with neat phrases. Insofar as the workers do not gain the initiative and exercise political control over the process it is likely to be the rather large anti-communist intellectual strata which will gain the upper hand—in the short term at any rate.

Eastern Strikers Face Huge Obstacles

Militant Newspaper Sees Victory in Each Setback

by Bill Onasch

The strike by 8,500 Eastern mechanics, baggage handlers, and other ground personnel, members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), has been a center of attention in both the bourgeois and working class press. This strike, which began March 4, 1989, and was supported by thousands of pilots and flight attendants for several months, attracted interest for several reasons:

- It broke a pattern of more than a decade of concessions by the Eastern unions to management.
- It initially disrupted the travel plans of thousands.
- It raised the possibility of a far broader challenge by labor with the threat of shutting down virtually all of the nation's airlines and railroads in sympathy with the Eastern strikers.

The strike was also viewed as important because it was the first major labor problem for the Bush administration. The interaction between the White House and the union bureaucracy would be seen as setting the tone for labor relations for the next four years. What happened?

- The Bush administration refused to accommodate the IAM bureaucracy by intervening in the strike. Bush showed that he would be "firm" in dealing with labor.
- After two-bit lower courts issued preliminary injunctions against picketing other carriers—clearly a violation of the union's rights under the Railway Labor Act—the IAM backed off from the threat of wider solidarity actions.
- After only a few days, Eastern filed for bankruptcy protection. The IAM's central strategy then became finding a new owner for Eastern. They offered even greater concessions than present owner Frank Lorenzo had demanded to try to attract an enlightened capitalist rescuer.

After a few weeks it was clear that not only was Eastern Airlines bankrupt—so was the bureaucracy of the IAM, the Air Lines Pilots Association (ALPA), and the Transport Workers Union (TWU). The labor skates settled in for a long war of attrition with a bankrupt company—a strategy for disaster.

The Eastern workers have shown great courage and determination. They have received the sympathy of wide sections of the working class. But sympathy and even material support for their strike funds are insufficient to overcome the dead-end policies of their leaders. After several months of supporting the IAM strike, the pilots, reluctantly, ended their sympathy action and offered to return to work. The flight attendants of the TWU—who never received a nickel

in strike benefits from their own union—felt compelled to go back to work as well. The IAM stands alone on the picket line.

It is too early to predict the future of the carrier. As this is written there is still speculation that Eastern may yet be liquidated, or merged with Lorenzo's union-free airline, Continental. But Eastern has made progress in reestablishing itself as a scaled-down carrier—which was clearly Lorenzo's plan whether there had been a strike or not. Whatever the future of Eastern the prospects for the IAM strikers returning to their jobs with a decent union contract are bleak indeed.

But not everyone is pessimistic. Pollyanna is alive and well on lower Manhattan's West Street and writing in the *Militant*, under various *noms de plume*.

From the beginning of the strike, the *Militant*, weekly newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party, tended to exaggerate its importance, implying that it was the most significant labor battle since the postwar upsurge. They were not alone in this overreaction; others on the left made similar wild declarations. This is somewhat understandable because this strike came after such a long dry spell. 1986-88 marked the biggest downturn in major strikes since the 1920s. A little exaggeration about current struggles is probably inevitable and not necessarily too harmful. Eventually things get put into their proper perspective.

There were several factors that contributed to the *Militant's* enthusiasm: unlike some other recent militant strikes, such as the Austin, Minnesota, Hormel packing-house struggle and the Jay, Maine, paperworkers fight, which were local labor battles, or the Pittston miners strike which had a predominantly regional impact, the Eastern strike is national in scope. In addition, it has differed from some of these recent struggles in that it has had the full blessing of not only the IAM bureaucracy but the entire AFL-CIO top echelon. And, for the first time in a number of years, an SWP fraction happened to be on the scene in a major strike.

Every issue of the *Militant* has featured extensive coverage of the Eastern strike, often providing useful factual information. They have covered the numerous solidarity rallies and picket lines, and have called for more of the same. That's all well and good.

But there has been absolutely no criticism of the bureaucracy's doomed central strategy, no realistic assessment of where the strike has stood at critical junctures, no proposals by the SWP fraction for turning the situation around.

Susan LaMont, writing in the December 15 *Militant*, reports on a conference organized by the SWP in New York

Militant Expels Pilots from Working Class

The November 17, 1989, issue of the *Militant* injected a further curious twist to their assessment of airlines labor. Greg McCartan, writing about the failed buyout of United Airlines, contrasted the ALPA to the IAM in the following way: "The pilots' association took an opposite stand [to the IAM's opposition to the buyout], reflecting the class differences between this layer of professionals and the mechanics, baggage handlers, flight attendants, and other wage workers in the airline industry."

McCartan presents some bizarre arguments to back up his contention that pilots are outside the working class.

"Unlike ramp workers, mechanics, and other airline workers, the pilots cannot produce more per hour. A plane can only fly at a certain speed."

It is true that there is a maximum speed for any given aircraft. There is also a maximum speed for any given tractor or tow-motor used by baggage handlers and ramp workers. There is a maximum speed for the flywheels of punch presses, the engines on lathes, etc., etc. So what?

Just as automation has made those factory workers who remain employed more productive, so has technology reduced the number of workers (or professionals) in the cockpit of aircraft. Navigators and flight engineers have become redundant, their tasks now handled by pilots, thanks to innovations in aircraft instruments and controls.

There is also a trend for pilots to work more hours in a month—a variation on the lengthening of the workday.

McCartan says, "Pilots earn salaries that are based on their monopoly of the profession."

So do carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and other skilled crafts workers.

"These salaries, which after a few years of service grow to \$80,000 a year or more, are higher than the actual value of the pilots' labor power."

This is a remarkable assertion. Why should the airline carriers pay more than the value of the pilot's labor power? Perhaps we should sympathize with the poor capitalists who are being held up by these greedy professionals?

The bosses never pay more than the value of labor power to any group of employees. (Of course there may be individuals who are lazy and incompetent and don't earn their keep. But that's a different, and quite inconsequential question.) The value of labor power is not fixed by pseudo-objective standards such as the velocity of aircraft but is determined by a complex of factors—including the availability of a particular skill combined with such things as social standards of performance and social expectations regarding living standards.

"Moreover, the salaries they command mean that they are able to invest in businesses, real estate, stocks and bonds, or other money-making ventures. They often earn more money from their investments than from the airline they work for."

McCartan does not cite any figures about how "often" pilots earn more from investments

than from their salaries. I suspect that there are few in that category. Don't we all know coworkers, maybe even family members—whether they work in a factory, an office, a hospital, a classroom, or on construction sites—who have investments in stocks and bonds? Or maybe rent out the top of a duplex?

McCartan's arguments sound regrettably similar to what the employers have said over the years about teachers, nurses, technicians. The bosses have always tried to convince these workers that they are professionals with no need for trade unions which are better suited for grubby proles. The National Education Association and the Nurses Association started out with the concept that they were simply professional societies; today they have become transformed, among the most militant unions.

Airline pilots are highly skilled workers in a vitally important industry. As such, they can command very high wages and status. But the capitalists own all the planes, all the gates, all the reservation systems. No airline pilot can go hang up a shingle like a doctor, dentist, or lawyer. To command their high salaries they must sell their skilled labor to a capitalist employer.

There's not really much difference between the situation of pilots and railway engineers. Engineers' penchant for making money has gained them the nickname "hog-head." They earn nearly as much money as pilots. But McCartan wouldn't try to read the hog-heads out of the working class. In fact, some SWP members have become engineers in their "turn to industry."

in early December which focused much of its attention on the Eastern strike. Present were ten members on strike. A lengthy report was given by Ernie Mailhot, a striking aircraft cleaner at LaGuardia, and a strike coordinator for the IAM.

In June the strike suffered its first significant blow. The Northeast shuttle had been sold in May by Eastern to New York real estate speculator Donald Trump, Mailhot explained, and on June 7 it started up operations as the Trump Shuttle.

This was the first significant blow? *Already in March* the IAM bureaucracy acknowledged their threat of a nationwide air and rail tie-up was just a bluff. *Already in March* the bankruptcy court had assumed jurisdiction. *Already in March* the bureaucrats had adopted an anti-Lorenzo strategy and were offering to give away everything if a new boss could be found. But for strike leader Mailhot the first significant blow is the sale of part of Eastern that allowed some strikers to retain their jobs with a union contract. In fact, the only substantive criticisms of the IAM bureaucracy reported was their acceptance of the sale of the shuttle, and later, some Philadelphia operations to Midway airlines.

The SWP conference took place only a few days after the pilots and flight attendants returned to work. Mailhot says,

This is a big blow to the strike. . . . It emboldens Lorenzo, his scabs, and the government. It gives the media a new handle to claim the "strike is over." It

undermines our efforts to expose Eastern's threats to safety. Despite this, however, it hasn't turned the strike around. . . . We may not get our jobs back, but we have to fight to keep Lorenzo from winning.

The strike hasn't been turned around—even though we may not get our jobs back? This seems most peculiar. Strikes against employers generally seek defense, or improvement of economic conditions. The strikers look forward to returning to their jobs, their union intact. If the strikers lose their jobs, that is generally considered a major defeat—a turnaround. How do the workers succeed in preventing "Lorenzo from winning" under such circumstances?

A month later the *Militant* carried a front page editorial entitled, "Anti-Lorenzo Strike at Eastern at New Stage." Note the increasing personalized nature of the dispute. The *Militant* steadily adapts to not only the syntax but substance of the IAM bureaucracy's vendetta against this evil individual.

The Machinists on strike at Eastern Airlines have reached a new stage in their fight against Texas Air Corp. Chairman Frank Lorenzo. Like hardened soldiers pausing to survey their smoke-filled battlefield, the strikers have arrived at the 11th month of their fight to find their enemy staggering and wounded. . . .

It's clear: the strikers—though they've taken some hard blows—have grown stronger in relation to Lorenzo, who is substantially weaker.

It would appear that it is the *Militant* editorial writer who is staggering around with smoke-filled eyes. With the pilots and flight attendants back on the job, with hundreds of defectors from the IAM ranks back at work, with Eastern ahead of schedule in restoring flights, the *Militant* calmly announces the strikers "have grown stronger." Continuing with this upbeat appraisal,

The next few weeks and months[!] are important ones for the strike. The Machinists have gained new momentum and Lorenzo is bleeding heavily. The time to strike another blow is now.

And what blows does the *Militant* suggest?

There's a lot to do. Union members should join the strikers' picket lines at the airports and pitch in at union halls. A war chest is needed to ease the financial pressure on strikers and help finance stepped-up strike activities, following up on IAM District 100 President Bryan's holiday appeal in December. Unionists can invite strikers to speak at local meetings. Tours by strikers and supporters can reach areas and unions that haven't been drawn into the fight before.

These are not bad things to do. They have been done right along during the course of the strike. Unfortunately, such elementary supplementary activities are woefully inadequate to reverse the relationship of forces at this point in the strike.

The editors of the *Militant* surely know this. They limit their proposals for action for two reasons: 1) this is about the

extent of what the union bureaucracy is prepared to support; 2) these are the type of activities best suited to the present industrial fractions of the SWP.

We wish the *Militant's* picturesque description of the present status of the strike were true. It is painful to recognize the harsh reality. As long as the Eastern strikers continue their fight we support them—without any conditions. All good trade unionists—not to speak of revolutionary socialists—should continue to participate in solidarity actions and contribute financial support, as the *Militant* editorial calls for.

But a revolutionary party has an obligation to do more than cheer-lead for those in struggle. In the past, the SWP advanced a program for how the unions could win struggles. The party challenged the bureaucratic misleadership and tried to pull together a new leadership of militant fighters. Class-struggle fighters must look for guidance elsewhere today; they won't find it in the pages of the *Militant*. (An in-depth assessment of the situation facing the IAM in this struggle was contained in an article I wrote for the May 1989 issue of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* "Problems of the Eastern Airlines Strike.")

Above all, a working class political organization which is unable to tell the difference between an advancing workers' struggle on the road to victory and one that has been severely crippled by a dead-end strategy and is suffering setback after setback can lay little claim to being a revolutionary vanguard organization in the United States.

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Caucasus (Continued from page 20)

those tragic expulsions, no substantial assistance of any kind has been given to these tens of thousands of people.

On December 7, the earthquake hit Armenia: Two-thirds of Leninakan (pop. 290,000); one-half of Kirovakan (pop. 150,000), and all of Spitak (pop. 30,000) were destroyed as were numerous small towns and villages. Irresponsible and corrupt construction of multistoried buildings caused them to collapse like pancakes, killing thousands. The official toll of 25,000 dead is a conservative figure. Tens of thousands were seriously injured, many becoming amputees. Many Armenian refugees had sought sanctuary in these devastated cities. Where many were living or died remains unknown.

Just five days before, to underline that not all workers in the two republics were on strike, *Izvestia* had informed that "construction was going full speed ahead [in Yerevan]. They need to build. There are 96,000 families on the waiting list for an apartment." The waiting list had suddenly grown considerably.

By December 12, 1988, five days after the devastating earthquake in Armenia, a stricter state of siege was imposed on Yerevan. The leadership of the Karabagh Committee, that had been in the forefront of the protests and was organizing to expedite earthquake relief, was arrested. Martial law was imposed, even as mass funerals mourned the dead.

Recently, despite its claims to be determined to stop the violence, the Kremlin's actions showed that it not only tolerated continuing abuses against Armenians, it encouraged extreme right-wing elements by allowing them to act with impunity and arresting not the criminals responsible for the racist pogroms, but the leaders of the independent movements—both Armenian and Azeri.

The most that the Kremlin would do to "assist" those who have been victims of or simply feared gang terror—this applies to Meskhetis we spoke of as well as Armenians and Azeris—was to help evacuate them. The state portrayed itself as powerless to protect its citizens, much as the U.S. government has often expressed its "powerlessness" to defend Blacks from the Ku Klux Klan in the Southern states and against other perpetrators of racist violence.

February 3, 1990

Notes

1. See Leon Trotsky, *Social Democracy and the Wars of Intervention, Russia 1918-1921*. New Park Publications, London, 1975 and *Formation of the Soviet Union*, Richard Pipes, Atheneum, New York, 1980.

2. *New York Times*, Jan. 20, 1990.

3. This was the population according to the 1976 census. The figure has fluctuated during this period of such drastic dislocations.

4. The Karabagh File. The Zoryan Institute, Toronto, 1988.

5. *Glasnost*, Nos. 10-11. Soviet samizdat journal published in an English translation by Center for Democracy in the USSR, New York, 1987.

6. *Glasnost*, Nos. 21-23, March-May, 1989, p. 53.

7. *Glasnost*, Nos. 16-18, Jan. 1989, p. 12.

8. *Pravda*, July 4, 1989.

9. *New York Times*, July 20, 1988.

10. *New York Times*, Sept. 22, 1988.

11. See *Izvestia*, Nov. 26, 1988.

12. More than 159,000 of 250,000 Armenians had fled the Azerbaijan Republic and 141,000 of 170,000 Azeris had fled the Armenian Republic, according to a military official in a report issued February 7, 1989.

Two Years of a Frame-up—The Case of Mark Curtis

by Ben Stone

On March 4, 1988, Mark Curtis, a member of the Socialist Workers Party from Des Moines, Iowa, and a meatpacker who worked at the Swift plant in that city, was arrested on a charge of rape. In jail he was savagely beaten by the police. He was convicted and sentenced to 25 years in jail. The case calls for a timely review. For those who may not be familiar with the facts, the brief chronology in the box on this page outlines the basics.

Most obvious, and perhaps the key point in the case, is the time sequence of events which occurred on the night in question.

- 7 P.M. — Curtis stopped off at the Los Compadres bar and restaurant. He cashed his paycheck and sat down with some coworkers and chatted with them about certain events at the Swift plant.
- 8:30 P.M. — Curtis leaves the Los Compadres bar and drives home. These facts were confirmed by one of Curtis's coworkers, Brian Willey, who took the stand during the trial and was not challenged by the prosecuting attorney.
- Testimony from the transcript of the trial:
Q — So on May 31 of this year, Ms. Morris, you testified that the phone call came at 7:30 and five minutes later there was a knock on the door, is that correct?
A — That's what I did at deposition, yes.
Q — You realize if someone was there at 7:35 that person could not have been Mark Curtis?
A — I don't know that.

Curtis was far from the scene of the crime at the time it is supposed to have taken place. If he was at the Los Compadres bar between 7 P.M. and 8:30 P.M., he could not have been at the alleged victim's house at the same time. At the close of the trial, however, the judge failed to instruct the jury on this point, which is traditionally done in the case of an established alibi.

Curtis testifies that at 8:45 P.M. he left his house to go to the Hy Vee grocery store to buy some things he needed in preparation for a Militant Labor Forum which he was organizing for the next day. On the way, he explains, he was approached by a young Black woman who told him she was afraid of a man who was following her. She asked if he would take her to her home a few blocks away. Curtis agreed. He parked his car in front of the house she directed him to, and the young woman asked him to wait on the front porch while she checked the house to make sure no one was lurking inside. At 8:53 P.M. two cops arrived at the house and arrested Curtis.

The discrepancy in the time sequence alone clearly points to a frame-up. In addition, the prosecution at the trial failed

to show any physical evidence of attempted rape. Its own forensic expert testified that there was no indication of penetration, or seminal fluids, or interchange of pubic hairs. There was no evidence on Curtis's clothing of dog hairs or other debris that was prevalent on the porch of the house, though much was found on the clothing of the alleged victim, Demetria Morris, who stated that she and her assailant struggled violently on the porch. Ms. Morris also said she smelled tobacco smoke on her assailant's breath; Curtis is an adamant nonsmoker. She claimed that Curtis took his belt off, but Curtis was not wearing a belt and no belt was found

Chronology of the Mark Curtis Case

- March 4, 1988 — Curtis is arrested and charged with rape in the second degree.
- March 4, 1988 — That same night Curtis is put in a cell and beaten so badly by the police officers that he suffers a shattered cheekbone and multiple contusions. Photographs taken the following day confirm the beating.
- March 5, 1988 — Bail is raised in the amount of \$30,000 and Curtis is released from jail.
- April 7, 1988 — The mayor of Des Moines, John Dorian, sends a letter to Doug Womack, president of UAW Local 893 in Marshalltown, Iowa, intimating that Curtis is guilty and repeating the police story that Curtis was beaten in jail because he had to be restrained from attacking the police officers.
- April 27, 1988 — Curtis is formally arraigned. The charges have been altered since he was arrested on March 4. The original charge of sexual abuse in the second degree has been changed to sexual abuse in the third degree and the charge of burglary in the first degree has been added, carrying a mandatory sentence of 25 years, if found guilty.
- September 7, 1988 — Curtis goes on trial in the Polk County Courthouse in Des Moines, Iowa.
- September 14, 1988 — Curtis is found guilty by the jury on both counts. He is remanded to jail, since by law no bail is permitted during an appeal for a criminal offense.
- November 18, 1988 — Judge Harry Perkins denies a motion for a new trial and sentences Mark Curtis to 25 years in jail.
- May 11, 1989 — A civil suit is filed by Mark Curtis against the city of Des Moines seeking damages for the beating he suffered while in jail on the night of March 4, 1988.
- June 27, 1989 — An appeal is filed by Mark Curtis against the state of Iowa, seeking to overturn the verdict of guilty.

at the scene. Ms. Morris estimated her attacker was about 5 feet 6 inches in height. Curtis is 6 feet 1 inch.

Despite these contradictions, Curtis was convicted of third degree sexual abuse and first degree burglary—though no one from the prosecution claimed that Curtis had committed burglary or had any intent to do so.

The *Militant*, weekly newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party, has given widespread publicity to the case, as has the nonpartisan Mark Curtis Defense Committee. Both organizations have devoted considerable effort and resources to publicize the case in the United States and abroad. As a result, many thousands have rallied to Curtis's support. Endorsers of the defense effort include trade unions, religious groups, civil libertarian groups, academics, political organizations, and many prominent individuals.

Who is Mark Curtis?

Mark Curtis was born in the Black Hills of South Dakota, on a Sioux reservation, where he lived for one year. Because his father was a government employee, working on Indian reservations, his family moved frequently and Curtis spent the next six years of his life on a Chippewa reservation. Once more the family moved, this time to a Navajo reservation, where they lived for another ten years.

The conditions of life on the reservations were very primitive, mostly without electricity or running water. At an early age Mark learned about caring and sharing. The Curtis family was completely integrated with the life of the Indians on the reservations.

The only time previous to this trial that Curtis had a brush with the law was when he got a ticket for not wearing a helmet while riding his motorcycle. At the age of 18 he left home to go to college, with his tuition paid from a presidential scholarship.

During the time he was in college, Curtis worked one summer at a uranium mine (coincidentally it was the summer when the Three Mile Island meltdown took place) and he became involved in some protests against the uranium industry. Around this time he joined the Young Socialist Alliance and the Socialist Workers Party.

After a series of jobs, including a period working at the National Office of the Young Socialist Alliance (he was national chairperson for a time) he moved to Des Moines, where he got a job as a "pauncher puller" at the Swift

meatpacking plant. Pulling paunches was heavy, dirty work. Curtis had been at it for two years at the time of his arrest.

During this period Curtis was also active in his union and as a supporter of the women's liberation and anti-intervention movements in Des Moines. He was particularly active in the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador. He was also director for the weekly series of Militant Labor Forums.

Just two weeks prior to his arrest, Curtis participated in a march against police racism in Clive, a suburb of Des Moines. The march ended at the local police station. Curtis staffed the socialist literature table on the front lawn of the station house.

On the very day of his arrest, in fact barely two hours before it, Curtis had been at a meeting with his coworkers at the Swift plant, which was held to protest a raid by the immigration authorities three days earlier. Seventeen immigrants from Mexico and El Salvador had been arrested and jailed during the raid. Curtis had taken the floor at the meeting and spoken in Spanish about the need to involve the union in the fight to defend the arrested workers. After this meeting Curtis went to the Los Compadres bar, as was the custom on payday, to cash his check and talk with his coworkers.

Radical, trade unionist, activist in the movements for women's liberation, minority rights, and an opponent of U.S. intervention in Central America. All these things Mark Curtis did after a full day's work at the Swift meatpacking plant. That is why he is in jail.

There is evidence that the cops were well aware of Curtis's political activity at the time of his arrest. While he was being beaten at the police station he was taunted with the epithet of "Mexican lover," showing that his assailants were conscious of his work to defend immigrant workers at the Swift plant. This certainly gives a strong indication of a political motivation in his arrest, beating, and imprisonment. The engineering of the charge of rape against a Black woman was a clever stratagem intended to divide Curtis from his natural allies in the Black and women's movements.

The frame-up of Mark Curtis is an injury to all militant workers fighting for a better world. His defense committee still needs endorsements and contributions. A spotlight needs to be kept on the case. For further information contact the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, P.O. Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa 50311. ●

Combat Workers League Attack on Mark Curtis

Virtually the only organization claiming to be on the left which has not supported the Mark Curtis case is the Workers League, which has become notorious for being a disruptive force in the labor movement.

For the past two years the Workers League and its newspaper, the *Bulletin*, have been vociferous supporters of the prosecution case against Mark Curtis. At every turn they have tried to undermine the defense. They even sponsored a national mailing—to labor and political figures around the country who had endorsed the defense—of a letter from Keith Morris, Demetria's father, attacking Curtis. They have also written letters to the bourgeois press stat-

ing their view that Curtis is guilty. This has allowed the authorities in Des Moines to point to "socialists" who oppose Curtis, thereby trying to undercut the political defense that Curtis and the defense committee have launched.

This same outfit is the one that supported Alan Gelfand in his lawsuit, that tied up the Socialist Workers Party in a ten-year legal battle in California. Gelfand charged the SWP leadership with being government agents and demanded that the court remove the elected leadership. The court finally ruled against Gelfand, stating that he did not produce a shred of evidence to sustain his charges, and finding that his suit was pure harassment. Still, the SWP had to devote significant resources to fighting this battle.

The disruption efforts of the Workers League are not limited to the SWP. A typical example of their activities in the broader labor movement was discussed by Ed Long, a leader of the United Paperworkers in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania: "They have been put out of our office on two occasions. It is almost impossible to embarrass them." Larry Regan, president of United Steelworkers Local 1014, in Gary, Indiana, explained, "As far as I am concerned, the *Bulletin* newspaper has no credibility whatsoever."

The Workers League has to be universally condemned for doing the work of the cops and bosses in its attacks against Mark Curtis, as well as for its general disruption in the labor movement and radical political organizations in this country. ●

Background Studies: Future of USSR

PERESTROIKA: New Thinking for Our Country and the World, by Mikhail Gorbachev. Harper & Row, New York, 1987. 254 pps. \$19.95.

BEYOND PERESTROIKA: The Future of Gorbachev's USSR, by Ernest Mandel. Verso, London-New York, 1989. 214 pps. \$18.00.

Reviewed by Haskel Berman

These two books, taken together, provide the necessary theoretical and programmatic background for a better understanding of the world-turning events presently unfolding in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The way these changes are taking place is partly the result of Gorbachev's perestroika program, both inside and outside the Soviet Union. Mandel believes they "are having a profound effect on the whole world situation and these effects will make themselves felt for years if not decades to come."

Before the recent events in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, Mandel perceived that the most important aspect of these changes is not the immediate reforms but the freeing-up and reemergence of the mass independent political activity of the Soviet working class. He reminds us that for more than 40 years the working classes of the Soviet Union and the United States, the two largest and most highly qualified, constituting more than one-quarter of the whole world working class, have been absent from the political scene. He sees this as one of the principal factors that inhibited the world struggle for socialism.

Neither Gorbachev nor Mandel attribute the policy of glasnost and perestroika to Gorbachev alone. Although he is the principal advocate and promoter of these connected strategies (openness and restructuring), Gorbachev insists that the basic concept was initiated by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the face of a most profound crisis—a stagnant economy that has undermined the moral and social fabric of the entire society.

In his book Gorbachev tries to show that the foreign policy of the Soviet state is driven by urgent domestic problems. Consequently, the leadership of the Communist Party has been forced to make drastic changes at home and abroad. The new course resulted in the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, discouraged single-party monopoly of government in all of Eastern Europe, and foreclosed Soviet military intervention in the internal affairs of these countries. For the sake of detente with the U.S. and the rest of the imperialist world, the Soviet government now withholds crucial aid to the revolutionary forces of Cuba, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.

There is no doubt that Gorbachev and the Communist Party leadership have turned a page of history and set a new direction away from military competition with the United States. This has evoked from President Bush and his secretary of state the announcement that it is necessary for

Washington to support and save Gorbachev's policy of glasnost and perestroika. One must ask at what cost and at whose expense this congruence of foreign policy between Washington and Moscow has been achieved? What confidence can the working class of the world place in these agreements? Has the Malta summit assured an end to the cold war policies in Europe and the total withdrawal of U.S.-North Atlantic Treaty Organization armed forces from Germany and Soviet-Warsaw Pact forces from Eastern Europe?

Foreign Policy and Domestic Needs

What moved the bureaucracy and leadership of the Soviet CP to alter both the internal and external policies in a new direction that Gorbachev says requires "new thinking" and restructuring of society with a "revolution from above"? In his book, Gorbachev, having adopted the method of glasnost, admits to the contradictions that confronted the party leadership in its inability to resolve the economic and social crisis faced by Soviet society. To distance the party from the past and rationalize the changes that are necessary, he alludes to past abuses of the Stalin era, and he appeals to the bourgeois world on the basis that "we are living in a new era threatened by nuclear war . . . unresolved major social problems of new stresses created by scientific and technological advances and by the exacerbation of global problems." This becomes his platform for projecting to the Western powers mutual disarmament, disengagement in Eastern Europe, and closer commercial and trade relations. "Pre-nuclear political thinking impedes cooperation between countries and peoples," he says. "Politics should be based on realities. And the most formidable reality of the world today is the vast military arsenals both conventional and nuclear of the United States and the Soviet Union." In his appeal for acceptance and understanding, Gorbachev subordinates all issues of class interest and ideology and omits all concern for international working class solidarity. No new thinking is involved here. This is merely the old Stalinist policy of peaceful coexistence (detente) covered with more appealing clothes for the Western powers. The economic imperative for the CPSU bureaucracy is to reduce the vast military financial drain and extricate the leadership from a potential internal social and economic disaster. Gorbachev advanced this as the main motivation for his policies, and claims that the new awareness of the unrealized potential of socialism dictates an adjustment to the capitalist market.

From the opening pages of his book Gorbachev seems bent on explaining these highly publicized dramatic shifts in Soviet foreign policy as the necessary result of internal and immediate national problems. The first chapter, which opens with "Perestroika Is an Urgent Necessity," sets forth

a laundry list of economic and social ills, including the following: 1) Stagnation, decline by one-half in rate of national growth. 2) A gap in efficiency of production, decline in quality of products and scientific and technological development. 3) A large portion of capital idle due to drive for gross output as an end in itself. 4) Costly projects fail high scientific and technical standards. 5) Consumers placed at total mercy of producers; high prices and shortages of goods created by putting more material and labor into production to meet gross output goals. 6) Reports of industrial goals were padded; material resources became harder and more expensive to obtain, parasitic attitudes developed. 7) Labor productivity declined. 8) The economy became squeezed financially and this resulted in the sales of raw materials subject to the whims of the world market. 9) Currency was used for solving immediate problems and not for modernization and technological development.

Gorbachev blames the economic system for the deterioration in the social sphere. He says the "residual principle" was practiced. Within this system all major resources were allocated to production. What was left was allocated to social and cultural programs. Social problems were neglected. The system failed to provide quality and quantity of foodstuffs, housing, transit, health services, and education. This, in turn, led to erosion of the ideological and moral values that ultimately affected the party. This resulted in false propaganda of success, servility, ignoring public opinion, driving creative thinking out of the social sciences; the declarations of indisputable truths, promoting mediocrity, formalism in culture, arts, teaching, and the media.

Gorbachev presents the crisis and these devastating developments as unconnected to the abandonment of Marxist politics by the Soviet rulers, the Stalinist ideology and practice in an attempt to build socialism in one country. He says, "Problems snowballed faster than they were resolved. . . . The situation that was arising was one that Lenin warned against: the automobile was not going where the one at the steering wheel thought it was going."

In contrast to Gorbachev's method of seeking the cause in psychological and evolutionary phenomena that ultimately even affected the party, Mandel explains the problems that have developed as irreconcilable contradictions between the ruling bureaucratic caste and the working masses. Once this irrepressible conflict is revealed it becomes clear that Gorbachev, in seeking to protect the privileges of the ruling caste, must ignore or hide the real causes of Soviet economic stagnation. Mandel is careful to point out that the fundamental cause has long been known and the current consequences should come as no surprise.

Trotsky's Warning

Leon Trotsky, in his works *The Revolution Betrayed* and *The Stalin School of Falsification*, explained in great detail the consequences that would inevitably follow from the political line and corrupt practices of Stalin, and how this would ultimately lead to the grave crisis which is today faced by Gorbachev and the Soviet bureaucracy. It is one of the ironies of history that 60 years after the criticisms of the Left Opposition in the Soviet Union under Trotsky's leadership

the dominant faction in the Stalinist bureaucracy under Gorbachev's leadership is forced by the failure of the system to seek democratic reforms seemingly similar to those advocated by Trotsky. But closer examination shows a vast difference, as Mandel explains. Whereas Trotsky's democratic reforms were designed to return power to the Soviet working class by restoring the trade unions and other working class institutions through which the workers could make their own decisions independent of governmental power, Gorbachev's reforms, going in the opposite direction, are designed to strengthen the hand of the bureaucracy and weaken collective ownership of the means of production. This is the route toward the restoration of capitalism and reinstatement of social relations between wage laborers and private employers that prevail under that system, as Trotsky warned prior to the advent of World War II.

Gorbachev describes vividly the degeneration that has occurred: "Party guidance was relaxed. . . . Everybody started noticing the stagnation among the leadership. . . . At a certain stage this made for a poorer performance by the Politburo and the Secretariat of the CPSU Central Committee, by the government and throughout the entire Central Committee and the party apparatus. Political flirtation and mass distribution of awards, titles, and bonuses often replaced genuine concern for the people. . . . An atmosphere of 'everything goes' and fewer and fewer demands were made on discipline and responsibility. . . . Many party organizations in the regions were unable to uphold principles or to attack with determination bad tendencies, slack attitudes, the practice of covering up for one another. . . . The principles of equality among Party members were violated. Many Party members in leading posts stood beyond control and criticism, which led to failures in work and serious malpractices. At some administrative levels there emerged a disrespect for the law and encouragement of eyewash and bribery, servility and glorification. Working people were justly indignant at the behavior of people who, enjoying trust and responsibility, abused power, suppressed criticism, made fortunes and, in some cases, even became accomplices in — if not organizers of — criminal acts."

Faced with a societal crisis which they could not control through established economic practice, Gorbachev only hints at another element that bore weight on the decision of the Communist Party leadership to change method and direction and adopt more drastic reforms. "The need for change was brewing not only in the material sphere of life but also in the public consciousness," he says. "People who had practical experience, a sense of justice and commitment to the ideals of Bolshevism, criticized the established practice of doing things and noted with anxiety the symptoms of moral degradation and erosion of revolutionary ideals and socialist values. Workers, farmers, and intellectuals, Party functionaries centrally and locally, came to ponder the situation in the country."

The pressures upon the leadership mounted increasingly from a vast new layer of educated, well-trained urban youth. A new generation of workers, technicians, and professionals emerged who could no longer be subdued and disciplined by methods of terror or coercion as occurred under Stalin. Now at every level they demanded what a modern major industrial

society should be able to deliver in terms of material needs, good social services, and democratic, human, and civil rights.

When the Gorbachev book was issued in the English translation in 1987, the hope was that Soviet economy would show signs of improvement as a result of perestroika. But this did not happen. Basic items like soap and meat were still hard to find at the time of the mine strikes in 1989, and were included in the miners' demands.

The Soviet press continues to report worker complaints that perestroika has not produced more consumer goods. This was confirmed at the Soviet party congress in December 1989, and one of the reasons admitted. Prime Minister Ryzhkov, in response to critics, said that "we have to admit that radical reform and the many changes on our agenda have backfired because of two different attitudes to perestroika, rejection and impatience." This, of course, was no more than a recognition of the openly declared factional divisions within the ranks of the ruling bureaucracy. Some are determined to cling to their privileges at all cost, and others seek to make adjustment out of fear of losing everything. In the present shake-up many entrenched bureaucrats are losing out to Gorbachev's "new thinkers."

Part of the new thinking entails the review and repudiation of Stalin's crimes, filling in the blank pages of Soviet history. But the reforms have not yet reached the stage at which all blank pages are restored and all the principal actors in the formative years of the Soviet Union fully rehabilitated. This is an essential part of the reform movement, the part which the corrupt bureaucracy vigorously resists.

Mandel explains the bureaucratic resistance to historical truth. He argues that a thorough restructuring of the system is impossible without a complete review of the past. This invites social conflict, a clash of antagonistic interests and rekindling of long smoldering grievances. Mandel points to the line-up of contending forces. On the one side over one million people who experienced directly the gulags and Stalinist repression and their relatives who have a personal stake in the process of de-Stalinization. On the other side are the old torturers, jailers, guards, informers, agents of the GPU responsible for the arrests and interrogations and assassinations. Mandel says the resistance of the bureaucracy to the recognition of the scope of Stalin's crimes is not just a question of moderation or seeking the right opportunity to reveal the truth. In hiding the real extent of the terror, they continue to lie to the people.

They have pretended to expose Stalinism but this is limited to two themes: the "cult of personality" and the necessity for a highly centralized administration as a defense against fascism and the West, both shamefaced apologies. For Mandel an objective study of the past is necessary for a scientific analysis of the key problems in the construction of a transi-

tional society from capitalism to socialism. The debates of the 1920s and '30s in the Soviet Union provide incomparable material for dealing with such problems as the relationship between plan and market, rhythm of industrialization, priority of investment in heavy industry, link between the level of consumption of the masses and growth in the productivity of labor, the social composition of the peasantry and conditions for maintaining the worker-peasant alliance. These are all current problems in the Soviet Union and no rational solution is possible, in Mandel's opinion, until the earlier debates are made available to the masses of people who are directly affected. They alone can find the most suitable answers.

Mandel projects four possible outcomes as a result of Gorbachev's reforms: 1) Partial success in improving the economic situation contingent upon a whole series of favorable conditions, including the neutralization of the working class and gaining economic help from the West; most unlikely. 2) A Moscow spring, in which a radical reform wing of the bureaucracy outflanks Gorbachev and succeeds in establishing a market economy free of the needs of the conservative nomenklatura, problematic because the conservative wing can use Gorbachev in defense of its interests to retain power. 3) Failure of reform and restitution of an undemocratic, highly centralized and authoritarian regime with power in the conservative wing, but incapable of resolving the social crisis and returning to the status quo. 4) Soviets with workers' political power as a result of the raised consciousness made possible under glasnost and independent political activity in the struggles that develop to protect working class interests, the most desirable outcome for working people throughout the world.

One of Mandel's important contributions in *Beyond Perestroika* is his in-depth analysis of the dysfunction of the existing socio-economic system. He explains why the Gorbachev reforms cannot overcome the systemic contradictions and why a political revolution of the working class could move Soviet society forward culturally and economically, thus preparing for the advent of socialism.

Gorbachev's *Perestroika* provides important insights into the thinking of the reform wing of the Soviet Communist Party bureaucracy. While one can appreciate the grave risks that this faction has taken to embark on the reform enterprises of glasnost and perestroika, it becomes obvious that their lack of economic control left them no other avenue to remain in power and avoid societal disaster.

Those who are trying to understand the politics of our times can benefit from these two books. They will serve as useful guideposts for students of this fateful turning point in our modern history for many years to come. ●

in the leadership of the coalition will be their ability to follow through on the initial planning, get out national publicity, and encourage the organization of local coalitions to assure the greatest possible turnout on March 24. Unfortunately, at the time of the writing of this article very little has actually been done in New York City, one of the most important centers for any action in Washington, D.C. This will have to be overcome in a very short period of time if March 24 is to be a success. ●

February 4, 1990

Anti-Intervention (Continued from page 3)

unit in San Salvador during the FMLN offensive last year. And then came the brutal, illegal invasion of Panama.

These events were the background against which the January 15 meeting took place. In spite of its weaknesses, the fact that the March 24 call was reissued at that gathering is an important step forward for the anti-intervention movement as a whole. But once again, the decisive test for those

Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

37. 'Consider Yourself Lucky!'

"Shanghaiers" – that's how we referred to former Russian emigrants (and their children) who lived in China and wished to return to the USSR after a well-known appeal from Stalin, in which he promised everything would be forgiven. Five thousand of them assembled in Shanghai and came back. It is totally possible that some of them had enlisted in a foreign intelligence service, say ten or a hundred of them. They had to be arrested. But to find them was a major undertaking that required considerable thought. Wouldn't it be simpler just to arrest all 5,000 and send them to a camp?

I knew one of them, a young engineer named Igor Alekseev. He was arrested somewhere far from Moscow. His investigator, aside from his major's star, had not been able to capture any other falling stars. Igor talked a lot of inconceivable nonsense about himself, using lines from a current foreign film, *The Adventure of Two Brothers in a Country of Savages*. For this gibberish, he got a 25-year term. The case went to Moscow for confirmation and ended up in the hands of someone more educated (in this area). Alekseev laughed as he told how idiotic the investigator looked when not only was the case sent back to him but a strong dressing-down was also included.

Composing himself, he told Alekseev: "Don't be a wise guy. It won't help you around here. We don't arrest people for nothing and we don't make mistakes." A new case was initiated and Alekseev still got his 25 years.

A prank like that never occurred to me. Besides, my Pinkerton had an old case on his hands. However, I willingly admitted that I had something to do with the death of Gorky, who was secretly killed by those same Trotskyists. I never spoke about my role—that clearly would have made no sense. That was the very reason that I must have known something about it. The major was thrilled and composed an amazing set of minutes of the session. When he rewrote it with his large curved handwriting, I asked to look at a calendar. It had occurred to me that morning that when Gorky died, I had already been in prison for quite some time. How to describe the investigator's pious rage? He tore up the minutes and swore at me for two straight hours without stopping to take a breath.

Finally, he grew hoarse. When performing such intense intellectual labor, it is unwise to overexert one's throat. He kept clearing his throat, not into the spittoon two steps away, but into the wastebasket at his feet. I shuddered at the thought of how revolting it would be for the cleaning woman to collect the spit-soaked papers into a bag so as to seal it up and burn it as she's supposed to do. My major spoke about

respect for labor using the most eloquent words from the lead articles in our press. I recalled this detail because it never gave me peace. During all those nights of interrogation, I thought a hundred times over: What hypocrites these people are, talking all the time about the "laboring millions." And how obvious this hypocrisy was made by their every deed.

The investigator kept accurate notes: "Interrogation was begun at such and such a time and ended at such and such a time." They hardly meant for these records to reach our grandchildren so that they could find out how many hours we were held without sleep, being asked one and the same question. Not our grandsons but the closest in the officialdom read the minutes of the sessions and say: "Yes, the major is trying. He must get some reward for this."

On the other hand, the excerpts from the resolution of the OSO [special sessions ruling on cases] that were presented to us, the convicted, never indicated the length of the time our cases were deliberated in these meetings where we were tried in absentia. After 20 years, we have sometimes learned this from resolutions about rehabilitations. For example, the entire "trial" of V.A. Trifonov, the Old Bolshevik, discussed by his son Yuri Trifonov in his story *The Reflections of the Bonfire*, lasted only 15 minutes.

On only one occasion did the investigator present to me the testimony of a witness against me. It consisted of ten words: "I, so and so, was acquainted with a number of well-known Trotskyists." And after that was my name in a long list filling a whole page: Kamenstsky, Selevanovsky, Goroshko, Gorbатов, and several workers from the Artemovsk shop where we printed Boiler Room,¹ and also several Moscow journalists. Almost none of them had ever been part of the Opposition and some had never even been in the party. Of the Moskovites, I remembered Sakhnovsk, who was also a long way from being a Trotskyist. He, as I subsequently learned, spent a long time in the camps and died from a brain hemorrhage just when he was being handed the resolution announcing his rehabilitation.

Who was this witness against me whose entire testimony fit into the words "was acquainted with well-known Trotskyists"? A former young collaborator at Boiler Room—a rather bothersome fellow, but in general innocuous; a member of the Komsomol printers' cell. And now he was listed as an agent of French intelligence: "Excerpts from the minutes of the interrogation of an agent of French intelligence." I did not get a chance to read it myself but it was shown to me from a distance and read aloud.

How much psychological torture had he endured? How many days in a row had he been interrogated nightly while still observing the Butyrka regimen by day? How many times had he been put into a punishment cell? What kind of tortures had he endured before he agreed that he was really a French spy and as such knew the names of those 20 or 30 unfortunates? Is it justified to reveal the name of a victim if you cannot also reveal the deeds of the hangman? It is not the name of the investigator that is important for history; what good does it do to know the name Volkov or Metan? What matters is the full name of the system that engendered the colonels in whose offices "Bukharin talked," who created the archives of falsified papers to be preserved forever, who sowed terror among the people and crippled their consciousness through decades of suspicion, informers, and blindness.

The cult of the personality is only one of its sides, and they have even ceased talking about it. All of our investigators, all our Mr. Fidgets [jail guards], all our officials in one voice repeated: "We do not touch the honorable Soviet citizens. If you have been pulled in, there was a reason for it. Something is there and it must be unearthed and exposed."

And they dutifully unearthed and exposed; they exposed things that were not there at all. When an enemy of your people interrogated you, you felt behind you the breath of these people, even if they were forced into silence. But you knew that they were there with you.*

But was I right about that? In fact, the people believed the Mr. Fidgets, and not us. Constantly trembling from fear that he, an innocent, could be arrested, each individual at the same time believed that all the others who had been arrested were the guilty! That was absolutely the case with the Odessa Komsomol member Didovsky in the mine, and with Lieutenant Ramensky, and with our neighbors in Yeisk—a frightened crowd standing in line to use the lavatory while our apartment was being searched. Asya told me this. When they took me away, one of my neighbors said: "I could tell by his mug that he was an enemy."

That was the opinion of the people. You have no link with them, but the investigator does. I was alone in my cell where the Mr. Fidgets in the name of the people and on their instruction watched my every move through a peephole in the door. But in the name of the people, each person was himself watched, his thoughts were misinterpreted, his terror was passed off as his high level of social consciousness, and with pieces of meat they were extorting from the arrested the names of ever-newer victims from among the people themselves.

"You get what you deserve," was the aphorism written over the gates of the Nazi death camps. That meant that those imprisoned in the camps got what they deserved. In other words: "We don't arrest people without a good reason." The murderers sitting at their writing desks create their formulas and aphorisms not, of course, to convince the prisoner of his guilt, but to strengthen in the minds of their subordinates,

*Rereading this in 1976, I find my explanation inadequate. But to add or rewrite would mean to distort the essence of the book. These pages were written 15 years ago. — M.B.

the hangmen, and the wardens, the conviction that what they are doing is not contemptible but a state imperative—just and valiant—and, therefore, their pay was well earned. Unlike the informers, the Mr. Fidgets must work not because of fear but because of their conscience. They must believe their own lies.

Prison trained me well. I never entered a cell with a despondent or despairing look on my face. Sometimes I would even smile at the pale shadows who always greeted any newcomer with the question: "What news have you heard?" If I answered that I wasn't coming from outside but from another building, they'd ask, "So what's the news from there?"

In the interrogator's office, I would also smile sometimes, which made the interrogator all the more angry. A smile diminished the quality of his circus act. But I explained that my smile was a hereditary trait, a feature of our tribe. Even Bagritsky noticed it.

"Bagritsky? Is he alive?" The interrogator immediately got fired up. He was tired of keeping records about dead conspirators. Alas, it turned out that Bagritsky wasn't a Trotskyist but only a poet, who had died long ago of natural causes. (However, his wife was still alive. She served 17 years in camps and exile: the original term plus various supplementary sentences.)

Finally, my case was ready, the minutes were all bound together with string, all the required formalities had been met, and the prosecutor was summoned. Without the prosecutor, the charge cannot be considered legally concocted, like soup without salt.

The prosecutor let me read through the whole package in its sewn-up, bound form, and talked to me in a kindly way. What horrors I could have gone and done if they hadn't grabbed my hands in time! While listening to him, I leafed through the case. The devil only knows how much of the people's money this large pack of lies had cost! Think how much they could raise the pay of workers and doctors if it weren't for large stews like this and all the cooks who concocted it!

My major for some reason mentioned that he was an oral surgeon by profession, and I remembered Chekhov's story by that name. The major had made great progress compared to Chekhov's surgeon, who extracted not the bad tooth but the good one. He had a diploma from a juridical institute and considered himself one of the Soviet intelligentsia, although he swore like a stevedore. The one doesn't preclude the other.

He learned how to write the word "compromise" correctly, without an "n" in the middle, and I am proud to report that the credit for this should go not to the institute where he acquired his intellectual credentials but to me.² Yes, I had compromised the leadership by agitating at meetings of workers against the official of the SMU [Factory Construction Division]. But he never stole so much as a nail in his life. The investigator didn't go to the Akhtar cossack settlement for this information. He simply recorded my story with a very slight rearrangement of words: where I had a plus, he put a minus. At production meetings, the defendant extolled foreign technology while pretending to be cautious about

machine tools. Naturally, he was also a Trotskyist and a cosmopolitan [Jew].

The fundamental factor was that as far back as 22 years ago, he had become involved in an anti-Soviet group and served a five-year term. In the eyes of the investigator, this doubled the evidence against me.

"You're lucky," the major said with a charming smile upon departing. "I am in a hurry to leave for my vacation, and so I have worked up only a little case on you. A real treat. Consider yourself lucky."

That was my luck! Evidently, it was not without reason that Pavlenko so entitled his novel that I had read before my arrest. I've been lucky my whole life.

I was transferred to a cell for the convicted in a former prison church, and there I enjoyed my good luck for a month. I heard the interrogation of an unknown woman, whose voice reminded me of Lena Orlovskaya.

Among those in the cell for the convicted with me was an American communist, an old man who had once emigrated from tsarist Russia, from Purishkevich. Now he had ended up in the hands of Metan. He was charged with cosmopolitanism, and also with espionage. So weak was he that he had to be helped into the cell. He ate up what was left in other people's bowls without embarrassment. He had spent the whole investigation period in Sukhanovk.

I didn't know at the time what Sukhanovk was. But it was a special prison for the especially stubborn cases. There, they tortured people by starving them. The portions were so small that after not more than two months, you were nothing but skin and bones. The cook, or whoever issued the portions, was only performing his duty to the Fatherland, according to the definition of Lieutenant Ramensky.

The prison was in a basement and the upper floors held a rest home for responsible workers of the Ministry of State Security. This endowed the torture with a particular refinement. They prepared the meals for all the floors at the same time. And the hangmen were very inventive.

* * *

The investigator worms his way into the prisoner's confidence with all the means at his disposal—the prisoner has to be exposed. But the investigator conceals his own inner soul from me. Therefore, I could only judge it by the character and quantity of the profanity he used. But what difference does the character of his soul really make, in fact? What matters is that he was able to come to believe in what he was doing and considered that it furthered the cause of communism; he took fully seriously the stories he had himself made up.

One of my friends, arrested in 1947, was questioned three or four times in all; and all the records filled about 20 pages. However, in the concluding conversation with the prosecutor (like the one I described above, called a "206," after the number of the article in the procedural code that provides for it), they presented to him not 20 pages, but two plump volumes on his case. They had sewn in an enormous portion of the interrogation records of someone with whom he was totally unfamiliar. When my friend asked the investigator, Major Yezepov, why some stranger's case had been

combined with his, the major answered: "We are not obliged to report to you the line of connection between your cases!" It turns out that dragging into one case another case concerning an absolutely unfamiliar person is a "line of connection."

Members of the troika, of course, who judged a person on the basis of Yezepov's records did not read even two pages of the work. There was a short summary prepared for them, lying on top of the two tomes. But they—along with the prosecutor who had, possibly, leafed through this entire stack of lies and Yezepov, who had concocted them—had done their job punctiliously and according to the rules. "We heard—We resolved, in the name of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics"—everything was done as it was supposed to be. And such people who with total seriousness created deliberate lies numbered many thousands—from the investigators to the writers to the historians. I am in no way setting out to investigate their souls—I do not have the strength for that. I only want to say: The problem does not begin with those who carried out the vilest orders. Where there are lies, one will find liars; where there are prisons, one will find Mr. Fidgets. It is necessary to study the history of the lies and of the prisons, the history of the phenomena that gave rise to these executioners.

* * *

In their contempt for the people, the retouchers of history suppose that people have short memories and weak minds and have fully surrendered to the mass myths that the retouchers have created for them. Therefore, they assume, no one will notice that the morality they preach is a double standard. "If my neighbor steals my wife, that's bad. But if I steal his wife, that's good."

In *Pravda* of January 16, 1969, a notice was published:

"The South African authorities have applied the most refined and barbaric forms of torture of political prisoners. This is supported by facts cited in the English newspaper *Sunday Times*. 'Sixty-eight-year-old Gabriel Mbindi,' the newspaper writes, 'was handcuffed and suspended from a water pipe and thrashed about the head. . . . March 10 of this year, 35-year-old James Lenkoye of Lesoto was found hanged in his cell. The forensic panel revealed that his body showed evidence of torture with electric prods. According to the testimony of Englishman Phillip Golding who had been imprisoned in the South African capital Pretoria, the most widely used method of torture is deprivation of sleep where the prisoner is not allowed to sleep for many days, which,' writes the *Sunday Times*, 'leads to psychological depression and in some cases to death.'"

The story about the brutality of the regime of the South African Republic should convince the reader of its reactionary nature. And it really convinces better than anything else. But in Butyrka, and in Lefortovo, and in all the other central and regional prisons where the internal rules I spoke of were in effect, the most widely used means of torture during interrogation was deprivation of sleep. That went on for decades, and I myself was subjected to this torture in 1950. I hardly knew of a single condemned person whose signature on a confession was extracted without the use of this torture.

And some had to undergo more refined methods, not to mention torture by hunger, which has been used very widely even since Stalin's death. I still seethe with anger at those people who want to rub out the past, even though I am aware now that it is more useful not to get excited, but to coldly seek the causes for a phenomenon.

At birth, a revolution has on its credit ledger only its short today and its boundless tomorrow. It has not yet acquired its own history. The history that it mercilessly analyzes so as to be firmly grounded in theory is an alien history, the history of a society hostile to it. It is not painful to examine such alien history objectively. Gradually the revolution will accumulate its own history. Its own history is more difficult to analyze, as is any analysis of a study of oneself. Such an analysis requires not only theoretical knowledge but the inner strength to endure the pain of self-analysis, the pain of admitting (not only to oneself but to the world) one's inevitable mistakes, which, if excused, will grow into crimes.

The devotion of a genuine revolutionary to his or her ideas is fundamentally different from the devotion of a person who believes in the revolution's future, but is afraid to analyze

what happened yesterday. Is the strength of convictions really the main sign of a fanatic, to dogmatically follow the teachings to the letter? Of course not. It is blindness, the absence of analysis of his own actions, that makes a person a fanatic. And there is nothing surprising in the fact that such a fanatic fears most of all an analysis which seems to him a revision. To become a revisionist in the fanatic's eyes does not require reexamining the fundamentals of the teachings, especially since his definition of a revisionist changes to suit his needs. What irritates him most of all is when these terrible revisionists dare to analyze and expose the recent past. ●

End of Notebook Six.

Next: [Notebook Seven—38. "Distinguishing Stuffing from Substance"]

Notes

1. In previous episodes this journal was mistranslated as *The Stoker*.
2. This reference is to Baitalsky's experience of reporting a corrupt official to the authorities in a previous episode.

This is an editorial, slightly abridged, from the November/December 1989 issue of *October Review*, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong, which was distributed as a leaflet during a mass rally there.

The Tide of Democracy Is Irresistible! All Power to the People!

1989 is an exhilarating year!

One volcano bursts after another, one dictator falls after another!

The global people's movement against bureaucratic rule and for freedom and democracy has made glorious gains!

The exhilaration lies in: the broad masses of people no longer feel passive and silent on the development of history; instead, they mobilize broadly, organize and challenge the political power of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and want to take the power into their own hands. The people of Eastern Europe take over the torch from the Chinese democracy movement; moreover, the Romanian people defy the blood-bath, see clearly the true face of the Stalinist bureaucracy from the June 4 massacre, overcome fear, throw themselves into battle, and achieve a great victory. And in all the mobilizations in China and Eastern Europe, workers have in fact played an important role, becoming the backbone of the fight against the bureaucracy and for democracy.

The people are the participants and creators of history!

The developments show clearly: the Stalinist Communist Party bureaucracies have been rejected by the people of various countries, they are enemies of the people and targets of revolutions by the people, they cannot reform themselves. These fake Communists, raising the red flag and claiming to "serve the people and liberate all of humankind," even during conditions of economic difficulties and hunger of the

people, shamelessly continue to use their power to enjoy a luxurious and corrupt life, constantly eroding the nationalized property system and gorging the wealth of the people.

Therefore, the true way out is through a political revolution by the people overthrowing the rule of the bureaucracy, terminating the one-party dictatorship by the Communist Party, and letting the toiling masses hold all power.

In this time of exhilaration and encouragement, we must also point out that, although the democratic revolution in Eastern Europe has made important advances, the revolution has not yet succeeded, power is still not consolidated in the hands of the people, there is still the hidden danger of reversals. Under decades of repression by bureaucratic rule, the laboring masses of Eastern Europe have not yet organized independently into a strong power at the base; on the other hand, although the rule of the Communist parties in Eastern Europe has apparently disintegrated, they still control important bureaucratic state apparatuses (including the army, police, the entire administrative apparatus, etc.), and they will still try by all means to linger on with bureaucratic rule and make a comeback. Therefore, to thoroughly disband bureaucratic power and to let the laboring masses control political and economic power remain the current revolutionary tasks.

In China, although the democracy movement is temporarily suppressed, the ruling crisis of the Chinese Communist Party bureaucracy is deepening, especially with the aggravating economic crisis, the steep fall in production, the heightening mountain of debt, the increasing number of unemployed, with the result that all the people have to tighten their belts—and their discontent grows. Workers in the Capital Steelworks have reportedly even expressed their discontent openly. News of huge changes in Eastern Europe keeps coming in, greatly encouraging the Chinese people. Following the boycott of "patriotic cabbages" by the citizens of Beijing, in recent days the university students of Beijing have acted; Space and Aviation Univer-

sity students challenged martial law and openly protested; wall posters have appeared in Beijing University challenging the CCP leaders; students confronted government spokesperson Yuan Mu with sharp questions that he could not answer... many signs indicate that the students' struggle for democracy is brewing.

The experience of the 1989 struggles for democracy in China and Eastern Europe shows that although the students have taken the initiative, they must trigger the workers and the broad masses into struggle so that, with the support of the people's army, they have sufficient forces to counter bureaucratic rule. The next stage of struggle must concretely combine the struggle against the bureaucracy for democracy with the struggle of the laboring masses in defense of their living standards and rights, and, through self-organization, form solid people's power and overthrow bureaucratic rule.

The Chinese compatriots in Hong Kong have played an important supporting role during the 1989 Chinese democracy movement. To prepare for the revival of the Chinese democracy movement, the support actions should not relax. Besides continuing to provide material and moral support, reference information, experiences, and lessons can also be provided in the area of exploration, analysis, and exchange of experiences of struggles for democracy in various countries and their course of development, so as to help promote the process of democracy. Moreover, the citizens of Hong Kong, by accumulating rank-and-file forces through self-organization to defend and fight for democratic rights, to defend the standard of living, to fight for democratic political systems, to fight for the democratic drafting of the Basic Law by the citizens of Hong Kong, and so on, are part of the Chinese people's struggle for democracy and for the realization of all power to the people.

The tide of democracy is irresistible, all power to the people!

December 31, 1989

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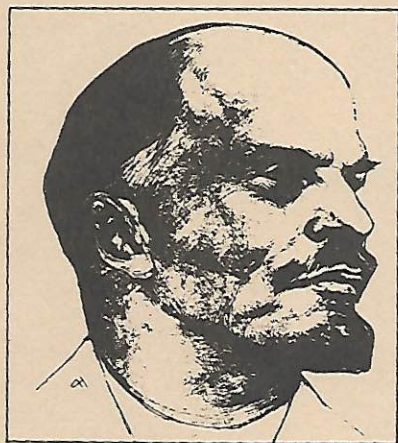
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