

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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Defend the Nicaraguan Revolution!

by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) suffered a surprise defeat in the February 25 elections. This result came after the biggest mass mobilizations in the history of Nicaragua, especially the vast rally in Managua on February 21.

The Nicaraguan election campaign was marked by a policy of aggression by U.S. imperialism against a country of a little more than three million inhabitants. This war has cost more than 70 thousand deaths, a great number of wounded, and absorbed 50 percent of the national budget. While U.S. imperialism did not achieve a military victory—the contras never got enough popular support to permit the formation of a provisional government—it did manage to profoundly distort the country's economy, thereby opening the way for acute social breakdown.

The Sandinista government found itself obliged to call early elections in the hope of ending this war of aggression. This attitude must be recognized as a further sign of the deep-seated democratic character of the FSLN, which organized the freest elections in the history of this country and many others.

Imperialist Aggression Limits Democracy

Nonetheless, the democratic character of these elections was limited, not by any dictatorial ambitions of the FSLN but by the imperialist aggression. You cannot think about democratic elections when a war of aggression is being carried out, when an election campaign is financed the way that of the National Opposition Union (UNO) was when the U.S. Congress voted to give it \$10 million in aid, when terrorist attacks were planned against the life of the president of the country, and with the contras active on the borders, despite the accords signed that called for demobilizing them. The triumph of UNO is the result of this aggressive policy of the imperialists.

The mere fact of having succeeded in defeating the imperialists' military plans, maintaining a democratic climate, and not resorting to repressive mechanisms speaks in favor of the Sandinista leadership. Today, despite its defeat, the FSLN has gained political respect worldwide. In the medium term this will weigh in favor of the development of the revolution.

The Fourth International has taken the side of the Nicaraguan revolution from its outset. Our support for this revolution has been unconditional.

Consequently, we have felt its successes as our own, and we feel this defeat in the same way. It is precisely this view that forces us, along with the comrades of the FSLN, to reflect on the

problems that the revolution has faced and the weaknesses from which it has suffered.

The imperialist aggression against the Nicaraguan people distorted the country's entire economy. It led to the growth of hyperinflation that has had a major impact on the standard of living of the population. The adjustment policy adopted by the Nicaraguan government did reduce the rate of inflation, but at the cost of a greater assault on the living standards of the population. This created very wide discontent, which was channeled into votes for UNO. The Nicaraguan people voted against the war, low wages, poverty, and hunger. Unfortunately, the majority of the population thought they were doing this by voting for those who are in fact responsible for this terrible situation.

This trend was aggravated by the fact that the social organizations formed since the revolution have been undermined by the social breakdown. At the same time, another major weakness revealed itself. Undoubtedly, the existence of parliamentary democracy was necessary. But we wonder if it was not also necessary to extend the elements of direct democracy in order to consolidate the revolution. That is, a democracy that would enable the broad masses to decide the essential economic and social policies. The creation of such a structure would be a crucial help not only to win elections but to give impetus to the consolidation of the revolutionary process.

Another element that worked against the FSLN was the vast anti-Communist campaign whipped up by the imperialists. They have sought to identify all socialist projects with the crisis of the bureaucratic societies in East Europe, and especially the revulsion that has developed, with just cause, against the monstrous Stalinist deformations. The FSLN took a correct position toward the struggles of the peoples of those countries. However, the ideological consequences of the crisis of Stalinism harmed them.

The weakness of the solidarity movement also has to be taken into consideration. The character of the aggression required a stronger response. In this respect, the traditional organizations of the labor movement—the social democracy and the Communist parties—played a limited role. Not only were they not forces for developing international solidarity, but in the case of the social democrats they very often allied themselves with the sectors that make up UNO today.

The role of the Nicaraguan Stalinists (the Nicaraguan Socialist Party and the Communist Party of Nicaragua) was even more negative. They are part of UNO. By taking this attitude, these parties have revealed their true faces as allies of imperialism.

Gorbachev's policy of making a new deal with imperialism has offered a basis for a more ag-

gressive policy by Bush, as was demonstrated in Panama.

These assessments do not lead us today to take our distance from the Sandinista revolution. To the contrary, we feel a greater identification with it. Today, the fundamental task, as the FSLN leadership has decided, is to defend the gains of the revolution. We have to defend the agrarian reform and fight to deepen it, along with the nationalization of the banks, the monopoly of foreign trade, the home ownership of the urban popular masses, the anti-imperialist foreign policy, and especially the Sandinista People's Army. All these aspects are legitimized by the revolution of July 19, 1979, and continue to enjoy the support of the immense majority of the population.

Very likely, after a certain pause, the government of Violeta Chamorro will aim to wipe out these revolutionary gains. The reaction to this will be much greater than she and her international backers imagine. The revolution has suffered a setback, but it is not defeated. Immediately after the electoral reverse, the FSLN took the correct road of mass mobilization. Today, more than ever, this is the best road. And it is precisely along this road that the past errors can be corrected.

Appeal for International Solidarity

Therefore, we restate our support for the Nicaraguan people and their vanguard, the FSLN. While the revolution has not been defeated, the imperialists and those who want to sell the country to them are readying themselves to crush it. Once again, the Fourth International appeals for international solidarity, and pledges itself to build it, as a guarantee that our brothers and sisters in Nicaragua can get a better relationship of forces so that they can advance in the struggle to construct a society without exploitation and imperialist oppression.

Finally, we want to draw attention to the intentions of U.S. imperialism to destroy the Cuban revolution. Over and above our differences with the Castro leadership, another international task today is to defend this revolution against a possible attack from the Bush government.

The situation is similar as regards El Salvador. The imperialists and the Cristiani government are going to put terrible pressure on the FMLN. The Salvadoran revolution is surrounded by hostile governments. Only a reactivation of solidarity can thwart these reactionary plans. The Central American revolution needs our full solidarity. The Fourth International pledges itself to this. ●

March 5, 1990

The Electoral Defeat in Nicaragua

by Paul Le Blanc

The world revolutionary movement and the people of Nicaragua suffered a defeat on February 25, 1990. The U.S. foreign policy of presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush (carried out for a decade with invaluable congressional support from both conservatives and liberals of the Republican and Democratic parties) registered what seemed a stunning victory. The revolutionary regime of the Sandinistas was defeated by a majority of the Nicaraguan electorate who voted for a new government.

The presidential candidate of victorious National Opposition Union (UNO), Violeta Chamorro, is not seen as a particularly knowledgeable or experienced political person. "Violeta wasn't chosen for her abilities as president," one opposition strategist bluntly acknowledged. "Violeta was chosen to win."¹ As John B. Oakes of the *New York Times* commented: "Mrs. Chamorro is, of course, the candidate of the 'united' opposition consisting of disunited anti-Sandinistas from every shade of the political spectrum. More important, she is also the candidate of President Bush and the State Department. In part, her campaign has been paid for by the U.S. taxpayer, and she has Washington's wholehearted moral and political support."

Oakes wrote a tongue-in-cheek column urging Ortega to throw the election to Chamorro: "The Sandinistas could relax while watching the bitterly divided Chamorro coalition fall apart between now and the next election. Nothing more than U.S. support and the hope of ousting the Sandinistas holds it together." In fact, Oakes and most other U.S. political and journalistic observers expected Ortega to win, relying on polls which turned out to be seriously flawed. Oakes jokingly pointed out that a Chamorro victory would "force Mr. Bush . . . to make an all-out effort to pull Nicaragua out of the economic mire into which we have done our best to sink it."² In fact, a majority of the Nicaraguans appear to have hoped for that outcome and voted accordingly.

The Pressure of U.S. Imperialism

Since the early 1980s, the revolutionary government of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) had been a target of the imperialist policy-makers. A combined strategy of economic strangulation and military intervention involving aid to the contras and a frequent threat of U.S. invasion has been brought to bear for almost a decade. "The Reaganites no doubt want to do what Nixon and Kissinger did in Chile — make the economy scream," one U.S. missionary noted in 1983. "They hope that will generate discontent and weaken the government."³ A U.S. diplomat commented a few years later that U.S. policy-makers felt that with the contra policy "we couldn't lose," because—even if they failed militarily—"the idea was that the Sandinistas would

react one of two ways. Either they'd liberalize and stop exporting revolution, which is fine and dandy, or they'd tighten up, alienate their own people, their international support and their backers in the United States, in the long run making themselves more vulnerable."⁴

The FSLN and Democracy

The FSLN leadership sought to counteract the negative impact of these developments in several ways. One of the most important was the decision *not* to "tighten up," but rather to maintain political pluralism and to utilize democratic elections in order to mobilize support for FSLN leadership and policies. In the 1984 elections they proved successful, winning over 64 percent of the vote. In the period leading up to those elections, the FSLN's Bayardo Arce explained, with joking formulations, that successful elections could discredit the reactionary U.S. slander campaign leveled at the revolutionary regime: "The people will ratify, in a bourgeois-type exercise, this Sandinismo, which is totalitarianism, which is Marxism, which is the end of freedom, which means the spread of Soviet-Cuban influence, which is everything that gobbles up little children."

Arce stressed that a democratic electoral victory could move the revolution forward: "Let the people vote for agrarian reform, which will continue. Let them vote for everything that has been done in the revolution, for literacy, adult education, confiscations, nationalization of the banks and foreign trade, free education, the Soviet and Cuban military advisers, the internationalism of the revolution. Let them vote for all that. That is the reality of our revolution and everything we have done has that dynamic behind it."⁵ This is what a majority of the Nicaraguan electorate voted for in the 1984 elections—to the horror of the Reagan administration and its bourgeois allies in Nicaragua, who shrilly denounced the elections as a "fraud" and "sham," although honest observers of various political persuasions documented that the elections were fair. For example, Abraham Brumberg—former editor of the U.S. State Department magazine *Problems of Communism*—demonstrated that "the elections were eminently fair, the conditions for secrecy were scrupulously observed, the incidence of irregularities (as reported by the contesting parties) remarkably low." He added: "The elections were not rigged. There was no need to rig them, if only because there is no doubt whatever that the FSLN still had the backing of the majority of the country."⁶

Increasingly after the 1984 electoral victory, however, the Nicaraguan people saw the revolution's gains eaten away. The standard of living finally plummeted well below pre-revolutionary levels (to those of 1940, according to some). In

spite of the disastrous deterioration of the quality of life in the country, the FSLN proceeded to institutionalize electoral democracy through a new constitution, and five years later moved forward with the new elections which the constitution required. Sandinista campaigners blamed the economic crisis on U.S. imperialism, and sharp austerity measures in 1988-89 yielded modest economic improvements during the 1989-90 election period. But these improvements were clearly too little too late. In addition, although the FSLN consistently demonstrated a capacity to defeat the contras (and the contras—blamed by Amnesty International for the bulk of Nicaragua's human rights violations—were never able to win mass support), the war had taken its toll. If the Sandinistas won the election, it seemed clear that there would be more fighting.

In the 1990 elections the Sandinistas hoped to duplicate their triumph of six years ago. "Things will be better," an FSLN campaign slogan promised. But things hadn't gotten better after people voted for the Sandinistas in 1984, and many could not be confident that a second vote for the FSLN would bring improvements.

"It was good that the Sandinistas got rid of Somoza," one impoverished barrio dweller explained to a National Public Radio correspondent (broadcast on February 26, 1990). "There are some parts of the revolution that we want to keep. It's not that we voted for UNO. We voted for change." Making special reference to economic shortages and unemployment, and also to military conscription and victims of the contra war coming home in body bags, such voters expressed bitter disappointment in the leaders they had once supported: "The Sandinistas have betrayed the revolution. Now UNO has promised to make things different. Let's hope that they do." The Sandinist revolution has obviously given people a sense of empowerment, and there is no clear understanding that this will be undermined under bourgeois rule. As the barrio dweller said of UNO: "We'll give them three or four years, and then if we don't like them, we'll throw them out. Here it is the people who are in charge. That's one thing that we've learned." Not all of the working masses and the poor felt this way, of course, as the 41 percent FSLN vote demonstrates, but many did—enough to replace the Sandinistas with the bourgeois coalition. The FSLN leaders had more than once insisted, in past years, that they rejected a return to political power of the bourgeoisie, that the kind of democracy they had been fighting for was not one in which power would be "raffled off" to old-time politicians. While the 1990 elections were by no means such a "raffle," it is clear that the Sandinistas and their popular following have been forced by the pressure of U.S. imperialism to retreat from the kind of democracy for which they had sacrificed so much.

A crucial point was made in an FSLN statement on democracy in 1980: "Democracy is not *simply* elections. It is something more, much more. For a revolutionary, for a Sandinista, it means participation by the people in political, economic, social, and cultural affairs. The more the people participate in such matters, the more democratic they will be. And it must be said once and for all: democracy neither begins nor ends with elections. It is a myth to want to reduce democracy to that status. Democracy begins in the economic order, when social inequalities begin to diminish, when the

workers and peasants improve their standard of living. That is when true democracy begins, not before."⁷

This genuine, vibrant democracy was thwarted in Nicaragua by the economic crisis generated by the assaults of imperialism, by the pressures of the contra war, and by compromises which the Sandinistas felt compelled to make with indigenous and international capitalism. Not only was there a devastating economic crisis, but there was also the disintegration of many of the mass organizations which had been such an important part of the revolutionary process in the early years of Sandinist struggle and power. Demobilization and demoralization of the working masses cut deeply into the popular support of the FSLN.

The Limitations on the Revolution

Among those on the left, some have criticized the Sandinistas for placing too much emphasis on "bourgeois" elections, and some have been critical of their failure to push forward to socialism. In fact, however, the Sandinista's commitment to the recent electoral process is part of their broad commitment to democracy, and this, in turn, is an essential aspect of their socialist perspectives. At the same time, it is a misconception to believe that socialism could be achieved in a single isolated country. In an article written last summer, "Understanding the Nicaraguan Revolution," we made several points which bear repeating:

We have seen that the collectivization of the economy, under present circumstances, can hardly be expected to solve the country's problems and could result in greater hardships than ever. The government's attempt to maintain some space for Nicaraguan capitalism in order to prevent the total collapse of the economy has generated FSLN attempts to contain or control the militancy and radicalism of the working masses. This undermines the proletarian morale and popular energy which has been essential to the revolution. What's more, the mixed economy policy of the government and other social and economic policies of the Sandinistas have failed to prevent the drastic decline of worker and peasant living standards, and it seems likely that growing numbers will hold the FSLN regime responsible for the worsening situation.

The danger seems to exist, therefore, of a fragmentation and erosion of proletarian rule in Nicaragua. If this progresses, three possibilities might face the Sandinistas: (1) to utilize the democratic-electoral forms established under the new constitution to allow bourgeois political forces to take over the reins of government (allowing the FSLN to assume an oppositional role—assuming it was not overwhelmed by repression or demoralization); (2) shifting from a revolutionary socialist to a "radical nationalist" path similar to that of the Mexican revolution in the early decades of the 20th century (although such a shift would probably cause splits among the FSLN's Marxist cadres); or (3) choosing the path of nationalizing the economy, at the risk of economic chaos and political authoritarianism.⁸

Some on the left might feel that the third option was the best, pointing to the example of the Cuban and Russian revolutions. But the nationalizations which took place in the early days of the Cuban revolution were backed up by the immense assistance given by the USSR, which from the beginning (and thanks to *perestroika*, even more so since the late 1980s) has refused to play a similar role in regard to Nicaragua. The nationalizations which took place in the early days of the Soviet Republic were originally resisted by Lenin and Trotsky because—given the lack of managerial expertise—it was feared that the economy would collapse. The early Soviet Republic did indeed suffer such an economic collapse, popular support for the Bolsheviks quickly eroded, and in the desperate conditions of civil war and foreign intervention the Bolshevik regime was compelled to resort to authoritarian measures to ensure its survival. Rapid nationalizations in Nicaragua could well have generated similar consequences. But as the experience of Grenada demonstrates, any left-wing effort to impose a regime which the masses do not support can open the way for U.S. intervention. Not only do authoritarian measures undermine socialist goals, but the strength of the Sandinist revolution has always been its popular support. What's more, the nationalization route would mean establishing state control over a devastated, impoverished economy which—given the present world situation—would find itself more isolated and discriminated against than ever.

The article "Understanding the Nicaraguan Revolution" suggested that two factors might help to lead the Sandinist revolution out of this impasse. One involved the possibility of the Sandinistas turning to "popular-democratic solutions—inspiring and mobilizing the country's working people—to deal creatively and resourcefully with [the] grave problems," but while the election campaign may have been an attempt to accomplish this, it has failed. The other factor was even more decisive: "what happens outside of Nicaragua, such as successful socialist revolutions elsewhere in Latin America, could open up new possibilities for the progressive development of the Nicaraguan revolution."

There are criticisms that can and should be made of FSLN policies on a variety of issues. Some of these are touched on in the report on Central America approved on February 18 by the National Organizing Committee of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, which is printed beginning on page 5 of this issue. Even if the Sandinistas had made absolutely no mistakes, however, it is questionable whether the electoral defeat could have been avoided. The "objective factor" remained stubbornly in place—the relative isolation of the Nicaraguan revolution for more than a decade.

Historical experience demonstrates that revolutionary efforts to establish socialist democracy in one country cannot triumph in isolation from similar efforts elsewhere. It is generally recognized that in the brutal years of civil war following the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, even under Lenin and Trotsky, the initial massive popular support for the revolution by no means remained intact. It dramatically eroded in the period of 1918-21. Authoritarian and bureaucratic deformations resulted. More than this, the ten-year isolation of the Bolshevik revolution led to the bureaucratic defeat of workers' power in the larger and more powerful

Soviet Republic. The failure of the German revolution in the period of 1918-23 (and of workers' revolutionary struggles in other countries as well) was at least as responsible for this as any mistakes the Bolshevik leaders might have made. It is not possible that workers' power can be indefinitely maintained in any isolated and impoverished country.

In a sense, the Nicaraguan election was lost on the battlefields and in the neighborhoods of El Salvador—where the FMLN failed to score decisive victories, in the voting precincts of Brazil—where the Workers Party fell short (for now) of coming to power, in the streets of the United States—where anti-intervention activists successfully mobilized to prevent a full-scale invasion of Nicaragua, but failed to end the contra war and U.S. economic aggression. We can of course be more critical of the Central America anti-intervention movement in the U.S. than we can be of the revolutionary movements of El Salvador or Brazil, because we are on more intimate terms with its limitations. The struggles are certainly far from over in these and other political arenas, but the fact remains that as of February 25, 1990, they were unable to end the relative isolation of the Sandinist revolution or to end U.S. aggression. Here it should also be repeated that much of the responsibility for the defeat must be laid at the door of those who should have been increasing economic support to the Nicaraguan people but who instead cut back their support: the bureaucratic leadership of the USSR. Under Brezhnev and his immediate successors, the Sandinistas were already informed that Soviet aid would be minimal. Mikhail Gorbachev's new foreign policy of even more far-reaching accommodation with imperialism further squeezed a vital lifeline for the Nicaraguan revolution.

There was an even more serious betrayal by the social democracy. The reformist politicians of the Second International had been increasingly displeased by the revolutionary commitments of the Sandinistas and had pressured them to transform the Nicaraguan revolution into a bourgeois-democratic exercise. Disappointed with the FSLN's refusal, many of them began to work for the Sandinistas' overthrow. For example, a "democratic socialist" in the United States named Michael Walzer (an editor of *Dissent* magazine, with ties to Democratic Socialists of America and the liberal wing of the Democratic Party) wrote an influential article in which he urged an end to contra aid but added: "This achieved, however, the Sandinistas will remain our enemies; and we should remain their enemies. Insofar as we can make things hard for them, politically or economically, we should do that."⁹

The Future of Workers' Power in Nicaragua

We have argued that the dictatorship of the proletariat, defined as the political hegemony of the working masses, had been established by the Sandinist revolution. The incoming regime will certainly do its best to dismantle that. The level of consciousness of the Nicaraguan working masses has proved, under present conditions, insufficient to guarantee the future of workers' power. The exhaustion and demoralization of the people (by no means all, but a majority

(Continued on page 24)

Central America, the Caribbean, and the Nicaraguan Revolution

by Paul Le Blanc

This is the edited text of a report approved by a plenum of the National Organizing Committee of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, February 18, 1990.

There is general agreement within the Fourth Internationalist Tendency that the revolutionary process taking place in Central America and the Caribbean remains, as it has been for some time, of central importance to the worldwide struggle for socialism and human liberation. Contrary to the unbalanced notion of the Socialist Workers Party in the early 1980s, it is not the case that this is “the epicenter” of the world revolution. We recognize that there are three sectors of the world revolution which are intimately interconnected. To focus on one sector to the virtual exclusion of the others would disorient us just as it disoriented the SWP. On the other hand, what the revolutionaries of that long-exploited region are able to do against imperialist oppression and indigenous tyrants profoundly affects our own struggles in the advanced capitalist countries, especially in the United States. What we are able to do, similarly, affects their struggles. For that matter, the momentous events in the bureaucratically deformed workers’ states of Eastern Europe and the struggles in Central America and the Caribbean mutually impact upon each other in important (if sometimes complex) ways. The fact remains that we in the United States must give special attention to the realities in this neighboring region, because its future and our own—for historical, economic, political, and even geographical reasons—are immediately and intimately interconnected.

There is much that must be said in any rounded analysis. Attention must be given to the heroic pioneer of socialist revolution in the Americas—Cuba under the leadership of Fidel Castro, which has provided an inspiring example for revolutionaries throughout the world, despite the increasingly serious failure of the Cuban revolution to institutionalize meaningful forms of working class democracy.

For more than a decade a sustained revolutionary struggle has been carried on in El Salvador under the leadership of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), and the recent offensive demonstrated conclusively that the Salvadoran struggle is far from over. It may be tempting to pretend that we know all we need to know about the FMLN and its orientation, and to express either a glowing tribute to its revolutionary leadership or a sharp critique of its strategic perspectives which have yet to bring victory. But we don’t really know enough to do either of these things honestly. One radical journalist close to the FMLN, Marc Cooper, tells us (in an interview appearing in the January/February 1990 issue of *Against the Current*) that this recent FMLN push into San Salvador was the beginning of the long-awaited “final offensive,” although he hastens to add that it “can last a year” or it “can last two years,” and that it “can win or . . . can fail.”

All of which raises numerous questions about the perspectives and capacities and future of the FMLN and the Salvadoran revolution. The answers to these questions are by no means clear.

Although there are problems for us to wrestle with in defining the realities of Cuba and El Salvador, at this point no differences have been raised within the FIT regarding our general approach to these realities. The same can be said regarding the escalation of U.S. interference and military buildup in the region, reaching a crescendo with the invasion of Panama. Noriega was a corrupt dictator originally in the pay of the CIA. His inclination to act like a maverick and nationalist infuriated his North American patrons; his contempt for his own people made it easy for the Bush administration to play out its own arrogant dreams of “taking him down.” The U.S. government accomplished more than one thing through its violation of Panama’s national sovereignty. In Latin America a clear message was sent to politicians across the political spectrum. Military forces were strategically positioned for possible future action in other parts of Central America—for example, El Salvador or Nicaragua. There is, obviously, more to be said about these matters, but again there are no differences which have been raised in the FIT on our general approach.

What I propose to do in this presentation is to focus on issues which *have* generated some critical discussion in our ranks—in particular, around the question of the nature and the current problems of the Nicaraguan revolution.

The FIT has developed an approach on this question which is unique among the fragments of the Fourth Internationalist movement in the United States. The FI Caucus in Solidarity has avoided developing an independent standpoint (though many of its members seem to accept our own views). But the other fragments of our movement in the United States *have* developed different perspectives. Socialist Action has advanced a sharp critique of the Sandinistas and presently favors the candidacy in the 1990 elections of a small party of left-wing critics, the MUR. The SWP has recently broken politically with the Sandinista leaders, arguing—as one of its leaders, Larry Seigle, puts it—that they have become “obstacles to the development of a communist leadership without which the revolution cannot move forward and without which it will be pushed backward.” Seigle adds: “The leadership in Nicaragua is not oriented to the world revolution. It is oriented to the capitalist world.”

It should be noted that our own independently developed analysis coincides with the analysis developed by many Fourth Internationalist comrades around the world, which isn’t surprising, given the fact that we are using the same theoretical tools and methodological approach. What is essential, however, is *not* with whom we converge or with whom we are aligned in the Fourth Internationalist movement. Far more important is to try to understand honestly what the

reality is—in this case, to grasp and learn from and orient ourselves according to the actual dynamics of the Nicaraguan revolution.

In this presentation I will indicate why we say that the dictatorship of the proletariat (that is, the political rule or the political hegemony of the working class) exists in Nicaragua. I will also discuss the logic of the “mixed economy” in Nicaragua. I will suggest why the approach of Socialist Action and the Socialist Workers Party represents a failure to apply the Marxist method. And I will suggest some of the problems facing the Nicaraguan revolution and some of the deficiencies of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), while at the same time indicating why the leadership of the revolutionary process by the FSLN remains sufficiently sound to warrant our support.

Proletarian Rule in Nicaragua

In 1979 a proletarian revolution took place in Nicaragua. Under the leadership of the FSLN, a mass insurrection—primarily involving the proletarianized and semi-proletarianized layers of the Nicaraguan urban masses, with the thoroughgoing support of the rural masses—overthrew the Bonapartist dictatorship of the Somoza family, under which modern-day Nicaraguan capitalism had developed and had been protected from the discontent of the oppressed and exploited. It was a proletarian revolution not simply because of the class composition of the combatants, but also because of the program of its leadership and because, after the smashing of the bourgeois state, governmental structures were established which reflected the political hegemony of the Nicaraguan working people.

The program of the FSLN was essentially revolutionary socialist, based on the ideas of Marx and Lenin (although it was strongly influenced by the popular, radical-nationalist tradition of Sandino, and also by a mixture of especially Castroist, but also Maoist, Vietnamese, and Trotskyist conceptions, plus radicalized currents in the Catholic Church). Elements in the FSLN were prepared to go quite far in establishing united front alliances with and making tactical concessions to elements of the bourgeoisie. But the FSLN, including *all* of its pre-1979 factions, explicitly sought to prevent any section of the capitalist class from establishing bourgeois political hegemony, consistently seeking instead to guarantee—through the FSLN’s political leadership and armed intervention—the hegemony in Nicaragua’s political life of the working masses. This orientation can be found in major FSLN documents and statements before, during, and after the 1979 seizure of power. By late 1979, FSLN leaders such as Jaime Wheelock were asserting: “The state is not now the same state, it is a state of the producers, who organize production and place it at the disposal of the people, and above all of the working class.”

More important than rhetorical assertions and stated programs, however, are the lived realities and actions of the working people and those who claim to provide leadership in the class struggle. On this, allow me to quote a paragraph from my study *Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua*, which first appeared in 1983.

It is not difficult to understand why elements of the old capitalist opposition to Somoza feel that the revolu-

tion which they (more or less) supported has been “betrayed.” But as... *New York Times* reporter Marlise Simons writes from Managua: “Today, at least some of the promises to the poor appear to be coming true. The Government says illiteracy has been reduced from 50 to 12 percent and one in three Nicaraguans is in school or adult classes. It cites health programs that have lowered infant mortality from 120 per 1,000 in 1978 to 90 in 1982 and reduced most diseases.” She adds: “At the same time, the former ‘silent majority’ has gained a voice in neighborhood committees and town councils. ‘Poor people are talking back to Government workers and even to the army and the police,’ said a longtime American resident. ‘Let me tell you, no one talked back to the Guardsmen in the old days.’” Stephen Kinzer has emphasized the meaning of this: “The Sandinistas have given many downtrodden Nicaraguans something as precious as it is rare for poor people in Latin America: hope for the future. So long as they can keep [such] people...happy, the Sandinistas can count on a solid base of popular support.”

The dictatorship of the proletariat—or political hegemony of the working people—was brought into existence through the Sandinist revolution. There are three qualities which are realized by such a workers’ government:

- 1) it is committed to carrying out policies and establishing programs beneficial to the proletarianized and semi-proletarianized layers constituting the majority of working people;
- 2) its commitment to the needs and interests of the working people is a higher priority than defending the interests of capitalism, and it is therefore prepared to realize that priority at the expense of the capitalist class;
- 3) it depends for its existence on the support of these proletarianized working people who see it as a force which represents their interests.

A distinction must be made between the class character of a state and the specific structure, form, or policies of the governmental apparatus. It would be possible to have a parliament, a system of councils, and a greater or lesser amount of democratic (or authoritarian) qualities in the way a government functions, without necessarily altering the domination of the country’s political life by the working class. The traditional Marxist orientation holds that democracy is most in harmony with proletarian hegemony, and the more democracy the better. But the Marxist orientation also allows for authoritarian measures by the proletarian regime in time of severe crisis and emergency.

There is an important question regarding how undemocratic such a state can become, and for how long can it be undemocratic, before “workers’ rule” is undermined or obliterated as a meaningful characterization, but our movement has traditionally maintained a certain flexibility on this question. By 1921, for example, the Soviet Republic had adopted quite severe authoritarian policies—yet many Marxists would argue (correctly) that essential elements of proletarian rule remained.

In regard to Nicaragua, this distinction between class character and specific structures suggests that the absence of certain institutions of proletarian democracy associated

with the Bolshevik revolution—such as soviets—can't be taken as proof of the absence of proletarian hegemony. What's more, we must recognize that in Nicaragua today there is greater freedom of expression and organization, greater pluralism and opportunity to influence government policy by working people than was the case in the Soviet Republic of 1921.

What is fundamental is that the FSLN government maintains as its highest priority (next to staying in power) the carrying out of policies and programs beneficial to the working people, and that this regime depends for its existence on the support of Nicaragua's working people.

The Mixed Economy

The FSLN as an organization, and all of its cadres that I was able to talk to, can be said—without any ambiguity at all—to favor the goal of socialism over any form of capitalism. But the FSLN has not established socialism in Nicaragua. It has neither nationalized the economy, nor brought all or most of the country's fields and factories under the democratic control of the working class. Although about forty percent of the economy is in the state sector, capitalism has not been abolished. Instead, the FSLN has followed a "mixed economy" policy of seeking to maintain a partnership with elements of the bourgeoisie for the purpose of preventing economic collapse.

The Sandinistas have argued that the FSLN government, its cadres and its working class supporters lack sufficient expertise to run the economy, that an attempt to do so will lead to isolation in a predominantly capitalist world economy and also will lead to internal disintegration. Despite the profound contradictions, tensions, and instability generated by this form of "mixed economy," the FSLN leadership has opted to preserve it for as long as possible, seeking to keep the country from descending into economic chaos. A socialist transformation of the Nicaraguan economy will have to await the spread of proletarian revolution, ending Nicaragua's relative isolation.

Such a general approach should not seem unreasonable to those of us educated in the Leninist-Trotskyist tradition. We reject the notion of "socialism in one country." We understand the centrality of revolutionary internationalism to the progressive socio-economic development toward socialism of such countries as massive as the Soviet Union, so it should not be difficult to grasp that this is even more the case with a country such as Nicaragua.

This is not the approach which appears to inform the analyses of the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Action.

The Method of Disoriented Comrades

In regard to the SWP's new position on Nicaragua, it is necessary to stress one point in particular. The SWP methodology remains, as it has been for more than a decade, to orient to Castroism. And this more than anything else explains its present line on Nicaragua.

It seems clear that a divergence has opened up between Castro and the Sandinistas. There are several significant indications. The Cuban leadership has come out against the democratic upsurge and reforms in Eastern Europe and the USSR, while the Nicaraguan leadership has embraced these developments. The Cuban leadership has indicated a dis-

satisfaction with some of the economic policies of the Nicaraguan leadership. The Cuban leadership appears to be critical of some of the foreign policy compromises made by Daniel Ortega. On this last point especially, we ourselves are inclined to make criticisms—certainly in regard to the statement of the five Central American presidents equating the FMLN with the Nicaraguan *contras* and calling on both to lay down their arms. On the other hand, the Sandinist rejection of the old Stalinist order that is being destroyed in Eastern Europe, and the identification with the democratic upsurge, is a positive development.

Given its guiding principle that the Cuban Communist Party under Fidel Castro represents the leadership of the world revolution today, the SWP has felt compelled to begin elaborating an increasingly profound critique of the Sandinistas. The starting-point of the SWP analysis is not the actualities of the Nicaraguan revolution, but certain ideological preconceptions which became central to the SWP leadership some years ago.

The approach of Socialist Action contains significant differences but also some similarities. The SA comrades reject Castroism, remaining faithful to Trotskyist perspectives as they understand them. The problem is that their understanding of these perspectives is somewhat superficial and rigid when compared to the methodology of Lenin and Trotsky. Instead of a concrete analysis of a concrete situation, the leading SA comrades are inclined to superimpose half-baked "orthodox" formulas onto poorly understood realities.

Their understanding of the concept of *dictatorship of the proletariat* is that it is impossible unless a nationalized, planned economy is first established. Elsewhere we have documented that this so-called "orthodoxy" has little to do with the actual theories of Marx, Lenin, or Trotsky—not to mention the actual experience of the Paris Commune of 1871 or the early Soviet Republic in Russia. Since the "mixed economy" policies of the Sandinistas are incompatible with this half-baked "orthodoxy," the SA comrades denounce the Sandinistas and call for a revolutionary alternative. Pragmatically casting about for such an alternative, they have embraced the presidential candidacy in the current Nicaraguan elections of Moisés Hassan of the Movement for Revolutionary Unity (MUR).

The MUR is a very loose coalition of disillusioned ex-members of various left-wing groups in Nicaragua. They came together around a minimal program, agreeing to set aside various differences and programmatic uncertainties for the sake of immediate practical unity. Hassan himself is *in favor* of the "mixed economy" policy, which he assured me is the only viable approach for a country such as Nicaragua. His major criticism of the FSLN revolves around allegations of corruption and insufficient democracy. Regardless of what one thinks of Hassan's specific ideas, Socialist Action's elevation of Hassan and the MUR as the revolutionary alternative to the FSLN seems to flow from an impressionistic pragmatism which exists as a dialectical counterpart to SA's superficial "orthodoxy."

Problems of the Nicaraguan Revolution

It is clearly not the case that there are no problems in Nicaragua.

One problem is that the military aggression and the economic catastrophe which the country has been forced to endure especially since 1983, in large measure thanks to the vicious policies of the U.S. government, have eroded the immense social gains of the revolution as well as the living standards of Nicaragua's working people. Built into the "mixed economy" policy, furthermore, is an inherent instability: the capitalists will inevitably feel compelled to hold back from investing in an economy which is overseen by a left-wing regime claiming to place the needs of the people above the profits of the capitalists. FSLN policy-makers are also pulled into two different directions: seeking to force the economy to function according to the principles of social justice on the one hand, but on the other hand making far-reaching concessions to the dynamics of the capitalist market (inside Nicaragua and also on a world scale) at the expense of the immediate needs of the Nicaraguan workers and farmers. There has been a clear tendency in the recent past to tilt more toward the requirements of the capitalist market. This has meant technocratically engaging in International Monetary Fund-type austerity measures and favoring policies buttressing the old agro-export aspects of the economy, at the same time seeking to prevent further worker and peasant challenges to the private sector. It's possible to question some of these FSLN decisions even if we do accept the validity of the "mixed economy," but it is also important to note that over the past year, in the wake of some of these policies, the inflation rate fell from 37,000 percent to only 1,000 percent, and that many commodity shortages appear to have been overcome. The fact remains that the economic situation of the country's working people continues to suffer, causing some to turn away from the Sandinistas.

Another problem involves the limitations on the institutionalization of proletarian democracy.

This should not be overstated. A genuinely democratic election process—far more democratic than anything the United States has enjoyed for many, many years, if ever—is unfolding in Nicaragua. Polls indicate that the Sandinistas will win the elections by a substantial margin over their closest competitors. A democratic election in 1984 also took place, resulting not only in an FSLN victory, but, among other things, in a National Assembly with freely elected delegates and representation for vocal oppositionists from the left and the right, a situation which is sure to continue after the 1990 elections as well. We can find political pluralism, trade union pluralism, freedom of expression, plus many policies and practices which have encouraged working people to participate meaningfully in the political life of the country. The people have access to arms. The leaders of the government regularly go among the people for town meetings—often televised or broadcast on the radio—for "Face the People" sessions where they are confronted with sharp questions. It seems clear that avenues exist through which popular pressures can be effectively mobilized, sometimes resulting in changes in government policy.

On the other hand, the mass organizations which played such an important role in the earlier revolutionary process have been in decline over the past several years. Some analysts suggest that one reason for this has been that the new constitution removed them from playing a direct role in

the government as they did when they were part of the Council of State. Another reason, some argue, is that—especially under wartime conditions—the FSLN, which brought them into existence, failed to allow them sufficient autonomy, seeking instead to utilize them to enhance efforts related to national defense. There have been charges of "verticalism" (policies being made at the top instead of by the membership) and criticisms about the leadership of the mass organizations (at least above the purely local level) not being freely elected by the membership but rather being appointed by the FSLN. There is some variation among the different mass organizations. The community organizations called the Sandinista Defense Committees reportedly have almost completely fallen apart, necessitating the assignment of Omar Cabezas to head up a revitalization and rebuilding effort. The massive Sandinista Workers Confederation remains strong in many ways but also has a reputation for subordinating the desires of the workers to the directives of the FSLN. The organization of small independent farmers, on the other hand, has the reputation for enjoying greater autonomy. The women's organization known as AMNLAE to a large extent devoted its energies to assisting the mothers of combatants in the Sandinista army, although some have hopes that it will assume broader functions and greater autonomy (perhaps even an elected leadership) under peacetime conditions.

For that matter, the FSLN itself has been criticized for being "verticalist." Its disciplined cadres (membership estimates range from 16,000 to 50,000) are said to be organized according to the Leninist principle of democratic centralism, but the centralism seems much the stronger element. The nine *commandantes* of the National Directorate are essentially the highest decision-making body in the organization, supported by a Directorate staff of about 600 cadres. Periodically a 100-person Sandinista Assembly, consisting of prominent party cadres, meets to discuss policies and proposals of the FSLN leadership; issues can be frankly debated in this body, but it only plays a consultative role in relation to the National Directorate. While position papers of the top leadership can be discussed and criticized, alternative position papers with counter-lines are not permitted. The local and base committees to which the FSLN rank and file belong can also frankly discuss party policies and directives, but they are expected to carry out the line which comes down from the *commandantes*. There appears to be room for debate and disagreement, but there are no rights of tendencies or factions.

There are serious problems regarding the status of ethnic minorities in the Atlantic Coast region. In the early years of Sandinist power the FSLN made a series of well-meaning blunders, in which revolutionary enthusiasm was mixed with substantial quantities of ignorance and insensitivity in regard to the specific needs, traditions, and cultures of the Atlantic Coast peoples—which include the Miskito, Sumu, and Rama Indians, the predominantly black Creoles, and others. The resentments in some cases escalated into open rebellion, which initially was countered by repressive FSLN policies. Over the past several years there have been sustained and stepped-up efforts by the Sandinistas to undo the mistakes and injustices, culminating in a plan for regional autonomy

which would encourage cultural pluralism and a degree of local self-government for the different ethnic groups. It remains to be seen, however, whether this will solve the problems.

There is also the continuing problem of women's oppression. This takes certain especially acute forms in a society permeated by *machismo*. Two goals that one revolutionary feminist in Nicaragua emphasized in talking with me involve breaking down gender barriers in a variety of occupations, and establishing the elemental right of women to control their own bodies. This last point includes the need for broader sex education and greater availability of contraceptives. It also must address the fact that abortions are not legal. Many women can and do have abortions in Nicaragua, but many—especially among the poorer social layers—don't have access to safe ones. A recent study indicates that accidents resulting from illegal abortions are the leading cause of maternal death, and that they are the single largest cause of death and injury to Nicaraguan women. A public debate in favor of legalizing abortion was initiated by some FSLN women, but this initiative has been halted by the FSLN leadership.

The FSLN Remains the Revolutionary Vanguard

I have only touched on some of the problems of the Nicaraguan revolution. Some critics assert that such problems demonstrate the utter inadequacy of the FSLN as a revolutionary leadership. Such an assertion should be rejected.

The FSLN has demonstrated its capacity for revolutionary leadership by leading the working people of Nicaragua to victory in 1979 and securing their political hegemony, a state that represents (to quote Marx and Engels) the "sway of the proletariat" or "raising the proletariat to the position of ruling class," what is often called the dictatorship of the proletariat. Regardless of criticisms that can and should be made, the Sandinistas have provided effective revolutionary leadership for a period of eleven years.

One of the Sandinistas' achievements has been maintaining a "mixed economy" under proletarian rule for that entire period. Another achievement has been at the same time maintaining political pluralism and a significant number of genuinely democratic policies and outlets. Both the "mixed economy" and political pluralism make a considerable amount of sense, and both were goals of the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky in the earliest period of the Russian Revolution. On both counts, the Sandinistas have accomplished for more than a decade what the Bolsheviks were able to maintain for only eight months.

Drawing on the perspectives of Marx, Lenin, and Sandino, and creatively adapting these perspectives to the complex realities of their own time, the Sandinistas have won and maintained considerable authority among the bulk of the most conscious and militant working people of Nicaragua, enjoying mass support that no other Nicaraguan political current can expect. Regardless of their limitations and mistakes, they are genuinely impressive revolutionaries. One of the most impressive qualities is reflected in the fact that all of the criticisms which I've just raised were articulated by cadres of the FSLN whom I interviewed in February of this year. The revolutionary process in Nicaragua is far from

over, and it is among the Sandinistas that we can find the advance-guards of that ongoing process. The FSLN as a whole remains what it has been for many years: the vanguard of the Nicaraguan revolution.

Conclusions

The Nicaraguan reality confirms (and helps deepen our understanding of) the theory of permanent revolution: a democratic revolution could triumph only through the hegemony of the working class in the struggle, resulting in a revolutionary regime—pushing in a socialist direction—which represents the political power of the proletariat. The Nicaraguan reality has also demonstrated the existence and growth of an independent revolutionary current which converges on important points with our own perspectives. We have much of value—in regard to our own distinctive experience and theory—to share with these comrades, as they have much to share with us. My own experience is that many of them are open to such comradely interaction. We also will benefit by learning from the insights and lessons gained through their struggles, and we can benefit from critically applying these lessons to our efforts to build a mass socialist movement in the United States.

This approach in no way means that we can afford to be uncritical as we look at Nicaraguan realities or the FSLN. That would benefit no one. It is essential to understand *what is*, and to give expression to that understanding. This involves raising sharp questions and sometimes making frank criticisms. It is obvious that the Sandinist revolution will be incapable of moving forward unless various limitations and grave mistakes are overcome. But our criticisms are those of comrades engaged in the same global revolutionary socialist struggle.

Such an open, critical, comradely interaction on our part with the revolutionary reality of Nicaragua can have analytical, theoretical, and programmatic consequences that will stand as an important contribution of ours to the U.S. left and the class struggle here, as well as to the Fourth International, and to the Nicaraguan revolution itself. Along with that, we have an obvious responsibility to continue our efforts to build anti-intervention and anti-imperialist consciousness and activities in the United States, as part of defending the Central American revolution but also as part of advancing the political education of growing numbers of working people in the United States. The development of revolutionary socialist consciousness within the U.S. working class is essential not only for a socialist transition in the United States, but also for the socialist transition in Nicaragua. Whatever criticisms are made of present policies of the Sandinist leadership, the bottom line—I believe—is that the Sandinistas are doing relatively well in the face of an almost impossible situation. That situation involves the confrontation of a tiny revolutionary republic with an imperialist Goliath, and also the relative isolation of an impoverished people hoping to move forward to socialism but having to survive in a world capitalist economy. The success of the Nicaraguan revolution is by no means guaranteed and, in fact, is unlikely if this situation persists. The FSLN cannot through its own efforts change the situation; at best, it can

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The New Situation in South Africa

by Tom Barrett

From both the imperialist and oppressed masses' points of view, South Africa entered a new stage in February 1990. The democratic reforms announced by President Frederik Willem de Klerk, including the lifting of bans against the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan-Africanist Movement (formerly called the Pan-Africanist Congress), the Black Consciousness Movement, and the Communist Party, among other organizations, have created a situation in which a negotiated end to apartheid is not only possible, but an objective of both the government and the anti-apartheid leadership. Nelson Mandela's release—which is a genuine victory for oppressed people throughout the world—gives the Nationalist government a negotiating partner with authority among the Black masses but who is nevertheless willing to discuss compromises which will be acceptable to the business community and to all but the most intransigent racists among the whites.

In his capacity as the political leader of big business in South Africa, de Klerk has taken an important calculated risk: he has clearly embraced the political agenda of his National Party's compromise wing, the so-called "New Nats," at the risk of alienating the right wing of his own party as well as those who have already left it, grouped in the Conservative Party and the Herstigte National Movement. He has recognized that continued insistence on legally mandated white supremacy has become a liability to the South African capitalist class, and it must be sacrificed before bourgeois rule in South Africa is more seriously threatened. South Africa is living proof of something which Marxists have always understood: as important as struggles for national liberation are, it is the *class* question which is decisive for that struggle, as it is for all others in politics.

In an address delivered upon his release from prison, Nelson Mandela reaffirmed that he is a "disciplined member of the African National Congress," and that he made no concessions whatsoever to gain his release or the legalization of his organization. That is true; however, the ANC has never at any time in its history threatened South African capitalism or South African whites. The ANC's program, as codified in the 1955 document called the "Freedom Charter," goes no further than demands for democratic rights, agrarian reform, nationalization of some monopoly industries, and improved social benefits. Nothing in the Freedom Charter addresses the question of who shall rule in South Africa; de Klerk is astute enough to recognize that ending the *white* monopoly on political power is not the same as ending the *capitalist* monopoly on political power. It is the latter which is crucial.

The reforms which de Klerk announced are by no means the end of apartheid. The foundation laws of apartheid, the

Group Areas Act, the Land Act, the Population Registration Act, and others, remain in full effect. De Klerk also left standing the State of Emergency, which gives the police wide repressive powers. However, the reforms have made it *easier* for Black South Africans to fight against the oppression which they still face. De Klerk has given them a *democratic opening* which allows formerly banned organizations to function legally within South Africa itself. The organizations which are fighting apartheid must now step up their activity, and they will be able to do it with less fear of police repression than before. They now face important decisions, which can be discussed openly: on the demand for the maintenance of sanctions, the questions of "nonracialism," of armed struggle, and of socialist revolution itself.

South Africa, the World Economy, and Sanctions

The foundation for the South Africa of today was laid during the 1950s and 1960s. The historical peculiarities of the South African state have been important factors in creating today's political situation, especially since nearly all the political organizations in South Africa have existed for several decades now, and most of the leaders are seasoned veterans.

The Union of South Africa achieved self-rule as a dominion of the British Empire in 1910. Dominion status allowed the South African government, an exclusively white government led by General Jan Christiaan Smuts, complete authority over domestic administration, though it could have no foreign policy independent of Britain. South Africa's economy, however, remained classically colonial—dominated by mining and agriculture, exporting raw materials and importing finished industrial products from Britain and other advanced industrial countries.

Smuts's United Party was defeated in 1948 by the National Party, led by Daniel Malan. The Nationalists carried out a political transformation in the 1950s, followed by an economic transition in the 1960s and 1970s, which created the South Africa of today. In many respects South Africa was a pioneer of capitalist development in the former colonies, which reached a high level in the 1980s. The proletarian component of the Black African population is qualitatively larger today than it was when the Nationalists originally came to power.

Under colonialism, race relations in South Africa were similar to those which prevailed throughout all of the British colonies: white supremacy was understood without being codified. White domination and racial segregation were not even questioned. In the British tradition of *noblesse oblige*, however, the colonialists attempted to "uplift" their native

subjects by providing them with the Christian religion and their "superior" European culture—as well as employment in agricultural labor and domestic service. (Blacks began working in South African mines when white miners went out on strike in the 1920s.) South Africa's race relations were not fundamentally different than those in India, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Egypt, or the British possessions in the Caribbean.

The Nationalists had a different idea of what race relations should be. Their vision of South Africa was of hardy *voortrekkers* (pioneers), farming the veldt and managing lucrative gold and diamond mines, of Afrikaners who weren't afraid to get their hands dirty and didn't need Africans to do their work for them. (The reality that the *voortrekkers* who colonized the Transvaal and Orange Free State relied on slave labor did not get in the way of the Nationalists' political mythology.) *Noblesse oblige* was over: Black Africans were to be excluded completely from South African society and even from South African citizenship, through the establishment of tribal "homelands" in the least desirable territories in the country. The name for this policy was, of course, *apartheid*, and it was imposed through a series of laws during the 1950s under Malan and Hendrik Verwoerd.

The British Colonial Office attempted to intervene in South Africa to reverse the Nationalists' course, leading to the final break between South Africa and Britain. In 1961 the Union of South Africa became the Republic of South Africa, an independent state rather than a British dominion. This change at the governmental level led to a far more profound change at the economic level: the diversification of South African industry and its transformation from a colonial economy to a capitalist powerhouse nearly self-sufficient in weapons and other important commodities.

Whether the Nationalists had economic motivations for the imposition of apartheid is a matter of speculation. However, the economic benefits for the South African capitalist class and for international investors in the South African economy have been unquestionable. Black South African workers, under apartheid, have essentially been illegal aliens in their own country: the homelands of which they are legally citizens cannot support them economically; however, they have no rights in the Republic of South Africa. Apartheid has enabled employers to pay minimal wages, to prevent any kind of trade union organization until very recently, and to put Africans to work at the most dangerous jobs with no health and safety protection.

In publications written for the business community, rather than for a general audience, one has always received a different perception of South Africa—as a country with a sensible, pro-business government, a good place to invest one's money, a good country with which to trade. Of course, when confronted with the obvious immorality of directly profiting from racial oppression, business spokespeople would mutter the usual liberal excuses about providing jobs for Africans who would not otherwise have them, and about how much better off South African Blacks are than the citizens of neighboring countries. The end result of their action, of course, was to reinforce the South African state's determination to maintain and defend apartheid.

Recognizing the importance of foreign investment to the apartheid regime, antiracist activists in Europe and the United States were encouraged by the ANC and other anti-apartheid leaders to demand the imposition by their governments of economic sanctions against South Africa. Students at U.S. universities demanded that the university endowment funds divest themselves of stock in any companies doing business in South Africa. At Rutgers, the state university of New Jersey, students demanded divestiture by the state itself, and in 1985 Governor Thomas Kean agreed to the demand, divesting all state pension funds of holdings in corporations involved in the South African economy.

The weapon was effective. U.S. trade with South Africa dropped by nearly \$1 billion. Advocacy of sanctions became a treasonable offense in South Africa. The government's public relations spokespeople concentrated their attention on the sanctions issue. The Reagan administration hid its support to South Africa behind opposition to sanctions, arguing that they "would not work." Congress overrode a presidential veto to impose them.

No one should have any illusions that economic sanctions will bring about the final victory over white domination, let alone socialist revolution. However, the end result of economic sanctions has been the series of concessions to African demands which has culminated in Nelson Mandela's release from prison. There is no question: sanctions *have* worked, at least at the level of democratic demands. However, in spite of the concessions which have already been won, those who oppose apartheid must continue to demand that sanctions remain in place, for Black South Africans have still not won the vote, unrestricted travel, or unrestricted residency—let alone anything resembling freedom or equality. The Thatcher government's lifting of sanctions was a setback to the struggle against apartheid, especially since Britain is South Africa's largest trading partner. George Bush has stated openly that he thinks the United States should follow Britain's lead. Maximum pressure should be put on him and on Congress to maintain the economic sanctions until the entire apartheid structure is dismantled.

The African National Congress

Since 1984 the ANC has regained its leadership position in the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. It spearheaded the formation of the United Democratic Front, which has organized an effective mass action campaign against apartheid over the past six years. Though it is not playing a leadership role in the trade union movement, it has important influence in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). COSATU is the leading African trade union federation, and it has accepted ANC leadership in the political struggle against apartheid, as conversely the ANC has recognized COSATU leadership in the labor movement.

The ANC is not a socialist organization and has never claimed to be one. However, it is leading the struggle against apartheid, and that is an absolute prerequisite for socialist revolution in South Africa. Socialists, inside and outside South Africa, have an obligation to do whatever possible to help the South African people put an end to apartheid, once

and for all. Understanding that the struggle must in the future go beyond apartheid is no excuse for abstaining from the struggle against it today—regardless of any disagreements one might have with its present leadership. Recognizing what the ANC is, and what it is not, makes possible an effective revolutionary strategy in the actually existing political situation.

The African National Congress was organized in 1912 to fight for African civil rights in the British dominion. It was not anticolonialist, it was not revolutionary socialist, and it was not African nationalist. Its purpose was exclusively to fight for democratic rights for the African people. The ANC's acquiescence to the Union of South Africa's relationship to the British Empire should not be seen as a betrayal or a capitulation, however. The ANC was founded only ten years after the Boer War, a revolt against British colonialism by the white Afrikaners. South African independence, at that time, meant independence under Afrikaner rule. The professionally educated Blacks who founded the ANC, as well as the leaders of similar organizations among the Colored and Indian populations, tended to see British colonialism as a protective force for them. In addition, the question of South African self-rule was already settled by the time the ANC was founded. The Union was a compromise settlement which gave the Boers political power under Smuts's leadership without forcing Britain to give up the second biggest jewel in the imperial crown.

The ANC was in no way a grassroots movement which involved the African masses in its day-to-day activity. It worked through parliamentary and judiciary channels much like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the United States. The Nationalist victory and the imposition of apartheid forced it to adopt a change in strategy.

In response to the enactment of the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, the Suppression of Communism Act, and the other laws which form the foundation of the apartheid system, the ANC organized a campaign of civil disobedience called the Defiance Campaign in June 1952. Participation was mixed: it was most successful in the Eastern Cape and less successful in the Transvaal and Natal. In the Western Cape the Colored community protested the loss of its voting rights. The government remained intransigent, and in August the police began widespread arrests of Defiance Campaign "volunteers," as they were called. Anti-apartheid activists concentrated a great deal of energy into defeating the Nationalists in the 1953 elections, an attempt which failed. It became clear that working within the political structure as it existed was not realistic. In 1955 the ANC sponsored a "Congress of the People," which adopted the Freedom Charter as a proposed new South African constitution. By this time, however, the repression within South Africa had become so intense that it was no longer possible for the ANC or any organizations in which it had influence to function inside the country. Most of the leadership went into exile.

The ANC's nearly instinctive approach throughout its existence had been to appeal to liberal sentiments in the South African English community and in the United Kingdom itself. However, the National Party reflected none

of those liberal sentiments. They believed that *neef Brit* ("cousin Brit") had gone soft and had lost his empire as a result. The ANC's strategy was not effective. Three foundations of the ANC's strategy were questioned by a section of the African political leadership: its "nonracialism," its focus on democratic demands, and its rejection of socialist revolution.

The questioning of nonracialism was not based on any hostility towards whites as a race, but the legitimate concern that even if apartheid were abolished, whites would retain their supremacy through control of business and finance. The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) was formed in 1960 as an explicitly anticolonialist, Black nationalist organization. It consciously related to the anticolonial revolutions which throughout Africa were driving the British, French, and Belgian imperialists out during the 1950s and early 1960s. It criticized the ANC for not providing leadership to Africans inside the country and for its failure to organize an effective struggle to defeat the white minority state.

The PAC organized a mass demonstration in 1961 to protest the establishment of the Republic—not in support of colonialism, but as a protest against the racist character of this new independent state—in a suburb of Johannesburg called Sharpeville. The name Sharpeville has become synonymous with the police massacre which took place on the day of the demonstration. After Sharpeville the ANC again changed its strategy, turning to armed struggle and forming a guerrilla army called *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, which means "The Spear of the Nation" in the Zulu language. The ANC's armed force has proved to be no match for the South African military forces, and the launching of the guerrilla war provided the pretext for the arrest of Mandela, Sisulu, and other ANC leaders at Rivonia in 1962, from which Mandela has only now been released.

These, then, are the historical foundations of the debates which face Black South Africans today.

Armed Struggle

There can be no question that the African people have been denied the most elementary democratic rights under the apartheid system. They have had no recourse from the most blatant police injustice within the South African judicial system. They are denied any say in how they are governed. Even the so-called "homelands" are in fact controlled by Pretoria and are in no way an expression of self-determination of the African people. Consequently, Black South Africans have every moral and political right to take up arms against the South African state. They have a right to defend themselves, their families, their communities, by any means necessary, up to and including armed force. They have a right to exact punishment on any police informer or collaborator within their community.

Recognizing the moral and political right to use military tactics does not, however, address the question of the *effectiveness* of such tactics in the given situation "on the ground," as South Africans say. The guerrilla activities of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* have accomplished far less in nearly thirty years than the UDF's mass-action activities and COSATU and its predecessor organizations' proletarian struggles have ac-

complished in six. The Umkhonto we Sizwe could by necessity only involve the most dedicated and courageous revolutionaries, those who were ready to take the risk of prison or death. In a situation in which the imperialist enemy's will has been — or can be — sapped, such a guerrilla movement can be effective. An example was the Vietnamese revolution, in which the Vietnamese combined their military activity with an appeal to the U.S. population to organize against their government's war effort. Another example was the Nicaraguan revolution of 1979, when the Somoza dictatorship had lost the support of the Carter administration in Washington and of significant sections of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie.

That has not been the situation in South Africa. The Afrikaners pride themselves that they have not "gone soft" like the British Empire. They are not squeamish about killing unarmed Africans. They have no problem with hanging women and adolescents. The South African army is well-trained and well-equipped, and it has the support of the majority of the white population — which after all has a monopoly of political power. The relationship of forces does not favor a guerrilla war of liberation. The present situation requires the mobilization of the *masses*, not just the *heroes*. The masses have the ability to shut down production and services — and the strikes and "stay-aways" (the South African term for general strikes) have had remarkable effectiveness. Nonviolent mass action has had the effect of isolating South Africa in world opinion, one important result being the imposition of economic sanctions. It has begun the process of demoralizing the racists and creating the improved political climate which exists today. Ultimately, armed struggle will likely prove necessary to achieve the South African people's total liberation, but at the present time it is at best a questionable tactic.

Nonracialism, Pan-Africanism, and Socialism

On the surface, the ANC's objective of a South Africa in which all citizens are equal, regardless of race, is an admirable one. Clearly, socialists and all progressives oppose any kind of racial supremacy and are attempting to create a world in which racial barriers are unthinkable. The ANC is correct to recognize that the Afrikaners' roots in South Africa are as deep as Anglo-Americans' roots in the United States, and that they have human rights which must be respected as well.

However, legal apartheid is not the only support to white supremacy. Just as in the United States, white supremacy in South Africa is one of the foundations of capitalist society. It is thoroughly ingrained throughout the economy and class relationships. It is further reinforced through religion and culture, both of which have been imposed by the white settlers.

The ANC has never at any time had a Black nationalist or Pan-Africanist perspective. Like the NAACP, its original philosophy was that race should be no barrier to integration into the capitalist society. There was no questioning of the dominance of European culture, or even that Blacks in their majority would continue to be subservient in their role as workers in capitalist society. The ANC never opposed South

Africa's relationship to the British Empire. Traditional non-racialism in reality can be summed up as the belief that race should be no barrier to Blacks becoming proper English ladies and gentlemen. That, however, is not liberation.

The problem is that there is no way to end white domination of capitalist society and still maintain capitalist society itself. Capitalism *on a world scale* developed on a foundation of Black oppression. The capital which financed the industrial revolution was amassed in large measure through the slave trade. Sea trade between Europe and Asia was the reason for the Cape Colony's existence, and in order for Europe to gain control of the trade routes it had to destroy the African trading communities — which had a very advanced culture and civilization (putting the lie to the notion of "barbaric" Black Africa) — in Southeast Africa, known as the Swahili Coast.

The colonial empires which we associate with the latter half of the nineteenth century were, in most cases, begun during the earliest stages of the capitalist transformation of Europe. The white man's schools, the white man's churches, and the white man's businesses have all been means of keeping the Black population in subservience. Nationalists like Marcus Garvey in the 1920s and his successors Frantz Fanon and Malcolm X in the 1950s and '60s recognized that the victims of colonialism can never become truly free until they rediscover their own cultural heritage and recognize that it is in no way inferior to the Europeans'. With this philosophical foundation, the Black Consciousness Movement grew out of the Pan-Africanist Congress in the 1970s. It played an important role in the Soweto uprising of 1976 and in other struggles, particularly in the Eastern Cape. Its central leader, Stephen Biko, died at the hands of the apartheid police.

Can apartheid be ended without socialist revolution? The answer is yes. Moreover, apartheid can be ended — and may very well be ended — without any kind of revolution at all. A negotiated settlement between de Klerk and Mandela could lead to the repeal of the apartheid laws and the granting of the franchise to Black South Africans. Can *Black oppression* be ended without socialist revolution? The answer to that is no.

Ending apartheid will still leave the economy in the hands of the white bankers and businessmen who rule South Africa today. A capitalist state, whether administered by African, English, or Afrikaner politicians, will defend those bankers' and businessmen's economic interests, just as the present state does. The ending of apartheid *in itself* will do nothing to relieve the day-to-day suffering of the African masses. It will not provide jobs or increase wages; it will not provide land to the poor peasants; it will not provide medical care; it will not improve children's education.

The only answer to Black oppression in South Africa is to take state power away from the class of financiers and turn it over to the popularly elected representatives of the working class and poor peasantry. It then could make economic decisions which benefit the working masses, rather than the wealthy elite. It could reprioritize production and reorganize services so that people's needs — for food, clothing, housing, and the "extras" which make life more pleasant — are met,

and it could help brother and sister Africans achieve the same victory in other countries as well.

In the South African context, proletarian socialist revolution must have an additional component—the component of Black African liberation from white domination. White domination is imposed by the bourgeois state in Pretoria; it is also imposed from the outside by imperialist finance capital. Socialist revolution would do away with the South African bourgeois state. Imperialism will continue to oppress South Africans and the working masses throughout the world until world revolution puts an end to it. However, by making a socialist revolution, the South African people will have armed force by which to defend itself from this enemy. Marxists use the term “combined revolution” to describe a revolution whose objectives are both the liberation of the working class from capitalist domination and the liberation of a subject people from domination by another race or nationality. Black liberation cannot be achieved without socialist revolution. Socialist revolution cannot be achieved without a struggle for Black liberation.

The theory of “permanent revolution,” which was developed by Trotsky beginning after the 1905 Russian revolution through the 1930s, explains that because of world imperialist domination, the kind of bourgeois democratic revolutions which took place in Western Europe and North America from the 17th through the early 19th centuries cannot win independence or bring about economic development in those countries which have been dominated by imperialism. Only proletarian revolution can achieve the tasks which bourgeois revolution never had a chance to achieve.

The Way Ahead

Recognition that socialist revolution is a prerequisite to achieving African liberation should not be seen as counterposed to the present struggle against apartheid. In fact, socialist revolution is unthinkable *without* the struggle against apartheid, for several reasons. First, whereas it is true that in itself ending apartheid will not improve the African people's living conditions, ending apartheid will make it considerably easier for Africans to carry on the struggles which *can* improve their living conditions. If Africans are given the vote they can also organize a political party which truly represents their interests in the parliament. If Africans are allowed trade union rights (COSATU has already won important victories on this front), they can then use collective bargaining and the strike weapon if necessary to win improved wages and working conditions from the employers. The repeal of the repressive “Suppression of Communism Act” will allow Africans to air their grievances openly and demand redress.

Second, it is apartheid which represents the most naked and brutal form of racial oppression on earth today, and it is apartheid which the Black masses of South Africa most acutely feel. They are in action against it *now*. This struggle does not have to wait until the future. Socialist revolutions are not made by conspirators in dark rooms nor by intellectuals in social-science laboratories. They are made precisely

by masses in struggle, and the South African masses will reject with contempt any notion that the fight to do away with apartheid is of secondary importance. Revolutionary socialists can earn their confidence and respect only by fighting with the greatest dedication and courage *right now* in the existing campaign to win democratic rights for Black South Africans.

One of the biggest obstacles to the fight against apartheid has been the degree of disunity within the democratic movement. The ANC has claimed that it *is* the anti-apartheid movement and has refused to recognize and work with PAC, Black Consciousness, and Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO) forces. Some socialists have for their part made the error of counterposing socialist revolution to the fight against apartheid, and have concentrated more enmity against the ANC than against the racist state. A united front of all democratic forces, in which all participate and none dominates, is a more effective weapon against the apartheid system. In an interview with Phil Donahue on NBC on March 2, Nelson Mandela called for discussions between the ANC, PAC, Black Consciousness, and AZAPO representatives to resolve the differences which have kept them from working in a common effort. Such a resolution would be a giant step forward and would hasten the day when apartheid ceases to exist.

None of the existing organizations in the anti-apartheid struggle are at this time capable of leading a socialist revolution. The ANC consciously opposes it. Some attribute this to the ANC's domination by the Stalinist South African Communist Party (SACP). Actually, though the SACP and ANC have good relations, if either group dominates the other, it is the ANC which dominates the SACP. The ANC's fundamental agenda has not changed; that dovetails neatly with the Stalinist program of counterposing democratic “revolution” to socialist revolution, but it is not true that the SACP imposed such a program on the ANC.

AZAPO and the trade unions in which it has influence have refused to join in united-front activity even when it has been possible, most specifically in the formation of COSATU. Sectarian abstention in the name of socialist revolution is a sure method for not achieving socialist revolution.

What is needed in South Africa is a political party which can take the lead—which can propose the most effective courses of action at the present juncture and, when it is appropriate, lead the working class and its allies in the formation of a new state, responsible to the working people themselves. Such a party does not today exist, but the cadres which will organize that party in the future are to be found in *all* of the existing organizations. The learning experiences which they are going through now, fighting against apartheid, combined with revolutionary Marxism's past theoretical and historical acquisitions, can bring them to the realization of the need to build a combat party which will lead a socialist revolution in South Africa; it will give them the tools they need to build it, and it will enable them to make the correct decisions in leading the working class of that country to final victory.

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March 4, 1990

The Health Care Issue

Cutting Edge for Labor's Fightback

By Richard Scully

Of the many takeaways demanded by the Pittston Coal Group from the United Mine Workers of America, none was more provocative in driving the workers out on the picket lines than the company's insistence on sharp cuts in the workers' health care program. To underscore how seriously the company regarded the issue, Pittston suspended health benefits for 1,500 retirees, surviving spouses, and disabled miners as soon as its collective bargaining agreement expired with the union on February 1, 1988. The miners worked 14 months without a contract until they struck April 5, 1989. On February 19, 1990, they voted to accept a contract which contains, in the main, the union's health care program.

The miners' determination to preserve their health and welfare plan intact exemplifies the stiffening resistance by organized workers all across the country to giving concessions on this vitally needed benefit. The strike by hundreds of thousands of telephone workers is the latest and most prominent manifestation. Bell and other employers say all they want is for their employees to "share" the burden of escalating health costs. But what's really at stake is the bosses' attempt to *shift* this burden onto the shoulders of the workers. Opposition to such demands is sparking a growing wave of militancy and can be a key factor — perhaps even *the* key factor! — in elevating labor's fightback to a qualitatively higher level.

'Sharing Costs'

A survey by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), titled "*Employer-Paid Health Insurance Is Disappearing: A Survey of Benefit Takeaways in Contract Bargaining*" (July 1989), finds that premium contributions by workers for family plans rose 70 percent over two years (1987 and 1989) while employer contributions increased 35 percent, or half as much.

Companies have innumerable schemes for cutting their costs and shifting the expense of health care benefits to their workers. These include:

- **Copays:** The worker is forced to pay part of the premium previously paid for in its entirety by the company.
- **Higher Deductibles:** The company's premium payment is reduced because the worker's deductibles (amount paid for medical services before the insurance plan becomes operative) is increased. Thus workers pay more for visits to the doctor and dentist, surgery, prescription cards, etc.
- **Higher "Stop Losses":** The employer pays a smaller premium because the worker's stop-loss provision is raised. (This is the point where the insurance company picks up 100 percent of the costs after the worker reaches some ceiling limit.)
- **Tier Plan:** Newly hired workers get reduced health care benefits or no health care benefits at all.

● **Longer "Tunnels":** Although newly hired workers eventually get health care benefits, the length of time they must be employed before they are eligible, or "tunnel," is increased.

● **Reduction or Elimination of Health Care Programs for Retirees:** For retirees alone, medical coverage cost companies \$2,397 per worker in 1988, as compared to \$2,160 for active workers.

● **Reduction in Services:** Elimination or reduction of services (visual, dental, prescription, psychological testing, etc.) which cheapens the plan and reduces the employer's contribution.

● **Change in Dependency Coverage:** The employer continues to pay for the worker's health care protection but the worker picks up the tab for family and dependents.

● **Cap on Employer Liability:** The employer agrees to maintain the cost of health care benefits as it is now but imposes limits on increases in premium payments as the costs of health services go up (typically 10 percent). If the premiums are raised over the cap, either the raise is avoided by cutting benefits or the higher premium is paid out of the plan's reserves, which are rapidly dwindling in union health and welfare plans all over the country. (In July of last year, 5,000 Teamster retirees and surviving spouses lost health benefits because the union's health fund had gone \$16 million in the red.) This is "maintenance of benefits" (MOB) with a "cap" as opposed to what the union seeks: MOB *without* a cap.

● **Preferred Provider Plans:** The company chooses the doctors who presumably charge lower rates.

● **"Cafeteria" Plans:** Different health care plans for different workers, some cheaper than others.

Rising Health Costs

The cost of medical expenditures is rising rapidly in the United States, twice the rate of general inflation. Since 1980, health premiums grew at an average of 15 percent annually, while consumer prices rose at an average rate of 4.7 percent a year. In 1988 health insurance premiums went up 20 percent to 30 percent. And insurers asked for another 30 percent to 40 percent increase in 1989.

Examples of ballooning health expenses show chest X rays in 1979 costing an average of \$27.50. In 1989, it was \$59.00. The average caesarian section in 1979 was \$5,010. Last year it was \$10,900. The salaries hospitals pay their executives have also ballooned, with some top administrators being paid over \$500,000 a year.

Perhaps the most telling statistic of all is the comparison in the overall cost of health in the U.S. today as compared to 20 years ago. The figure has skyrocketed from \$50 billion to \$600 billion. (There is a 150 percent increase just since 1980.) Former secretary of health, education, and welfare Joseph Califano says, "By the year 2000, the only person in the United States who can afford to get sick will be Donald Trump."

The explosion in health care costs has been in large part due to advances in medical research and development of new technologies, the costs of which are passed along to consumers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, medical expenses average nearly 12 percent of after-tax income for low income (\$5,000 to \$10,000) households; 7.9 percent for moderate income (\$20,000 to \$30,000). Expenses above this 8-12 percent range are considered catastrophic.

Other basic necessities—food, housing, transportation, and clothing—consume 82 percent of the typical family budget. That leaves little leeway for above-average medical bills.

The result of health care inflation is to price additional millions of workers out of having any medical protection at all. Currently 37 million people in the United States have no coverage, nearly 88 percent of them working people or their families. (Twenty-two million workers are employed in jobs that offer *no* fringe benefits.) Most work for small businesses and make too much to qualify for government programs like Medicaid but live in or near poverty by federal standards.

Compounding the situation, an estimated 40 million low income people have such limited health care protection that they are frequently confronted with staggering medical bills, not covered by insurance, that they cannot possibly pay. Or, more commonly, they do not seek medical attention when they need it. Every year about 14 million uninsured (or underinsured) people fail to seek medical care because they cannot pay for the treatment. About one million people are turned away by hospitals each year because they lack the means to pay their bills.

According to Wills Goldbeck, president of the Washington (D.C.) Business Group, providing for the medical needs of the uninsured, where they are provided for, accounts for about 25 percent of the typical hospital bill. The hospitals and doctors make sure they get compensated for all services rendered to indigents, with the price tag being higher premiums charged to those who carry insurance. The big corporations, already providing health care benefits for their workers, complain bitterly about this increment and also about the fees and increased taxes they are asked to pay to help “subsidize” the costs of treating the uninsured.

As galloping inflation for health care erupted into a serious problem for profit-hungry corporations, they asked unions to join them in programs of “cost containment.” Cost-containment programs are intended to control medical costs by discouraging unnecessary procedures, promoting less expensive treatment alternatives, and encouraging preventive care. Such programs include mandatory second opinions before surgery; prenotification before admissions to hospitals; use of generic drugs in place of more expensive, but not more effective, brand names; PPOs (Preferred Provider Organizations) and HMOs (Health Maintenance Organizations) which emphasize regular medical care and checkups to prevent more serious illnesses and long-term hospital stays; and outpatient surgery where appropriate. These together with administrative cost controls were seen as the most effective way to cope with soaring medical costs. But this approach was cost effective only in the short run. In a study of 227 groups, hospital utilization review was estimated to reduce total medical expenditures by only 8.3 percent

(“Private Cost Containment: The Effects of Utilization Review Programs on Health Care Use and Expenditures,” *New England Journal of Medicine*, May 19, 1988). Meanwhile, overall medical costs continued to climb at a much higher rate.

The crisis is so severe that 60 percent of hospitals are running in the red, according to the National Association for Hospital Development. Based on present trends, 2,700 of the 6,800 hospitals in the United States—more than a third—are expected to close or become specialized by the year 2000.

There are basic factors at work that militate against the success of cost-containment programs. Like every other aspect of life under decaying capitalism, the health care system in the U.S. is riddled with waste, inefficiency, and fraud. For example, with each medical procedure performed, each laboratory test conducted, and each prescription filled, there is an opportunity for profit and an incentive to order procedures and tests not medically necessary. Opportunities for fraud also include billing for procedures and tests not actually performed. (In August 1989, six people in Chicago were indicted on charges of making \$500 million in questionable Medicaid charges. An insurance firm discovered that a Texas hospital was running a tonsillectomy factory. In New York, a company found doctors were performing too many expensive coronary bypasses.)

In addition, the threat of lawsuits spawns additional tests and procedures, medically unnecessary but useful for defending against malpractice charges. Each year doctors and hospitals perform more than \$12 billion in unneeded tests. Given the current organization of health services in the U.S., further cost savings—short of cutting profits—could be secured only through controlling outpatient costs, reducing benefits, or requiring workers to pay more out-of-pocket. But while cost-containment measures curbed *inpatient* hospitalization care to a degree, the savings were largely offset by an increase in *outpatient* costs. So the employers turned to the other two ways of dealing with the problem: cut benefits and make the workers pay!

The Battle Over Health Care Costs

Once the bosses decided to ask workers to shoulder the lion's share of rising health costs—putting families in financial jeopardy—they practically invited a confrontation. Millions of workers went along with the loss of cost of living protection (COLAs), wage freezes, and wage cuts (often “justified” by companies on the ground that they are paying more money for health, which leaves less for wages). But they are drawing the line when it comes to taking away or sharply reducing their medical benefits. Even conservative union officials who time after time over the last decade have asked their members to forget about wage increases, to accept the tier system, surrender work rules, curtail vacations and other benefits, and agree to additional rollbacks know better than to recommend that health care benefits be slashed as well.

When companies force the issue they discover something they have not seen before. Where health care is involved—and this is true of pensions as well—the labor bureaucracy may find itself boxed in, with no alternative but to do battle. Union leaders are political animals and must stand for election. They know that the unions' self-funded health plans, paid for by employer contributions, can provide health care

at a much lower cost than their members can get on the outside (because a lot of "middle men" are eliminated in the union plans). To permit health care to go down the drain could cost union leaders dearly at election time at the hands of members who find it hard, if not impossible, to get alternative medical coverage.

The labor bureaucracy has institutional concerns as well. Historically unions organized around fraternal health and welfare plans for workers long before contractual relations with employers were legalized. Today, the union itself is part and parcel of the health and welfare plan and its administration. (The union and company both appoint trustees who in turn select an administrator to run the plan.) Such plans also provide an opportunity for the labor officials to exercise a degree of power and control over the membership.

Moreover, if health protection plans were to be eliminated, the effects could be devastating in other ways. The union's role in representing its members would be severely undermined and its survival threatened. If a union cannot see to it that its members have health care coverage and if their real wages are lagging as well, how can a union retain the members' loyalty, much less do new organizing?

There is an additional concern. Thanks to the revenue provided by the members' dues, union officers and staff representatives enjoy full top quality medical coverage at no cost to themselves. How justify that if rank-and-file members lose their health care protection or have the burden of paying for it shifted to them?

So the fight over who pays the bill for health insurance is sharpening. In virtually every contract negotiation, health care is a central issue, increasingly *the* central issue, between the union and management. And 90 percent of 400 employers surveyed recently by insurer NWNL Cos. said they plan to sharply restrict medical benefits for employee families by the year 2000. Over the past decade, the corporations have registered a number of victories in shifting the cost of increasing health care costs to workers. For example, in 1980, 67 percent of companies paid 100 percent hospital and surgical insurance for their employees, while in 1988 the figure had declined to 57 percent. As for "first dollar coverage," more than 70 percent of company health plans now require deductibles, up from 51 percent in 1984. In addition, unions have agreed to cost-containment measures that require workers to use certain hospitals or doctors that offer a reduced price. And where unions have fought successfully to maintain health benefits, they have often been able to do so only by giving ground on wages. In other words, workers are increasingly sacrificing wages to keep their benefits intact.

National Health Care?

The cost of health insurance programs has grown astronomically over the last decades for public programs as well as private. Medicare costs in 1988 were \$87.6 billion, up from \$25.2 billion a decade earlier. Medicaid was up to \$57.7 billion from \$18.9 billion. The price tag for the catastrophic health insurance program is \$6 billion and the cost of a projected long-term care program will exceed \$40 billion. (Such a program is urgently needed. Workers who think they have adequate medical coverage may discover their program does not cover custodial care—needed for patients who

suffer from long-term diseases like Alzheimer's—which may well cost \$500 a week.)

Health care insurance is unquestionably a big cost item for corporations. The Big Three auto companies, for example, paid about \$5 billion in 1988 for health care for 3.5 million people. (Chrysler says its health costs soared to \$700 a car.) NYNEX, one of the "Baby Bells" struck by the telephone workers, argued that even under its own proposal health care for each unionized employee would jump 49 percent, to \$3,520 by the end of the three-year contract. All told, private corporations were expected to pay \$140 billion or more last year for health care. Health care costs for U.S. businesses rose an average of 18 percent in 1988 and an estimated 15 percent to 20 percent last year, according to Hay/Huggins, a benefits consulting firm. The average company's medical insurance premium has doubled in the last five years.

Many big corporations, beset by health cost inflation, their belief that they are paying twice—once for their employees, retirees, and dependents, and again through higher premiums, fees, and taxes for the uninsured—and unable to get the massive concessions they seek from the unions (at least not without a fight), are taking a new look at the idea of a national health care program. A national health care program would spread the costs, whether in the form of taxes or mandatory insurance, more equitably among employers. For this reason, it is gathering support from some of the bigger corporations incurring substantial costs for health care, including Chrysler, AT&T, Bethlehem and other steel companies. Another factor creating pressure for a national health care program is the fact that virtually every major industrialized country already has such a plan (the only exceptions being South Africa and the U.S.). Chrysler boss Lee Iacocca complains:

American industry cannot compete effectively with the rest of the world unless something is done about the great imbalance between the health care costs in the United States and national health care systems in virtually every other country. That's why a national health insurance program for the United States is being discussed widely for the first time since the late '70s.

Labor's top bureaucracy warmly welcomes such statements. They relish the prospect of forming a united front with top corporate leaders. That is entirely consistent with their class collaborationist policies which they apply not only in regulating industrial relations but wherever possible in fashioning social and foreign policy objectives as well.

The sad fact is that while the AFL-CIO has advocated a national health care plan for years, it has never done anything of significance to get one enacted. The labor movement could and should have mounted a massive campaign mobilizing its millions of members and uniting with its natural allies—unemployed and unorganized workers, working farmers, minorities, the women's movement, senior citizens—to demand that the capitalist politicians who sit in Congress enact legislation providing quality and comprehensive health care for all. But it is only now, with some of the corporate moguls beginning to speak out, that the labor leaders think they have a chance to get some kind of health care legislation through.

After all, the U.S. already has a "public health plan" in place. All military personnel—active or retired—and their dependents, as well as all civil service workers on military bases and their dependents, receive full medical and hospital services at no cost to them through government operated facilities, staffed by public employee health care providers. That's 10 million people who never have to worry about annual health insurance cost increases. The need now is to take this national health service for the military and extend it to the entire population.

But it won't be easy. Even the weak and diluted national health care plans that are being bruited about face opposition from monied interests. The *Wall Street Journal* (7/10/89) leaves no doubt about its position on the issue:

The current direction, given the rising level of despair among corporate executives, is toward national health. That is what some politicians have wanted all along, but it would solve nothing. It would only be the final confession of failure.

The American Medical Association, the National Association of Manufacturers, the huge drug companies, the banking and real estate-controlled hospital aggregates, insurance companies, small businesses, and others not cur-

rently paying for health care also oppose any kind of national plan. And if broad support should develop for a specific piece of legislation which these forces could not defeat outright, they will do their utmost to amend it to death.

The Arenas of Struggle

Health care has become an explosive national issue, one to which revolutionary socialists must pay much greater attention.

At the present time, organized workers are dealing with the issue primarily in collective bargaining and on the picket line. But just as with the shorter workweek, legislative and political action are also required.

As the struggle mounts for decent health care for all, it becomes more and more clear that *massive* support can be won for it by the labor movement. Experience has many times demonstrated that when workers strike to preserve their health care benefits, they can win broader support from other sectors of the population than when the major strike issue is, say, wages. This tends to be true regardless of how justified workers are in their wage demands. Together with strike battles being waged today against individual

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Pittston miners can instruct, invigorate U.S. labor movement

by Peter Rachleff

(Reprinted from the St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch, January 24, 1990.)

The just concluded Pittston Coal labor conflict provides a useful case study of the crisis faced by the American labor movement—and what workers can do about it.

A multinational conglomerate, Pittston, through its behavior, typified the corporate strategy of the 1980s. The support it received from the state—injunctions, state police intervention, thousands of arrests and millions of dollars in fines against the union—typified the new stance assumed by the government in the 1980s.

In this new situation, the miners breathed life into their traditions of solidarity and launched a creative struggle that employed virtually every new tactic being debated within the labor movement in this critical period.

Pittston sought to increase its profits by reducing its labor costs. It closed union mines and subcontracted to nonunion ones. While its bottom line grew, some 4,000 union miners lost their jobs. Then, two years ago, with fewer than 2,000 miners remaining under contract, Pittston informed the United Mine Workers of America that it wanted out of the "pattern"—the bituminous coal field agreement negotiated with dozens of corporations and the pension and health care fund for retired miners.

When Pittston let the contract expire without signing on to the coal fields agreement, the miners opted to try "working without a contract" rather than going on strike. This is an

old tactic—once called "striking on the job" by the IWW—that has received new interest as an "inside strategy" in the antistrike climate of the 1980s. The Pittston miners organized on the job, enforced every contractual regulation to a "t," followed every safety rule to the letter of the law, and refused all the overtime they could.

The miners also pursued a "corporate campaign." They attended Pittston's stockholders' meeting in Connecticut and raised the issues of their strike directly. They put pressure on individual board of directors members and the institutions they represented. The UMW produced high quality informational literature and circulated it widely, not just throughout the United States but to Japan and other countries where Pittston's coal is handled.

In the spring of 1989, the miners decided to increase the economic pressure on the company by going on strike. Well aware that a traditional exercise of the strike weapon would be futile, they added some new wrinkles to an old tactic. They organized their families, their neighbors, and their communities. They dressed in camouflage garb, creating a powerful symbol of their struggle.

By the hundreds, they sat down in the road and peacefully blocked the passage of scab trucks until they were arrested and removed by state troopers.

Roving pickets in the early summer brought out 47,000 miners in seven states. Many of them headed for the Pittston site to express their support. Other sympathizers from around the country began to do the same. Caravans with hundreds of cars and tons of food from upstate New York, Boston, and Detroit wound their way to southwestern Virginia. By midsummer, the miners set up "Camp Solidarity," where thousands of union activists from around the country stayed in tents and trailers, participated in picketing, civil disobedience, and rallies and shared experiences, not just with the miners but

with each other as well. At the national level, the UMW formally reaffiliated with the AFL-CIO.

This past fall, the miners introduced two new tactics into their struggle. One hundred strikers took control of a Pittston coal processing plant, while thousands of supporters surrounded the building. This was the first time in more than 50 years that a group of American strikers had occupied their workplace. For four days, they held the plant, costing Pittston millions of dollars in production.

Shortly afterward, the UMW's Jack Stump launched a write-in campaign for state legislator. He challenged a 22-year Democratic incumbent. The incumbent's son was a district judge who had levied \$32 million in fines against the union. Stump's supporters distributed camouflage-colored pencils with his name on them for voters to take into the booths. He won in a historic landslide and set a precedent for independent labor politics in America.

Finally, this range of activities moved both Pittston and the federal government from their initial stances. Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole scurried to southwestern Virginia and offered to provide a high-powered federal mediator. Pittston agreed to return to the bargaining table. This past month, a tentative settlement was announced.

Whatever it contains, its real lessons are in what the Pittston miners themselves did, the variety of tactics they employed, the depth of the commitment they called upon. In their attempt to deal with their new situation, they have realized the values of their traditions as well as the need for new strategies and tactics.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the United Mine Workers—America's oldest industrial union. If the American labor movement can learn from it, maybe the movement can revive in the 1990s. ●

The prospects for the reunification of Germany are a major subject for discussion today in both the capitalist press and on the left. An idea that was considered unthinkable by the East German regime and by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, even after the downfall of Erich Honecker and the Berlin wall, has now become a strong possibility. East German interim leader Hans Modrow and Gorbachev have withdrawn their outright opposition, though they insist that some conditions still have to be met. And the tide of East German public opinion has shifted dramatically to an apparently overwhelming majority in favor of reunification. On the imperialist side, initial hesitations by French and other Western European leaders, who tend to fear the emergence of a unified Germany as an even stronger economic (and potentially military) competitor, have been swamped by the rising tide.

From each of these points of view—that of the East German and Soviet bureaucracy, of the East German working class, and of the imperialists—the expeditious reunification of Germany seems to be a reasonable proposition.

The East German bureaucrats find themselves in an extremely weakened condition. They have had no viable solution of their own to offer since the collapse of their police state. Unification with the West represents a far more attractive alternative than the prospect of real workers' rule in the East. At least a significant portion of the old bureaucratic caste can reasonably expect to find a comfortable niche somewhere in a reunited Germany. As for the Kremlin, since Gorbachev's ascension to power he has opted more and more openly for the shortsighted policy of giving the world away to the imperialists in hopes of a "peaceful coexistence" that will enable him to salvage bureaucratic rule in the USSR. Given this record, there is no particular reason that he should take a hard line on the question of East Germany.

East German workers who favor reunification also do so from a purely pragmatic viewpoint, though it is a different one from that of the bureaucrats. They see the standard of living of their West German sisters and brothers and want to enjoy the same. That is why thousands have already relocated to the West. In the absence of a mass-based political force in the East which could present a real socialist alternative, a working class point of view, this phenomenon is not hard to understand.

Eastern Europe and East Germany

The imperialists (most notably the German imperialists) would also gain significantly from an absorption of East Germany into the West German economy—which is what reunification under present conditions would mean.

In the article I wrote for the last issue of this magazine, "What Is at Stake in Poland," and in previous articles as well, I have pointed out some of the objective obstacles that stand in the way of the "capitalist restoration" in Eastern Europe—a capitalist restoration that has been loudly

Comments on German Reunification

by Steve Bloom

proclaimed in the international bourgeois press as well as by some of the leaders of the new regimes in the East. Figuring prominently among these obstacles is the absence of any *significant* layer in these societies that can reasonably be called capitalist.

Some of the more corrupt old bureaucrats and some black marketeers—that is, the worst elements in the old societies—have accumulated money that might be invested in "legitimate" business ventures. But by any reasonable Western standard, as well as by the standard of what would be necessary to truly bring about a capitalist reconversion in the East, these are relatively insignificant sums.

This problem was illustrated once again by a report in the business pages of the February 20 *New York Times* about the fledgling Hungarian stock exchange:

Despite the careful planning and fanfare that accompanied its birth two years ago, the Budapest exchange, the first in Eastern Europe, remains in many ways merely an educational exercise. . . .

The daily average stock trading volume is just \$16,000. The exchange operates only three days a week.

"Our exchange is still not a real market," said Ilona Hardy, executive director of the exchange. "There is no real demand. We can't talk yet about a real equity market." . . .

The move of companies to the private sector has gone more slowly than anticipated because of the problems of selling shares where there are few investment banks, a tiny stock market, and little private capital.

But East Germany is different. In the event of German reunification a capitalist class not only exists that could take direct control of the East German economy, it is one of the strongest capitalist classes in the world. The search for native East German investors would not be necessary. That is why the imperialists would gain dramatically by a reunification of that country. Despite all of their propaganda, the fact is that *even in the best of circumstances for the imperialists* any real rebirth of capitalism in most of Eastern Europe is going to be a long and extremely difficult process. But that is not the case in East Germany if a reunification can be successfully engineered. Working class property forms could be overturned there with relative ease.

All of these material pressures—on the bureaucracy, on the East German workers, and on the imperialists—are pushing, therefore, in the direction of German reunification.

An Internationalist Working Class Perspective

There is, however, one point of view from which the reunification of Germany does not make any sense at all—that of the world working class and of the revolutionary Marxist movement. The conversion of the East German economy into another profit-making machine for the imperialist bourgeoisie would be a serious defeat for the

perspective of proletarian revolution on an international scale.

German nationalism, which is being stimulated by the unification forces, is not a progressive factor in the world today, any more than British, French, U.S., or Canadian nationalism. The jingoism of the imperialist powers justifies and helps perpetuate the exploitation of other peoples throughout the globe. The standard of living enjoyed by the working classes in the industrial centers would not be possible without the superprofits made by international corporations which pay starvation wages to workers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The racist, nationalist ideology that the imperialists use to maintain the support of their own working classes in this enterprise is something that revolutionaries must fight without compromise. It has a qualitatively different character from the nationalism of oppressed peoples — which can be a powerful force in mobilizing them against their oppression.

The dichotomy between rich and poor countries is an aspect of the international capitalist system that hasn't been taken into account by those reformist forces in Eastern Europe who declare that they will bring about prosperity by modeling themselves after the "successful" capitalist "democracies." The success of which they are so jealous has been paid for by the suffering of the overwhelming majority of those who live in the "third world." The truth is that for most of Eastern Europe the idea of joining this elite club of wealthy capitalist countries is a severe illusion. There is simply no room for new imperialist powers in the glutted world market that exists today.

Should Eastern Europe ever actually reconvert to a capitalist economy, the conditions of life that would be imposed on its working class are more likely to resemble those of a country like Turkey or Brazil than those of Western Europe. That is one of the profound contradictions that limits the real possibilities for the "capitalist option" in Eastern Europe at the present time: the aspiration of the mass movement — which remains active and mobilized — for *greater* economic prosperity and *greater* democratic control over their lives runs *completely contrary* to this basic, material fact of international economic and political life.

But East Germany is different. A reunified German state would become an even stronger player in the deadly serious imperialist game of world domination. That is something revolutionary Marxists must oppose body and soul. It is not surprising, given the complete bankruptcy of the bureaucratic state which ruled in the name of "socialism" for more than four decades, that many East German workers now want to join that part of the world which enjoys the benefits of the imperialist system. But we cannot agree with or support them in this desire.

'United Socialist Germany'?

Some individuals and tendencies on the left, in the context of the overwhelming tide that has been generated for German reunification, have declared that they are in favor of it as a legitimate expression of national self-determination. The slogan, "For a United Socialist Germany" has been presented as a way of trying to capture the prevailing

nationalist sentiment and influence it in a revolutionary direction. Such an approach, well-meaning though it may be, is misguided.

The problem is a very concrete one. Were there some actual basis for believing that the West German working class would be stimulated in a revolutionary direction by a process of German reunification — that the slogan of a "United Socialist Germany" could become more than merely a propagandistic abstraction — then a basis would exist for the revolutionary workers' movement to become a proponent of the unification process. But is that actually the case today? Unfortunately it is not.

In the present context there seems to be little chance for the real mass movement of East German workers to spread to the West. A reunified Germany *will* mean a reunified *imperialist* Germany *in fact*. What it could conceivably mean in the abstract slogans of leftists is quite beside the point. Real proletarian currents do exist in the East (and some voices are even being heard against unification), but they are not strong enough to influence the outcome of events as things stand now. Saying anything else to the international working class would mean fostering dangerous illusions.

It is true that the division of Germany into four sectors after World War II was the result of a reactionary deal by Stalin and the victorious imperialist powers. It was imposed undemocratically, without considering the desires of the German working class. In a sense, then, the German workers have a right to "democratically" decide to reunify their country on a capitalist basis just as workers in the U.S. have a right to "democratically" elect George Bush president. Revolutionary Marxists recognize these rights in the sense that we do not advocate using force to overturn such decisions when we disagree with them — even if we were in a position to do so, which we are not. But that is far different from our becoming *advocates* of German reunification, or pretending that it is some kind of progressive development just because it reflects, at present, a majority viewpoint. The results of such a process will strengthen German and world imperialism, and harm the German and world working class. That is what we should say to anyone who will listen.

It is also important to keep in mind, when discussing the possibility of a "democratic" decision for reunification which might be made by German workers, that the process is hardly being left in their hands. The bosses and bureaucrats are the real movers in the current unification process, not the masses. Negotiations are scheduled between the two German governments and the victorious World War II allies — the U.S., Britain, France, and the USSR. The analogy with bourgeois elections in the USA is relevant from this point of view as well. The German workers may be allowed to ratify a decision already made for them. But working class militants should not dignify this with the label of "democracy."

Problems for the German Bourgeoisie

All of this should not make us think that the reunification of East and West Germany will be an unmitigated windfall for the imperialists. It will certainly create its own share

(Continued on page 33)

The future of communism

AT THE start of December 1989, the West German weekly, *Die Zeit* brought together 25 experts to ponder that fashionable topic: the end of Communism.¹ The participants could be grouped together into three categories. The large majority were right-wing social democrats or left-wing or centre-left liberals from both East and West, who support Gorbachev's reforms and are fervent partisans of the market economy — "humanized" by dose of state intervention. The main representatives of this current were the leaders of the (West) German Socialist Party (SPD), Brandt, Schmidt and Bahr; the West German president von Weizsäcker; a leader of the Swedish social democrats; the main ideologist of Solidarnosc, Bronislaw Geremek; one of the leaders of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), Segre; Ralf Dahrendorf, a former director of the London School of Economics; the Hungarian ambassador in Bonn; and the Soviet economists Bogomolov and Shmellov.

ERNEST MANDEL

THE SECOND category was of those who were sceptical about Gorbachev, including the director of *Le Monde*, André Fontaine, or unashamed partisans of capitalist restoration, like Henry Kissinger, the American banker George Soros and one of the heads of the Deutsche Bank.²

The third category consisted of three participants who were basically hostile to capitalism; the doyen of East Germany's Marxist historians, Jürgen Kuczynski; the director of the Soviet weekly, *Ogonyok*, Viktor Korotich, and the West German left Social Democrat, Irving Fischer.

The transcripts of the debates amount to some 200 pages of a paperback book. Only one of those taking part, Professor Jürgen Kuczynski, confidently affirmed, with conviction and passion, a faith in the future of Communism. Everybody else was of the opinion that Communism was finished. But one thing that is scarcely credible: in all these 200 pages, not a single mention by anybody of the working class or the workers movement today! Even Jürgen Kuczynski, author of many works on the history of the situation of the workers in many countries, managed the feat of defending the future of Communism without referring even once, to the working class, to the workers struggle or the workers movement.

Anybody the slightest bit educated knows that Communism is not the product of the October revolution or the Cuban revolution. It was born as a current within

the modern workers movement, rising up against capitalism. The first Communist organization, Gracchus Babeuf's Society of Equals dates from 1796, not from 1917. The Communist Manifesto was published in 1848, not 1958.

The experts assembled in Hamburg were certainly aware of this elementary truth, from which a conclusion clearly flows: one cannot deal with the subject of Communism by referring only or above all to what is happening in the USSR, Eastern Europe or China. It is also necessary to look at what is happening and will happen in the capitalist countries, whether the imperialist metropolises or the countries of the so-called Third World.

But these politicians and ideologues are wholly taken up with their search for a consensus with the bourgeoisie, a consensus that can only be built on the maintenance of a reformed capitalism. Thus they have to try to make out that the future of Communism can be divorced from the intrinsic contradictions of capitalism and the dynamic of workers' struggles and the workers movement.³ Anybody who pointed out that such a divorce is absurd would have certainly broken the consensus at the Hamburg round-table. They would have been accused of risking "destabilization".

However such an accusation is based on a misunderstanding that dates from the French Revolution. The modern proletarian class struggle, or that of its immediate predecessor, the "Fourth

Estate" is not the product of some "doctrine" nor of the efforts of "subversive agitators" (or "hidden ringleaders"). The same goes for the class struggle of their adversaries, the bourgeoisie of all shades.

These class struggles result from the inevitable and irrepressible conflicts of interest embodied in the given social and economic conditions. It is the reality of the class struggle that gave rise to the theory of class struggle and not the other way round.

Hitler pursued the bourgeois class struggle

Foaming with rage, Hitler railed against the "Jewish Marxist" theory of the class struggle. But when he suppressed the trade unions and all workers organizations; when he imprisoned and murdered their militants, when he proclaimed that the bosses had to be sole masters in the enterprises in the name of the "leadership principle" (Führerprinzip), he was in practise conducting an implacable and terrorist class struggle against the wage earners and in favour of the capitalists.

Mrs. Thatcher sincerely detests the doctrine of the class struggle. But she wages the bourgeois class struggle with every breath, 24 hours out of 24, even if her methods are far less violent than Hitler's.

The real subversive forces are not agitators calling for revolution. The real destabilizing actions are such things as enterprise closures; the sacking of workers; the speeding up of the work process; periodic attacks on wages; the growth of social inequality to the point where it provokes a revolt; the hellish misery of the "Third World"; the death each year of 16 million children from hunger and curable diseases and the denial of a minimum of dignity and elementary rights to 100s of millions of human beings. The social forces that cause these things do not do so out of innate malice or blindness. They do it because the logic of capitalist society leads them to act in this way, under the threat of losing their fortune and possibilities for increasing it, that is to say, for

1. Previous fashionable topics have been Reagan's "Evil Empire" and "totalitarianism that is spreading constantly and which nothing can destroy." Not much is left of all this now.

2. The American press has made a lot of noise about an article by an unknown author, signing themselves X. The letter proposes as an alternative to the Reagan/Bush line of "partial detente" with the USSR, a policy of fundamental distrust of Gorbachev, the pursuit of the Cold War and accelerated growth in armaments.

3. The representative of the Swedish Social Democracy explicitly stated that: "It is necessary to give capitalism a human face." All the references are to *Die Zeit*, December 29, 1989.

accumulating capital.

This is why there will be a proletarian class struggle for as long as there is capitalism. And this is why this class struggle will always give rise to a political current that will look to go beyond immediate demands and combine these with an attempt to replace capitalism with a more humane form of society.⁴ And because of this, the future of Communism is assured, for as long as capitalism exists.

Even better: capitalism lives under a curse. Not only do its internal contradictions tend to periodically get worse and give rise to explosive crises of all kinds. It is also unable to grow and develop without the proletariat, that is to say its own grave-digger, growing and developing at the same time. The future of Communism is founded on this growth in the proletariat, resulting from the development of capitalism itself. There are many more wage workers today than at any time in the past.

Long-term tendency to stronger workers movement

The long term tendency is towards the strengthening and not the weakening of the organization, cooperation and solidarity of the wage-earners. This can be shown by looking at the comparative numerical strength of trade unions in 1850, 1900, 1950 and 1990, at the breadth of their actions, including general strikes. Such a comparison will reveal that, with few exceptions, in every country, the rising tendency over a century or half-century neither fluctuates nor recedes.

Socialism means the reconstruction of society on the basis of *freely accepted* cooperation and solidarity, not imposed in any way, and these are qualities that the proletariat gains through its own organizations. Socialism is the same as the "rule of the freely associated producers", to recall another of Marx's formulas.

The proletariat brings together these qualities, inculcated by bourgeois society, with the economic and social strength to carry through the reconstruction. It is the proletariat, and only the proletariat that produces society's wealth.⁵

This capacity has not been weakened, but strengthened by the third industrial revolution. In fact, the wage-earners of the energy sector, telecommunications, electronics, banking, teaching and health-care are today becoming one of the principal pillars of the trade union movement, something that is true also of the totality of workers in the public sector. They often have an even greater ability to paralyze the capitalist economy than the workers in the mines, iron and steel, cars or construction.

Nonetheless, as a consequence of the lying propaganda of the Stalinist and post-Stalinist bureaucracies, repeated by the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries and by the international bour-

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geoisie for its own ends, the Communist project has become identified in the eyes of a part of the international proletariat and for a large part of world public opinion, with a supposed "really-existing socialism" in the USSR, Eastern Europe, China, North Korea and elsewhere. Now that the crises of all these societies is exploding, the bourgeois, social democratic, and neo-social democratic ideologues in the post-capitalist countries are able to proclaim that this real crisis also represents the bankruptcy of Communism and Marxism.

From a strictly objective point of view, it is easy enough to refute this idea. What

is collapsing in the USSR and elsewhere is Stalinism rather than Communism, Leninism or Marxism. Stalinism is a product of the counter-revolution, not of the revolution. Stalinism, in order to triumph, had to physically exterminate the party of Lenin and trample 90% of his ideas underfoot — not to speak about the ideas of Marx. The fact that despots like Stalin and his successors have made formal reference to Lenin and Marx⁶ does not justify identifying them with those heralds of emancipation. The fact that the despot Bonaparte made reference to the French Revolution does not at all justify making the authors of the Declaration of the Rights of Man or the

4. It is depressing to see the highly educated participants in the Hamburg round-table repeating the most threadbare banalities, that cannot stand up neither to an objective reading of Marx and Lenin's writings nor any study of the practical activity of the organized movement before the Stalinist dictatorship. Among the other platitudes Marxists — like all ideologues — are accused of envisaging the "end of history". Marxists, more modestly, in fact envisage simply the end of pre-history during which humanity remains in the grip of the miserable struggle for subsistence and the obligation to engage in compulsory labour. The real human drama, really human history, only begins when humanity is emancipated from these conditions. Those who

consider such emancipation utopian, have to fall back on the myth of original sin.

5. A "post-industrial society", in the sense of a "post-proletarian society" would imply that food, clothing, housing, domestic appliances, pharmaceutical products, telecommunications, schools, hospitals, transport without which no thinker or ideologue could survive, would be 100% produced by robots and not by human producers.

6. Before his death, our old comrade Zimin, one of the rare survivors of the Soviet Left Opposition, produced an excellent refutation of these supposed theoretical references in his book "Le Stalinisme et son prétendu 'socialisme réel'" (La Brèche, Paris, 1985).

Jacobins responsible for the corruption, the White Terror, the suppression of civil liberties and the hundreds of thousands of victims of Napoleon's wars. Furthermore, no person could in good faith suggest, on the basis of texts and actions, that the practice of Stalin, Stalinism and post-Stalinism and the ideologies that have sought to support them, flow in any way whatever from the teachings of Marx.

But the thinking of the working masses arises from their experiences of life and struggle, refracted through ideological-political influences and organizational loyalties. There are no big social layers untouched by such influences. And that is why the image that the masses used to have of a Soviet Union on the way to realizing the socialist project now rebounds against Communism.

The idea that the disenchantment of the masses with the Soviet reality is a product of imperialist propaganda — or Khrushchev's revelations and *glasnost* — has no real basis. Anti-communist propaganda was far more virulent in the years immediately after the October revolution, but at the time it did not have a big impact on the advanced workers.

The rejection of the "Soviet model" by these same workers is the product not of propaganda but of an understanding of a depressing reality. This understanding is then modified by the drawing of a false identity, which reverses the previous uncritical attitude to the Soviet Union, China and so on.

False Identification of Stalinism and Communism

Yesterday, people said "yes" to Stalinism because it was falsely identified with Communism. Now, these same people say "no" to Communism because it is identified — no less falsely — with Stalinism. This false identification will not put a stop to the tendencies towards Socialism inherent in massive workers struggles any more than Stalinist indoctrination and bureaucratic gangrene could suppress such struggles before.

But the ideological factor will certainly be a brake for the moment. The scepticism aroused by the bankruptcy of Stalinism goes together with the scepticism resulting from the integration of Social democratic and neo-social democratic reformists into bourgeois society. This integration has become manifest in the eyes of the majority of wage-earners, including those who vote for the Social Democrats. These are votes for the lesser evil, not the expression of an illusion that the SPs is aiming to abolish capitalism through reforms.

But life itself, the real movement of history, inspires tendencies that will allow this scepticism to be overcome. First of all, in a number of countries, a new workers movement has already arisen in recent years, born from the awakening of a rela-

tively young working class that is burdened by neither Stalinism nor traditional reformism.

This new workers movement is not marked by the sense of historical failure and scepticism that characterizes so much of the old workers movement. It tends towards a challenge to bourgeois society in its totality. This is the case in Brazil, in South Africa and in South Korea. It is at least possible that the same phenomenon can take place in Mexico, India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Egypt and the United States.

Development of anti-bureaucratic currents

In a series of countries where the workers movement is still in the grip of the traditional bureaucratic apparatuses, a growing fraction of the trade union movement is progressively freeing itself from that grip. It is beginning to adopt broader aims under the pressure of objective conditions. If the influence of the revolutionary socialist currents grows in these movements, the socialist project will progressively regain its mass credibility. This would have a major effect in stimulating the debate in the traditional mass workers parties, above all if the vanguard forces are able to correctly apply the united front policy, in different forms and in different combinations with the development of a mass movement already partly emancipated from the grip of the traditional apparatuses.

Finally, the development of impetuous mass movements in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, and the real if slow growth of the mass movement in the USSR and several other Eastern European countries shows the contradictory nature of this crisis of credibility. In all three sectors of the world revolution the rejection of Stalinism and bureaucratic manipulation is freeing and will free colossal forces, that can be reorientated in the direction of emancipatory actions, challenging bourgeois society in its totality.

This whole contradictory project is an expression of the self-critical and self-correcting capacity of proletarian revolutions that Marx already underlined in "The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte". This too is a guarantee of the future of Communism.⁷ More, it implies the possibility, even probability of victory.

But on one condition; that the Communists/Revolutionary Socialists free themselves once and for all from every theory and practise that involves a substitutionist, paternalist or authoritarian attitude to the emancipation movement of the workers.

Communism is the aspiration for a more humane and more just society for the great majority of the human race. It is the aspiration for a society qualitatively superior to capitalist society. Insofar as the contradictions that tear capitalism

apart are at work, and lead to crises, a socialist classless society appears also as a more rational form of society.

The balance-sheet of capitalism in the 20th century cannot only be drawn with reference to the average standard of living of the American population or Swedish and West Germany social security — in any case to a large extent conquests of the workers movement.

There is also the terrible miseries of 80% of the inhabitants of the "Third World". There is also the two world wars that have cost nearly 100 million lives. There are also the "local" wars since 1945. The "local" war unleashed by the pro-imperialist forces in Mozambique has cost 900,000 dead. There are also grave economic depressions. There is also the Fascism and semi-Fascism of numerous military dictatorships. There is also torture, which is institutionalized in more than 50 countries.

Marxists, starting with Rosa Luxemburg, were right to sum up the future of humanity at the start of this century in the phrase: "Socialism or barbarism". Before finding its most hideous expression in the Nazi crimes, the rise of barbarism had already been shown in the crimes of colonialism, including those of Japanese militarism and in the racist doctrines that support these crimes by dehumanizing their victims.

Since the start industrial capitalism has developed as a combination of progress and regression, of productive forces and destructive tendencies⁸. At first the former carried more weight than the latter. But with the coming of the imperialist epoch, the latter began to overwhelm the former.

Exorbitant price of continued development

This does not mean that the productive forces, whether mechanical or human, stop developing. In fact, they can experience extraordinary growth, as was the case during the period from the end of the 1940s to the start of the 1970s (in some semi-industrialized countries, the 1970s and the start of the 1980s). But the price of this development has become increasingly exorbitant.

The clearest expression of the reversal of the tendency has been the appearance of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons during the Second World War. Their massive use would mean — and has meant since the end of the war — the physical destruction of the human species. The multiplication of nuclear power sta-

7. Victor Korotich correctly underlined at the Hamburg round-table: "If *perestroika* succeeds, it [socialism] must triumph! It would give socialist theory an even greater authority." (We would say: if *glasnost* is generalized by a victorious political revolution from below — EM).

8. See the passages in Volume 1 of Marx' Capital on the dual nature of the machine.

tions holds out the same risk in the case of large-scale "conventional" warfare. Thus the prevention of world or continental wars, whether nuclear or conventional, becomes the primary strategic objective for the workers movement, including its communist component.

The strategic conclusion that it is necessary to draw from the danger of extermination implicit in the danger of war in the presence of nuclear power stations, is that the only real and definitive guarantee of the survival of the human race is that all factories and laboratories capable of producing heavy armaments should be taken over by the producers themselves. It is for an agreement by these producers to cease the production of these arms and to immediately destroy the existing stocks.

Yesterday the dilemma was "socialism or barbarism". Today it has changed into: "socialism or death". This is the most profound imaginable motivation for Communism.

The same conclusion flows from the other mortal threats weighing on humanity, above all the threat of destruction of the environment and the danger of a disastrous extension of hunger and epidemics in the "Third World" (and not only in the Third World).

Control must pass into the hands of the wage-earners

These dangers cannot be finally removed if the control of production and distribution of wealth continues to be in the hands of social forces and governments that pursue the goal of private power and enrichment and which are thus compelled to pursue uncontrolled and uncontrollable forms of growth. Control must pass into the hands of the wage-earners and their allies, the working peasantry, who have the will and the ability to subordinate all partial interests and all growth to cooperation in the interests of the whole of humanity.

For the first time since the coming of Stalinism the flag of liberty, the broadest democracy, both direct and representative, anti-militarism, indeed the categorical imperative, is starting to pass into our camp, the camp of Revolutionary Socialism.

Liberty; political and economic equality; solidarity and social justice; including on a world scale; radical anti-militarism; radical defence of the environment; respect for human rights — make up an unbeatable combination. These are the big propaganda themes on which we should hammer away, combined with immediate and transitional demands and political projects that translate these ideas into everyday life. Such a programme is the definitive guarantee of the future of Communism. ★

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at present) have led to the rise of illusory hopes in the capacity of "Violeta" to perhaps do better than "Daniel."

It is essential that we seek to learn from the Sandinistas' defeats as much as we sought to learn from their victories—to look the realities full in the face even when there are painful lessons to be learned. But it is still too early to make finished judgments. We will need to see what the imperialists now do, what the different components of the unstable UNO coalition do, what the Sandinistas do, but most importantly how the working people of Nicaragua respond.

It is quite possible that the upset of February 25 will generate a crisis in FSLN ranks. The Sandinist struggle has suffered its most serious setback since the 1960s. But the Sandinistas, who include among their ranks some of the finest revolutionaries of our time, remain. The defeat can be utilized to deepen the understanding and strengthen the organization and influence of the FSLN cadres, making them a more mature and formidable revolutionary force than ever.

There is a danger that former contra units will be organized into right-wing death squads in order to combat the "Sandino-Communists." The FSLN's insistence on maintaining control of the army and police flows from a refusal to allow this to happen. There is an additional danger, however, that the Chamorro government could request "peace-keeping" assistance from the U.S. in order to deal with "violence from the left and the right." On the other hand, although the Chamorro regime can count on U.S. aid in alleviating the economic crisis created by U.S. aggression, it is unlikely that the larger crisis and "normal" oppressiveness of "third world" capitalism will be conjured out of existence. Faced with this stubborn reality, it is unlikely that the left, right, and center components of the UNO coalition will hold together.

A confrontation between the working masses and a government committed to expanding interests of the "private sector" is inevitable. Without question the Chamorro regime, to maintain its bourgeois base, must attack the Sandinista land reform as well as many of the gains won by working people in whatever industry remains viable in the country—both in the nationalized and in the private sectors. Up to now, the Sandinistas have been constrained by their policy of promoting the mixed economy and have urged restraint on the workers. Such restrictions on the actions of the FSLN will be much weaker now. What will happen when Chamorro attempts, as she must, to dis-

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achieve the survival of the revolution for an interim period until the larger context changes. If there is peace, this survival policy may be less difficult—although the impending FSLN electoral victory could lead to a full resumption of the contra war and even the renewed threat of U.S. military invasion.

In any case, the capacity of the Nicaraguan revolution to move forward to a socialist economy depends most decisively on what happens outside of Nicaragua. What is necessary is the advance of the revolutionary process elsewhere: in other parts of Central America, in other parts of Latin

mantle the Sandinista armed forces and police, and substitute an army and police that will serve the interests of the Nicaraguan capitalists and landowners? The election has paved the way for some decisive confrontations, but it has not predetermined their outcome.

The FSLN remains the largest, strongest, most cohesive single party in Nicaragua, with a substantial popular base. If it is able to rebuild the mass organizations plus marshal its 40 percent bloc of National Assembly delegates to defend and advance the interests of the country's working people, it could still rally a majority—perhaps with other forces on the left—around a program of revitalizing the revolution and moving it forward.

The fact remains that the forward movement of the revolutionary struggle in Nicaragua—like the advance of the struggle in the United States—is part of an international process, tempered by advances and defeats in each sector of the world revolution. The future of the Nicaraguan revolution will be determined *in part* by what we are able to do in the United States: building a broad movement in opposition to U.S. intervention in Central America (and elsewhere), and also building a revolutionary organization that will help create a mass working class socialist movement in the United States. In doing this, we will have much to learn from and much to contribute to the Nicaraguan experience.

The struggle continues. ●

March 8, 1990

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America as a whole, perhaps in South Africa and in parts of Asia, and in other sectors of the world—including both Eastern and Western Europe, and also, ultimately, North America.

The understanding of the Nicaraguan revolution outlined in this report represents a distinctive contribution whose development began in the earliest period of the FIT, when we were still in the SWP. It has held up well, and its further development promises to help us in the general effort to understand and change the world along revolutionary Marxist lines. We therefore urge the National Organizing Committee to adopt the general line of this report. ●

National Struggle and Political Revolution in Armenia and Azerbaijan (Part 2)

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

This is Part 2 of a two-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 1 appeared in our last issue.

On January 12, 1989, by a decision of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR a "special administration" was imposed on Nagorno-Karabagh. All local institutions were annulled. Arkady Volsky was appointed special administrator. Volsky had headed a CP troubleshooter team to the Caucasus in late November at the height of the mass expulsions. An evenhanded man, he has equal contempt for both Armenians and Azeris. Speaking before the USSR parliament on December 1, Volsky condemned the people of Nagorno-Karabagh for expressing no gratitude for the economic reform package promised by the central government in the summer. (The reforms had never materialized.) He referred to the huge rallies in Baku, the popular demands of which we reported in Part 1 of this article, as "horrendous."

Since then, 4,000 troops have occupied Nagorno-Karabagh. What was it like in Nagorno-Karabagh under Volsky's special administration? An article in *Moskovskiy Novostii*, No. 7, dated February 12, 1989, meaningfully entitled "Waiting," described the living conditions:

Empty counters in food stores; water appears in faucets only for an hour and a half a day; at the schools the pupils sit three at a desk; and in the kindergartens children sometimes sleep two to a bed. The occurrence of acute stomach infection is 2.5 times higher than the national average. . . . There is nothing surprising in this, considering that there isn't a single industrial-sized refrigerator in the region!

In an allusion to the corruption that in part spurred the Armenians' protests, the reporter went on:

Underground wealth used to be in excess here. Next to people who were living without elementary human comforts lived businessmen from the shadow economy who dealt in hundreds of thousands of rubles and had high and far-off connections. Suffice it to say that the money confiscated after the arrest of one of them was enough to pay a month's wages to hundreds of people. The swindlers could compromise honest Karabagh residents who struggled to awaken the people's consciousness.

That is the reality with which the NKAO [Nagorno-Karabagh Autonomous Oblast] lived for years — nearly up to the introduction of the special administrative rule.

There can be little doubt that these "businessmen" in Nagorno-Karabagh and elsewhere in the Azerbaijan and Armenian republics have been behind the goon attacks, the mass firings, and the mass expulsions. Only they had the power, influence, funds, and other means that such measures would require. Their "high and far-off connections" in Moscow, who could find no one else to protect their interests, have relied on such elements for years to protect the established order. No one else would do it.

That was the reality "up to the introduction of the special administrative rule," and there were no indications that anything had changed substantially since then.

Arkady Volsky said of Nagorno-Karabagh: "I have never seen anywhere in the country a region as neglected in all respects as this one. The Bagirov and Aliyev clans,¹ and the leadership of Kevorkyan, the former first secretary of the local regional CPSU committee, have led the region into a horrible situation. . . . There are no roads, not enough hospitals, and the employment situation is very complicated." The number of jobless was given at 10,000 — surely an understatement, considering the influx of refugees. Volsky's answer to the problems was regional "cost accounting." "Liquidating non-profitable enterprises," and the building of a dam "which will make it possible to provide water to the city — today there is no water even in the hotel."

Situation Deteriorates Further

The economic situation continued to deteriorate throughout the spring and summer of 1989 and the mass movements continued to grow. On August 30 more troops were sent into Nagorno-Karabagh. According to the minister of the interior, Vădim Bakatin, "An attempt had been made to set up an alternative government."

One was certainly called for. The *New York Times* reported on September 17 that the region was characterized by "empty shelves." There had been no harvests and animals were being slaughtered for food. The predominantly Azeri-populated town of Shusha, that had been a "prized vacation point" for officials, was now a place where some of the 20,000 refugees lived in "squalor."

As regards the refusal of the ruling CP-controlled Azerbaijan apparatus to recognize Nagorno-Karabagh's right to self-determination by relinquishing the Azerbaijan Republic's rule over it, Volsky remarked to a *New York Times* correspondent: "All the intelligentsia, the leaders and

the wealthy people in Azerbaijan have dachas in Shusha and they can't just give it away. . . . They have always referred to Shusha as their pearl."²

Many enterprises in Nagorno-Karabagh had been on strike against Volsky's rule since May and the main train line and station were closed. Meanwhile, the Soviet press was silent about the protests, only repeating stories of shootings, and the terrible fear under which people lived after their apparently fruitless appeals to Volsky for protection. Young men threw stones at troops who would come to remove barricades the youth had erected. Many people were living in panic and terror as would be expected when goon squads are known to act arbitrarily and with impunity.

In the Armenian Republic, conditions were deteriorating as well. Although the movement had won the closing of the nuclear power plant, this had led to energy shortages throughout the Caucasus region just when massive rebuilding of destroyed regions called for extra sources of power. In July 1989, one of Gorbachev's key economic advisers Abel Aganbegyan announced that the hated Nairit industrial-chemical complex in Yerevan and another similar one in the Armenian Republic would be closed down.³

In the areas destroyed by the earthquake, even a year later, little construction has taken place. People are still living in makeshift shelters without proper sanitation or other amenities. An investigation by the Armenian state prosecutor has found that many of the buildings that collapsed so readily during the quake had been inadequately constructed with the full knowledge of responsible authorities, including those in Armenia. They were built to withstand earthquakes of intensity far lower than those known to threaten the region. Moreover, even these inadequate specifications were not met due to corruption.⁴ Worse than that, an investigation of six new buildings has found that they have been constructed exactly that same way. The bulk of the international and domestic aid that was intended for the victims of the disaster, *Moscow News* reported, has been stolen and sold on the black market. "Everybody knows about this," one victim of the disaster told the *Moscow News* correspondent.

The economic deterioration is reflected in the growth rate of the Armenian Republic in 1989: minus 11 percent!⁵ In a vivid admission that the Stalinist apparatus in the Kremlin seek no humane solutions at all to the stark consequences of its anti-democratic methods of rule over the Armenian Republic, the same Aganbegyan proposed the area be turned into a "free enterprise zone" where foreign capitalists could come in and do whatever they pleased with the region.⁶

Meanwhile, massive low-cost housing, clinics, and other medical facilities to help victims of the earthquake and environmental disasters; schools, the cleaning-up of polluted water supplies, proper sewage systems; and ecologically safe industries—only a partial list of what Armenians need right now—are not profitable and are not what capitalists are interested in providing as a cursory look at the capitalist world readily shows. Moreover, the dire effects on workers' living conditions that result from reliance on imperialist capital for "development" is evident throughout the "underdeveloped" world. Nothing could serve better to illustrate

the need for a free, independent, socialist Armenia than such a solution from the Kremlin.

The growth rate of the Azerbaijan Republic had dropped from 4.3 percent for the first nine months of 1988 to .4 percent for the first nine months of 1989. There are well over 100,000 refugees living in Baku, putting enormous pressure on the already acute housing shortage of this city of approximately 1.6 million. Most of the refugees live in "shanty towns." (Of the roughly 200,000 Armenians who had lived in Baku at the beginning of 1988, only 20,000 or so remained on the eve of the present crisis.) Most of the refugees were without jobs or basic means to survive, becoming part of the thousands who gather at the growing unofficial outdoor "labor market," available for day labor where the ones who will work for the least get the jobs.⁷

Azerbaijan Popular Front

By early September 1989, the newly formed Azerbaijan Popular Front (APF) was holding demonstrations in Baku that attracted, according to the *New York Times*, "tens of thousands." The demonstrations demanded the removal of the Azerbaijani party chief Abdul-Rakhman Vezirov, an end to colonialism and economic exploitation by Moscow, the removal of corrupt officials, an end to "torture of the environment," and popular control over the republic's resources.

Although the bourgeois and the Stalinist press have characterized the Azerbaijan protesters as "Islamic fundamentalists," the Azerbaijan movement has repeatedly maintained that the specter of Islamic fundamentalism is "a myth the Soviet authorities use to keep their Muslims in check."⁸ While welcoming openings for more religious freedom, APF has carefully avoided appeals to religion, according to APF activists. The Soviet authorities deliberately speak of Islamic fundamentalism to isolate the southern republic from the sympathy of the country's Christian majority and the West, they say. They are not attracted to Iran because of "the poor living conditions of the large Azerbaijani population living under Iranian rule."

The rulers in Moscow "are not afraid of Islam," said Ekhtibar Mamedov, a Baku historian and leader of the APF. "They're afraid of losing control over their colonies."⁹

The nationalist movement in Azerbaijan was apparently invigorated by watching the televised meetings of the new Soviet parliament in 1989. These vastly popular broadcasts (later discontinued) gave the peoples of the Central Asian republics a chance to compare their "machine-elected" deputies with the more independent deputies elected on the strength of popular mass movements in the Baltic republics, Leningrad, and Moscow.

"They saw that the deputies from Azerbaijan and the Central Asian republics were just tools for the party leadership. Everything proposed from the top they approved. Everything approved by radical deputies . . . they blocked," said Arif Aliyev, an Azerbaijan journalist who supports the APF.¹⁰

Some reports say the first demand of the Front is restoration of Azerbaijani control over Nagorno-Karabagh and attribute this to the APF's need for support from Azeri

News from the USSR

The editors of *Moscow News*, in the issue dated March 4, 1990, report the response of the chairman of the USSR Supreme Court Evgeny Smolentsev to their request that he comment on the petition for the rehabilitation of Leon Trotsky that was presented by Trotsky's relatives more than a year ago.

"On the essence of the appeal I must say that there were no judicial decisions in the L.D. Trotsky case and, therefore, there can be no juridical rehabilitation." This statement by Smolentsev came at the end of a page-long feature devoted to "Leon Trotsky—In the Context of the Past and Present." There were three other contributions.

One provides, in effect, a response from Trotsky's grandson Esteban Volkov, one of the petitioners, to the Court's decision, which Esteban had heard of but only indirectly. It is in an article by Mikhail Belyat, *MN's* special correspondent in Mexico and Latin America.

Belyat asks Esteban if there had as yet been any official response to the petition. "I have not, until now, received an official response to the request. However, I have been able to learn through people experienced in the roundabout channels the position the USSR Supreme Court is taking on this question. . . . They say Trotsky was never tried, he was never prosecuted, so consequently, it is impossible to rehabilitate him. Then, are we to assume that stripping him of his Soviet citizenship, his exile from the

USSR, the banning of Leon Trotsky were outside the law? And what about the thousands and thousands of people who were murdered on charges of Trotskyism, who perished in concentration camps because of Stalin's regime, whole families, shot only on suspicion of having links with Trotsky?"

Another item in this feature on Trotsky is by doctoral candidate in history Albert Nenarokov. He points out that although less than two years ago the Supreme Court of the USSR revoked all the sentences against the defendants (except NKVD agent Yagoda) in the three Moscow trials—all of whom were convicted for allegedly working in secret "anti-Soviet Trotskyist blocs" or "centers," and although in 1957 a similar decision had been handed down regarding the Soviet army generals convicted and shot for their role in the "anti-Soviet Trotskyist military organization in the Red Army" in June 1937, Leon Trotsky himself has not been cleared of the charges.

"Although L.D. Trotsky, accused of the most absurd charges in all these and thousands of less publicized trials, had no official verdict that one could protest, the Supreme Soviet in my opinion is obligated to hand down a special decision concerning him, removing from his name, and the names of many of his supporters, the heap of filth and slander. In the same way, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, or its Presidium, should express its opinion about the illegal expulsion of Trotsky and his wife and removal of their citizenship."

"Such is my personal point of view," Nenarokov continued. "I am deeply convinced that it is shared by many. . . ."

"The process of returning Trotsky and the others to our history books is continuing, even if much more slowly . . . than we might want; this shows the effect of the long years of lies and stereotypes of thought that have accumulated, as well as pure professional illiteracy." (For more on the meaning of these "stereotypes of thought," see the excerpt of Mikhail Baitalsky's "Notebooks for the Grandchildren" on p. 34.)

According to the introductory remarks, the feature on Trotsky was published to direct the readers' attention to the fact that February 1989 marked the 60th anniversary of Leon Trotsky's expulsion from the USSR.

Belyat pointed out that August will mark the 50th anniversary of Trotsky's murder. "In Mexico and in many other countries this date will be widely commemorated. Why don't our historians organize here in Coyoacán an international scientific conference, symposium, or something similar on the same theme? Why not speak openly and impartially with our foreign colleagues, Sovietologists, and investigators of the life and heritage of Trotsky?" Belyat asks.

But wouldn't it be even better to organize such a gathering in Moscow where perhaps new materials from the archives surrounding the Soviet government and NKVD activities and assassinations could be publicized and the people in the USSR could attend and hear about the life and heritage of Trotsky?

—M.V.D.

refugees said to number 160,000 in Baku. These reports should not be accepted at face value. On the contrary, it is important to note that among the demands that have been reportedly raised by the APF, none of them appear to concern measures to assist these dispossessed Azeris. There seems, however, to be an effort in the media to blame the anti-Armenian pogrom in Baku in January 1990, for example, on the dispossessed Azeris—who are the least able to refute the charges. The refugees have undoubtedly initiated their own protests. One report since the invasion noted that the refugees have been involved in "months of campaigning for adequate housing for themselves."¹¹ But beyond this, we know little about the experiences of these refugees.

The protests of the refugees for adequate housing, as well as the other protests around social and economic issues, have been pushed into the background because of the claim by the official media that the mobilizations are primarily directed against Armenian rights. The real struggle concerns issues that go much deeper.

"'We're fed up with Gorbachev, fed up with the Communist Party,' said a 55-year-old Azeri refugee in Shusha. According to Arif Aliyev, 'Nagorno-Karabagh is not this republic's real problem. . . . The real issues are political and economic sovereignty, human rights, the ecology. But the question of Nagorno-Karabagh is so dangerous and so intense that it blocks the solution to all other problems.' The APF also demands the wealth from Azerbaijan territory be used to benefit the population there and not be siphoned off to Moscow."¹²

Need for Azeri-Armenian Alliance

The APF won official recognition after strikes in Baku spread to the railroad workers September 8. This was a controversial labor action. Most of the fuel and construction products destined for the destroyed regions of Armenia get delivered by rail via Azerbaijan, as do food products and numerous other necessary supplies. The railway strike in Azerbaijan has had a devastating impact on the Armenians in the Armenian Republic and in Nagorno-Karabagh as well as on the thousands of Azeris in Nagorno-Karabagh and on others in the region. There are desperate shortages of food and fuel.

The official press stressed that the rail strike was a symptom of the "interethnic conflict," a vengeful act by Azeris to punish the Armenians and force them to withdraw their demand to be reunited with Nagorno-Karabagh. Other official reports claimed it was a strike organized by crews who refused to work on trains traveling through Armenian regions because the Armenians were firing on them and blowing up tracks. However, *Moscow News* No. 47, dated November 19, reported that the Azerbaijan prosecutor had arrested no one for such crimes. Only three persons had been arrested in connection with these alleged attacks on transport and these were charged with "throwing stones."

It is extremely unlikely that Armenians would attack trains and trucks that are bringing supplies they need so badly. Much more likely is that the claim of the strike being aimed against Armenia is exaggerated by local authorities to try to discredit the strikers. Tactics like that are used the world over. It may well be that the strike was simply over the basic

popular demands, including lifting the military curfew, ending special military control that was still in effect in many Azerbaijan cities, and for the right to veto national legislation (as the people of the Baltics were demanding). These were listed as part of the concessions package promised to the APF by Azerbaijan Communist Party chief Vezirov that ultimately ended the strike.¹³ Vezirov had also agreed to recognize the APF as an official organization and allow a discussion to be raised in the Azerbaijan parliament on the right of the republic to secede from the USSR.

That strikes will cause hardships is not news. But the onus for that legitimately belongs on those in power who have left the oppressed with no other option.

One thing is certain, however: the struggle for self-determination for the Azeris or anybody else cannot be successfully waged at the expense of the struggle of another oppressed people, in this case the Armenians. The democratic and nationalist movements in Azerbaijan must build alliances with others who are oppressed—from the Baltic to the Caucasus to the Far East, and internationally. If their struggle is directed against others who are oppressed then they are playing into the hands of the bosses in the Azerbaijan Republic, in Moscow, and everywhere else. The policy of “divide and rule” has helped destroy more than one revolution.

Any section of the APF leadership, any currents within it that actually raise demands against Armenians, or against Armenian control of Nagorno-Karabagh, must be roundly condemned. That is a reactionary and deadly course that cuts off the just movement of Azerbaijanis for self-determination from other national movements in the USSR and from the democratic and workers’ movements internationally—whose support it needs and deserves.

Recent Wave of Protests

On November 28, 1989, the Supreme Soviet voted to return Nagorno-Karabagh to the indirect administration of Azerbaijan. It returned power to the structures that had existed prior to January 8, 1989, but a “peace-keeping force” was to remain there. The resolution also promised more economic and political autonomy for the region and its right to develop closer ties with the Armenian Republic. A new local government was to be elected that is supposed to guarantee “a proportional share” to the Armenian 80 percent of the population.

Mass demonstrations erupted in Yerevan. In Stepanakert, 12,000 protesters assembled, burned the Supreme Soviet resolution, and called for an independent Armenia. A general strike began in Nagorno-Karabagh (except in Shusha). On December 1, the Armenian Supreme Soviet and the National Council of Nagorno-Karabagh, an informal group that had several months previously declared itself the legal government of that region and the leaders of which attended the Armenian Supreme Soviet, voted to reunify these two Armenian regions.

In Baku, at the same time, 50 large factories went on strike, along with the railworkers, and a rally was held outside the Communist Party headquarters. It called for the government to resign.¹⁴ The Azerbaijan protests were said to include

opposition to the stipulations that the central government’s troops would continue to occupy the Nagorno-Karabagh region and that a central government special commission to oversee the situation reserved the right to send in troops when it saw fit.¹⁵

The strike continued to spread throughout the month of December and right up until the January 12, 1990, decision to dispatch troops to the region.

At the end of December, protests in Nakhichevan received international attention. Nakhichevan, an Armenian region that had been made part of the Azerbaijan Republic by Stalin along with Nagorno-Karabagh in 1921, has been systematically converted into a predominantly Azeri territory over the years. Most Armenians have been forced to leave due to the anti-Armenian practices of the local bosses, or in order to find work and homes, while Azeri workers have been brought in to fill jobs. The region is poorly developed and economically depressed.¹⁶

Local inhabitants organized actions directed toward removing fences and border guardposts separating their region from Iran along the Arras River. Mass protests occurred all along the border the first week of January in response to a call by local organizers. Whether the actions were designed to gain access to idle land that could be tilled or to simply open up the border for free travel is unclear. But both these aims appear to have been achieved for a brief period.¹⁷

While Azeris on the Iranian side of the border apparently rejoiced at the opening of the border, the Islamic government in Teheran did not, and called on Moscow to stabilize the situation. The Iranian government is no more interested in promoting national consciousness among the Azeri Turks in the region than Moscow is.

In the city of Dzhilalabad, on the Azerbaijan Republic’s southern regions, a crowd of protesters, reportedly angry over the murder by the local police of a teenager and the wounding of dozens of others, attacked local party and government offices, drove the party and government officials out, and established a new local government.

The Azerbaijan city of Kirovabad was the scene of mass protests in early January. Demonstrators pulled down the statue of Stalin’s henchman, Sergei Kirov, and changed the city’s name back to what it had been in the pre-Stalin period Gandzha.¹⁸ The entire Communist Party leadership was apparently held hostage for at least five days in a “rural district” of Azerbaijan; heavily armed vigilantes attacked military patrols and state armored vehicles; and nationalists controlled other cities after local officials “abdicated,” according to a TASS report of January 14.¹⁹ These apparently include areas from Lenorkan in the south to the northern Shaumyanovsk, and Khanlar.²⁰

The same report stated that on January 13, in Baku, a demonstration of 130,000 “roared support” for a demand that the republic’s parliament conduct a referendum on secession from the USSR. Then, leaflets began to circulate among the crowd calling for the expulsion of remaining Armenians in Baku, and gangs of hoodlums, carrying mimeographed lists of names and addresses of Armenians, broke from the crowd and rampaged through Armenian neighborhoods, viciously killing at least 30—in some cases

burning homes and belongings. It is important to note that duplicating facilities are still accessible only to the ruling elite in the USSR, so the lists of names and addresses carried by the hooligans had to come from someone in the apparatus. A TASS correspondent noted that the "police watched indifferently" as the mobs carried out their attacks.²¹

It was reported that in other regions of Azerbaijan, attacks of various types began by armed men in flak jackets with automatic rifles, machine guns, anti-aircraft guns, even with helicopters. Since the central press was reporting that the targets were primarily Armenians, it is not surprising that the Armenian population began to gather to discuss and organize ways to arm themselves. Three hundred thousand gathered in Yerevan. Armenian self-defense squads would seem to be a natural precaution under such conditions.

Pretext for Intervention

The government announced that a state of "near civil war" existed in Nagorno-Karabagh. But it is more likely that Armenians were simply beginning to arm themselves against the local bosses' attacks or because they had reason to be fearful. This "near civil war" situation was one of the official excuses for declaring a state of emergency in Nagorno-Karabagh and Yerevan on January 16, as well as in many Azeri towns, most likely to try to destroy the rising institutions of popular, independent organization and self-defense.

While the government claimed the invasion was necessary to defend Armenians in Baku, it didn't really do anything like that. Soviet navy ships apparently helped evacuate some Armenians, but the troops did nothing to defend their homes or lives from attacks. They did not even move into Baku until a full four days after the invasion. By then most of the 20,000 Armenians had fled.

The reports of the number of people killed when the troops invaded Baku the morning of January 20 range from scores to thousands. The area is closed to the press. The invading troops were apparently met with tens of thousands of protesters shouting "Freedom, Freedom!" and were forced to pull back.

Mass opposition to the invasion brought over one million people into the streets January 21 for a funeral march for some 60 of those who had been killed. Thousands again protested outside the party headquarters demanding the officials resign. It was this pressure from below that forced the Communist Party-dominated Baku city council and the officially appointed Moslem board of the Transcaucasus to cosponsor with the APF the call for the January 21 mass funeral protest. It is also this mass pressure that forced the CP-controlled Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet, after an all-night session January 21-22 attended by members of the APF, to vote unanimously to lift the state of siege and to support a republic-wide referendum on secession if the Kremlin did not withdraw its troops within 48 hours. Popular resistance to the occupation had brought the economy to a halt with a general strike in effect.²²

It seems clear that the Kremlin's local apparatus throughout Azerbaijan was on the run. During the week after the invasion, a reported 200,000 burned their party membership cards. Such occurrences were even broadcast on the

Union-wide evening news program "Vremya." Late on January 23, the Azerbaijan Communist Party Central Committee, seeking to separate itself from the corrupt and hated leaders of the past, expelled from the party Abdul-Rakhman Vezirov, the party chief who had been dismissed from his post in response to popular demand January 20. A new party chief was appointed, but the protesters made it clear that they demand more changes than a new face on top.

Yussef Samodoglu, a poet and APF leader, was quoted as saying: "Our goal is to drive out the army, liquidate the Azerbaijan Communist Party, and establish a democratic parliament."

On January 20, Nakhichevan declared itself independent. Radio Moscow reported that the Nakhichevan insurgents had taken over the local radio and television and were broadcasting appeals for help in seven languages. They apparently called on the nationalist and other movements in other parts of the USSR to oppose the mobilization of army reserves. And such opposition was apparently underway in widespread regions. However, by January 23, it seems that the leadership of the Nakhichevan movement had been arrested and the occupying troops had sealed the borders.²³

Dozens of "insurgents" and members of informal "illegally functioning organizations" had been arrested by the occupying forces by January 25. The blockade of Baku harbor had been broken by Kremlin forces and 12,000 members of families of army, KGB, and interior ministry troops had been evacuated from Baku. The city was without any source of reliable news; the radio played military music and there were no newspapers or television.

On January 26 Defense Ministry Dmitri Yazov stated that the army intervened "to destroy the organizational structure" of the APF. He claimed that the APF forces were on the verge of overthrowing the Communist Party. "Our task is not to detain them [APF members] all, but to destroy the structure of power that has taken shape at all the enterprises and offices."²⁴ It appears that it was only the invasion that protected the Kremlin's control over the region.

Search for a Solution

However, mindful that they are surrounded by a hostile population and that the idea of a long-term occupation would be very unpopular throughout the USSR, the Kremlin is now seeking to find conciliationist elements in the APF on whom it can rely to diffuse the opposition, establish some sort of civilian rule, and end the strikes. But that will not be easy. The Communist Party apparatus has virtually no authority. The Kremlin's old allies have committed gross crimes against both Armenians and Azeris.

While the central authorities have sought to blame the APF for the massacre of Armenians January 13, many Azerbaijanis blame the apparatus for the crime. APF leader Samodoglu charged that the KGB had instigated the riot to discredit the APF and provide an excuse for military intervention to defend the old order.²⁵ One Azeri journalist reported that the invading troops were not defending Armenians but government buildings. "The invasion of Baku came only after people blockaded the Party Central Committee's building," he said.²⁶

As of February 3, the Kremlin had been unable to find conciliationist elements. The troops continued to occupy the region and strikes continued.

In the meantime, the Baltic Council, made up of the Latvian and Estonian Popular Fronts and the Lithuanian Sajaudis, had arranged for talks to take place between representatives of the Armenian National Movement and the APF. The talks were to focus on resolving three questions: the troop occupations, the refugees, and other "humanitarian" issues. The "humanitarian" issues would hopefully include the dozens (hundreds?) of "insurgents" who have been imprisoned since the invasion, many of whom are leaders of both the Armenian and Azeri movements.

The issue of Nagorno-Karabagh was not on the agenda. According to Latvian PF representative Anda Anspoka, the Nagorno-Karabagh problem "should be solved in a while, when the republics have more freedom."²⁷

So low was the Kremlin's authority in the wake of the invasion that these talks were taking place without anyone present who directly represents it.

Bolshevism and Self-Determination

Winning and upholding the right to self-determination was a critical goal of the Russian Revolution. As Lenin explained, national self-determination was a precondition for the formerly oppressed workers and peasants to be able to democratically decide their fate. Just as the tsar's great power chauvinism and anti-Semitism accounted for the presence of a disproportionate number of non-Russians and Jews in the revolutionary leadership and specifically in the Bolshevik party, so the Russian chauvinist policies over the past 60 years of Stalin and his heirs have moved the non-Russians into the vanguard of the forces that are furthering, today, the overthrow of Stalinism in the USSR, the political revolution to replace rule by the bureaucrats' apparatus with workers' rule.

Whatever solution Stalin's heirs may find to extricate themselves from the ever-deepening crises in the Caucasus or whether or not they can find conciliationist petty-bourgeois nationalist elements in the APF who will make a rotten compromise allowing Moscow's troops to withdraw from Baku while still occupying the remaining Azeri and Armenian regions, this will not end but only exacerbate the mass intolerance for continued Stalinist rule and expose the conciliationist collaborators before the masses.

The assessment of Leon Trotsky on the Ukrainian question in July 1939 finds striking application to today's situation:

The slogan of an independent Soviet Ukraine [Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Armenia, Nagorno-Karabagh, Azerbaijan] is of paramount importance for mobilizing the masses and for educating them in the transitional period. . . . The slogan of an independent Ukraine advanced in time by the proletarian vanguard will lead to the unavoidable stratification of the petty bourgeoisie and render it easier for its lower tiers to ally themselves with the proletariat. Only thus is it possible to prepare the proletarian revolution. . . .

To speed and facilitate this process, to make possible a genuine brotherhood of the peoples in the future, the advanced workers of Great Russia must even now understand the causes for Ukrainian separatism, as well as the latent power and historical lawfulness behind it, and they must without any reservation declare to the Ukrainian [Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Armenian, Azeri] people that they are ready to support with all their might the slogan of an independent Soviet Ukraine [Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Armenia, and Azerbaijan] in a joint struggle against the autocratic bureaucracy and against imperialism.

The barb of the slogan of an independent Ukraine is aimed directly against the Moscow bureaucracy and enables the proletarian vanguard to rally the peasant masses. . . .²⁸

"What does a revolutionist say" to these oppressed peoples? Trotsky asked. And he answered: "Of importance to me is your attitude toward your national destiny and not the 'socialistic' sophistries of the Kremlin police; I will support your struggle for independence with all my might!"²⁹

February 3, 1990

Notes

1. M.D. Bagirov, Stalin's pointman in Azerbaijan from 1921 and throughout the Stalin period, presided over the purges in the republic in the 1930s. Tens of thousands of people were shot for allegedly trying to assassinate him, according to Roy Medvedev's account in *Let History Judge*. (Alfred A. Knopf, NY, 1972. p. 344) Bagirov was Beria's boss before Beria moved up to become head of Stalin's secret police. Azerbaijani party boss Geidar Aliyev was KGB chief of the republic and was made Azerbaijan party chief and a member of the CPSU Politburo during the Brezhnev years. He was demoted and deprived of his rank as popular movements began developing in the region in late 1987, when the Gorbachev reformers tried to dissociate themselves from the most notorious and hated local rulers from the Brezhnev era. He was resurfaced in January 1990 in an unsuccessful effort by a wing of the bureaucracy to try to repackage him as a viable alternative to the rulers hated today, much the way a wing of the U.S. ruling class does with Richard Nixon in the United States.

2. *New York Times*, Sept. 5.

3. *Moscow News*, No. 33, Aug. 13.

4. *Moscow News*, No. 50, Dec. 10.

5. *New York Times*, Jan. 22.

6. *Moscow News*, No. 33, Aug. 13.

7. *Moscow News*, No. 36, Sept. 3.

8. *New York Times*, Sept. 3.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Financial Times*, Jan. 18.

12. *New York Times*, Sept. 3.

13. *New York Times*, Oct. 12.

14. *New York Times*, Dec. 1.

15. *Financial Times*, Dec. 4.

16. See The Karabagh File.

17. The Arras River has been the border dividing the Azeri region between Russia and Persia since the 1828 treaty that ended tsarist expansion into Azeri regions ruled by Persia. Due to the repression of Azeris by totalitarian dictators, particularly during the Stalin period and the time of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran, the Arras River gained the reputation for being a depository of bodies of political prisoners murdered by police on both sides of its shores. (See "A Double Mask: Our Mission in Arras" by Reza Baraheni, Azeri poet from Iran). Azeri Turks suffered severe cultural, economic, linguistic, and political oppression under the shah and continue to suffer under the present Islamic government.

(Notes continued on inside back cover)

Why We Need a Programmatic Discussion In Response to Barry Sheppard

by Steve Bloom

In September I wrote an "Open Letter" to Barry Sheppard—a longtime leader of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), and part of its central leadership during the period of the purge of the Trotskyist opposition in the early 1980s—who left the SWP in 1988. My letter and a reply by Sheppard were both published in the February issue of this magazine. (To receive a free copy of this exchange write to *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, P.O. Box 1317, NY, NY 10009.)

I was prompted to address my remarks to Sheppard after reading a letter he wrote to the SWP Political Committee (dated July 1989) which circulated in the SWP and its periphery. In this document Sheppard raised a series of extremely important programmatic and organizational questions flowing from the extended crisis of the party during the decade of the 1980s.

In his reply to my "Open Letter" Sheppard declares:

I also agree with comrade Bloom's statement that "the cancellation of the party convention in 1983 was not an accident, not an isolated mistake. . . . The convention was cancelled for the very purpose of avoiding a political discussion." However, I have a different view of how and why the party began to use such methods, and why they have been deepened and extended to the point where the SWP today is in deep crisis.

Rather than going into my own view of the past and my analysis of the roots of this crisis in the SWP, I would like to take the opportunity that the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* has afforded me to discuss what should be done about it now.

Sheppard goes on to explain why, in his view, the proper course for those of us in the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT) is to dissolve our organization and fuse with Socialist Action (SA), the group he has joined since the time I drafted my open letter to him.

This approach is extremely unfortunate. The single most profound cause of the present situation faced by the Fourth Internationalist movement in the United States today—which is divided into four separate currents: the SWP, SA, FIT, and a group of comrades who are part of Solidarity—is the refusal of the SWP leadership to organize the kind of political discussion and debate that could have clarified the issues in dispute during the 1981-84 period. To this day, no such discussion has taken place, even amongst the expelled opposition which finds itself divided into three tendencies. We of the FIT and the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* have dedicated ourselves to helping to bring about such a process of political clarification, but so far with little interest or participation from any of the other currents.

Sheppard's letter to the SWP Political Committee seemed to be an important opening, which might have allowed this all-important process of political clarification to take a giant

step forward. Sheppard could have (and still could) shed considerable light on the political thinking of the party leadership during the early 1980s, when their new line on such questions as permanent revolution, political revolution, the application of the transitional program and method, workers' democracy, etc., was taking shape. This is especially true since he declares that he agrees with Jack Barnes's rejection of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. On that problem, on others where he is still in agreement with the current party leadership, and on those matters where he has changed his views since the early '80s, what Barry Sheppard has to say is important. The discussion between us would be illuminating not just for the FIT and SA, but for those in Solidarity, the SWP, Fourth Internationalists in other countries, and the broader radical public who might also read it.

The prime purpose of my open letter was to point out that the analysis of the organizational degeneration of the party leadership that Sheppard presented in his July 1988 letter to the SWP Political Committee was inadequate precisely because it didn't deal with these kinds of political problems. The root of the crisis in the party lies in the political evolution of its leadership, not in its organizational practices. Sheppard's response to this idea (i.e., his "different view of how and why the party began to use such methods") would represent a significant contribution to our overall understanding of the problem.

Instead Sheppard concentrates on what he sees as the present-day solution ("what should be done about it now") and the differences he believes to exist between Socialist Action and the FIT. His response to me reflects the general methodology which the leadership of SA has followed since the political purge in the SWP. It projects a simple organizational solution and is not linked in any way to programmatic insights that might be gained from delving into the substance of the crisis in the SWP. This is precisely backward. A reconquering of the program of revolutionary Marxism—discovering it anew based on our recent (and current) experience—is an absolute precondition for effectively constructing a Leninist party in the United States today, given the depth of the programmatic challenge posed by the Barnes leadership after 1981 and the objective changes that have happened in the world. That was always the approach of SWP leaders such as Cannon and Dobbs when faced with similar circumstances. This disagreement about what is primary—program or organization—has been at the root of all the differences the FIT has had with the SA leadership from the beginning.

The SA comrades act as if all we have to do is build a new organization just like what the SWP used to be in the days when it was healthy. To that end they have copied a series of organizational structures and practices by rote, as if organizational forms constituted the essence of Leninism. We insist that such a solution is completely schematic and cannot

work. To find a correct organizational practice in the circumstances we are in at present we must first of all understand what those circumstances are and how we came to be there.

Derived from this fundamental difference of method are the different approaches SA and FIT have taken toward the rank and file of the SWP who have remained loyal to the Barnes faction. We believe that only through a serious attitude of trying to engage the party leadership and membership in a *programmatic* discussion can we have an *effective* influence on them, one that goes beyond a superficial appreciation of the SWP's current crisis. SA (and now Sheppard) pose things in a strictly organizational way: "Those comrades being expelled or dropping out who are not destroyed as political people will want to continue to be part of a Leninist organization, even if only the nucleus of one. . . . I would not have joined if SA wasn't seriously trying to build a party." This disagreement about how to approach the membership of the SWP, which Sheppard seems to think is the primary problem, is merely a symptom, not a cause, of our fundamental difference with Socialist Action. (It may ultimately prove impossible for those of us in the FIT to force the kind of discussion we want to have with the party, but we decided from the outset that if that turns out to be the case it wouldn't be for a lack of effort on our part.)

One of the problems with Sheppard's reply is that he confuses several different things. He asserts, for example, that the main difference between the FIT and SA is that SA has "set about to build a new organization, with a public newspaper, which you think is wrong." Later he says, "The way to deal with this opportunity is precisely to build a new organization." He then proceeds with the sentence quoted above about being "part of a Leninist organization, even if only the nucleus of one," and "trying to build a party." Still further he declares, "I do not believe that outside the context of actually constructing a Leninist party can discussion about its norms, or its program, including the question of permanent revolution, or its political positions, be meaningfully carried out. The *practice* of an organization is the testing ground and final arbiter of such discussion." He concludes, "Without some organizational clout of our own, I don't think we could influence [the SWP] in any way at all. *With* an organization that is deeply involved in all facets of the class struggle, that is working out its line on all the main questions of world politics in that context, the situation changes."

But the concepts that Sheppard uses so loosely: "new organization," "Leninist organization," "party," are by no means identical. And the distinctions are essential in the present case. The FIT has no disagreement with the idea of building a Leninist organization today. We are doing so, and it is called the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. Certainly, it is necessary to demonstrate that we are active in the class struggle and able to offer concrete answers to concrete problems of tactics and strategy in such vital areas as the anti-intervention, trade union, women's, and other movements. And it is necessary to analyze and comment on all of the major events in the world. The FIT has never shrunk from these tasks. Our members are active in the mass movement and we publish a monthly journal, the *Bulletin in Defense of*

Marxism, which covers a broad array of questions every month.

What we have rejected is declaring ourselves a new party, or the nucleus of a new party. That is where we differ profoundly with the leadership of SA. "Leninist organization" does not equal "party." Sheppard's own confusion on this is illustrated when he talks about being "part of a Leninist organization, even if only the nucleus of one." I do not know what the "nucleus of a Leninist organization" means. One can have the nucleus of a *party*. But such a nucleus must certainly be a *Leninist organization* — as the SWP has been, for example, during most of its history.

The FIT is a Leninist organization that does not see itself as the nucleus of a future party. What we have said is that we are *one tendency* within that nucleus. The nucleus as a whole represents a broader Fourth Internationalist movement including all four of the currents cited above. A prerequisite to closer collaboration between ourselves and SA — not to speak of fusion, as Sheppard calls for — is a reversal of the attitude of the SA leadership that it, and it alone, represents the legitimate continuity of Trotskyism in the United States, that the only possible resolution of the current division is for the other two currents of the expelled opposition to recognize this fact and join SA.

In thinking of the problem in this way, the SA leadership makes fundamentally the same error the SWP leadership has for many years. It creates an identity between the interests of *its own tendency or faction* and those of the party (or in this case, broader Fourth Internationalist movement) as a whole. Therefore, "party discipline" becomes identified with advancing the interest of one current in the U.S. For Barnes and company this meant silencing and purging the opposition, instead of organizing a discussion that would have advanced the interests of the entire party. For SA today it means rejecting all collaborative relations with Solidarity and trying to shape relations with the FIT in such a way that any common work takes the form of the FIT giving logistical support to a project designed to build or promote the goals of Socialist Action. It should be obvious why this attitude actually becomes an *obstacle* to any *genuine* process of joint work and collaboration.

When such an approach was taken by the leadership of the SWP in the early '80s (and I for one believe that the same general thinking created considerable difficulties at least as far back as the 1970s), it was completely wrong, but at least it made a kind of sense — in a sectarian way — for a leadership that had the allegiance of 80 to 90 percent of the party membership. But when this same approach is pursued by the SA leadership today, which doesn't even enjoy the loyalty of a majority of the expelled opposition, it begins to take on the proportions of a farce.

If Sheppard and Socialist Action want to advance a process of collaboration and ultimate fusion with the FIT they must seriously undertake two things: 1) a political discussion and debate about the lessons to be drawn from the historical experience of the SWP and the degeneration of its leadership, as well as the present situation faced by Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. and around the world; 2) an active collaboration with *all* other Fourth Internationalists in the United States which takes as its starting point the

interests of the movement as a whole, and not the narrow organizational and factional needs of Socialist Action. If all components of the expelled opposition can begin to do those two things, we will then have the best chance, in my view, of influencing members of the SWP in our direction by

demonstrating that we have, indeed, understood the essence of a Leninist strategy of party building.

The pages of this magazine remain open to Sheppard, or any other member of SA, who would like to make a contribution to that process. ●

Important Victory in Freeway Hall Case

The following is taken from a news release by the Freeway Hall Case Defense Committee dated February 23, 1990.

In a unanimous full-court ruling yesterday, the Washington State Supreme Court struck down a 1987 default order leveled against the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP) for its refusal to hand over meeting minutes for judicial review. The court declared that the Seattle-based organization had shown that disclosure could jeopardize constitutional privacy rights.

The decision basically accepts the arguments made to the court by Leonard Boudin, the late general counsel for the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee. In his last appellate argument before his death in November 1989, Mr. Boudin asserted that protections must be applied wherever it is shown that constitutional freedoms are at stake.

The Washington high court ruling overturns an earlier Court of Appeals decision which held that the FSP had not proven it would be harmed by disclosure. Instead, says the Supreme Court, it is only necessary to show "some probability"

of harm to First Amendment rights in order to gain court scrutiny of the issues.

The decision sends the Freeway Hall case back to King County Superior Court where it started over seven years ago. The FSP's opponent, Richard Snedigar, has the choice of trying to show that his claim for minutes outweighs the constitutional considerations, of foregoing that attempt and proceeding to trial, or of dropping the suit altogether.

The case started in 1984 when ex-FSPer Snedigar sued the party and nine individuals for return of a donation he had made five years earlier. Snedigar charged that the FSP had defrauded him by manufacturing a crisis around its eviction from its headquarters, Freeway Hall. Snedigar's lawyers attempted from the beginning to force disclosure of internal FSP records, including minutes, lists of members and supporters, and financial records.

A ruling in 1985 ordered the party to give Snedigar all the documents he requested. This was struck down as "overbroad," but was followed by an order to hand over portions of eight years' worth of minutes. In 1987, Superior Court Judge Warren Chan placed the defendants in default for failing to release the minutes and, without trial, ordered the FSP to pay Snedigar

\$42,139. In January 1988, three of the defendants were found in contempt of court and sentenced to jail for refusing to disclose financial information. The contempt charge and jail sentence were later dropped.

The Supreme Court decision was immediately hailed by labor, civil liberties, and other activists. Phyllis Hutchinson, recording secretary of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 587 in Seattle, said: "This ruling's strengthening of privacy rights protections is a big victory for every worker in the state." Susan Taylor, president of the Seattle chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, also praised the ruling: "This is a historic decision for all membership organizations. It is crucial that members of an organization should feel free to discuss issues of importance, among themselves, without operating under the cloud of fear that views expressed confidentially are subject to disclosure." ●

The Freeway Hall Case Defense Committee still needs support. For more information write to 5018 Rainier Ave. S., Seattle, WA 98118; or call 206-722-2453.

Health (Continued from page 18)

employers over health care, city, state, and national coalitions—with union retirees often playing a leading role—are being built in support of the demand for universal health care. (A 1989 Harris opinion poll reported that 89 percent of the people believe fundamental change is needed in the health care system. Polls conducted in 1988 by NBC and the *New York Times* showed a solid majority favoring a federal government guarantee for medical care for every man, woman, and child in the country.) The arenas

of struggle—on the picket line, in the streets mobilizing for legislative action, and in electoral activity—are all crucial fronts for winning that demand.

Sharp distinctions, however, have to be drawn between leaving it to the professional lobbyists to secure a meaningful health care program and winning it through mass mobilizations organized independently of the capitalist parties; and between business-as-usual support for sellout Democratic and Republican politicians as contrasted to independent labor political action leading in the direction of a labor party. ●

Germany (Continued from page 20)

of problems and contradictions—both immediate and potential. Most significant will be the task of absorbing a mobilized and active East German working class which has only recently succeeded in bringing down a government.

The West German bourgeoisie could establish wage levels two or three times what East German workers are accustomed to and still enjoy a source of extremely cheap labor power compared to the Western part of the country. But the question of social benefits, which East Germans have come to expect, will not be so easily dispensed with. In addition, the recent upsurge that kicked out the old Stalinist regime in the East was marked by a strong egalitarian ethic. This has deep roots in East German society. Increased social differentiation will inevitably take place in the East under a reunified capitalist republic. As it does, renewed social struggles—or at least new currents of dissent—will be generated.

These factors point to a continuing program of action that can be pursued by revolutionary-minded workers in both East and West Germany in the event of unification. Specific transitional slogans and demands can be raised around questions such as defense of the right to a job and of

working conditions on the job, for health care and other social benefits, etc. In this way the difference between a capitalist and a working class program for a united Germany can be developed so that all working people—both East and West—will be able to understand it.

But whatever problems might stem from the process, they are problems the West German and imperialist bourgeoisies are at present more than happy to take on. They have the wind in their sails, and believe that they can muster the resources to overcome any difficulties. Their longer-term success will probably depend on the immediate future of the imperialist economic system on a world scale, and on the German economy in particular. Should a serious economic downturn occur any time soon, a reunified German working class—which would combine the recent experiences of the masses in the East with the sheer economic and political power of their Western comrades—might dramatically alter its consciousness and significantly threaten capitalist rule in all of Germany. A few years of post-unification prosperity, however, would allow the German capitalist class more time to stabilize the situation, and make it easier to weather any future economic slump without a significant threat to its power. ●

March 5, 1990

Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

“Those who proselytize against ideology and for petty-bourgeois profligacy show themselves up in this way as well, in that they all— one under the banner of creative freedom, another under the pretext of struggling against the consequences of the cult of personality, a third as a ‘standard-bearer’ of historic truth and authenticity—they are all in essence simply posing before the mirror of history while they try to slander the heroic history and struggle of our party, our people and its army. The party has never hidden the fact that our road to the victory of socialism was not strewn with roses. On this road, there were ruts and obstacles. And the party appraised this situation in a timely fashion.”—From a speech of General A.A. Yepishev at the Twenty-third Congress of the CPSU (emphasis added).

38. Distinguishing Stuffing from Substance

Thinking over my past, I sometimes try to imagine: What if I had not become friends when I did with Maryusa, Rafa, and Vitya Gorelov? What if I had not joined the Opposition? What if I had not read Lenin’s Testament thirty years before everyone else did—in other words, what if my life had gone as quietly and smoothly as the life of that comrade with whom, if you recall, I argued till midnight? Would I have reasoned like him or not?

More likely than not, I would have thought the way he does.

I will try to imagine for just a minute or two that I am not myself but him.

I wouldn’t have become a general for many reasons, but I could have become an engineer or some kind of journalist. And I wouldn’t have dug in the dirt for the truth and gulped down prison gruel. While I am concerned over personal body searches, I don’t know which is more humiliating: to be subjected to that violence or to voluntarily get on your hands and knees and kiss whatever you’re told to. Maybe I would even have agreed to that.

Dripping water will erode a rock so why not the cerebral crust? Such a bright guy and a cunning rogue as my onetime editor Tsy-pin, having understood magnificently what was happening, was able sometimes to be insincere. But the majority of ordinary, good people, who were not too close to the palace kitchen and thus not privy to its secrets, were in those years undeniably sincere.

The elderly people, who were the youth in those days, have become accustomed since youth to specific forms of thought

and find it hard to dismiss them. This is a truism, but it explains why they are so zealously concerned to protect the intellectual chastity of the youth today. I would be the same way.

Of course, I would have had a world view. It would have been based on things that I considered reliable. However, things about which Solzhenitsyn spoke, for example, in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, would have seemed highly unreliable to me and even slanderous. Reading in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* that his *Cancer Ward* was a slanderous work, I would in principle never have wanted anything to do with it, even if they had decided to publish it in our country. Having somehow with extreme difficulty convinced myself that the facts relayed by Khrushchev at the Twentieth Party Congress were not slanderous, I would all the same have believed that it would be better if the youth did not know about them or knew about them in the same way that they know about the rings of Saturn: they exist but don’t concern us. Moreover, the problem of the ruts and obstacles has been surmounted.

An elderly man, recalling his youth, naturally finds that it was good and that he had conducted himself well even though he hadn’t known that in approving the executions he was approving the cult of personality and nothing more. Consequently, he reasons, one need not know these unpleasant details of Stalin’s second five-year plan. One can still be a distinguished man, achieve a certain status and live to a venerable old age so as to be able to write memoirs about great people whom one still respects today. What good does

In 1977, a manuscript totaling hundreds of pages arrived in this country from the Soviet Union—the memoirs of Mikhail Baitalsky, who was in his middle 70s at the time and living in Moscow. His work consists of a series of nine “notebooks” which describe his life as a Ukrainian Jewish revolutionary militant. He narrates how, as a teenager inspired by the October revolution, he joined the Communist Youth, tells about his participation in the Red Army during the Civil War years that followed 1917, his disenchantment with the developing bureaucracy under Stalin, and his subsequent experiences in Stalin’s prison camps. To the very end of his life Baitalsky remained devoted to the ideals of the October revolution. He says that he is writing “for the grandchildren” so that they can know the truth of the revolution’s early years.

The first installment and an introduction by the translator, Marilyn Vogt-Downey, appeared in Bulletin IDOM No. 36, December 1986.

it do to know about isolated events that were not so rosy? Absolutely no good. The present-day youth should be more like us. We would like that and it would be good for them. And then there would be a continuity of generations.

It is difficult to convince the old man (i.e., the hypothetical me) that the majority of his ideas are stereotyped conceptions perfected through the repetition many times over of good formulas which were not always in the service of good things. It is not easy to restructure oneself. It is not easy to recall the origin of each of one's ossified conceptions.

Take for example a very widely circulated example, "that little Judas Trotsky." It is possible not to know that Lenin's remark about "the embarrassed blush of the little Judas Trotsky," written in January 1911, was not published while Lenin was alive but was first published in *Pravda* January 21, 1932, eight years after Lenin's death. This, by the way, means that Lenin himself did not consider it something that needed to be published. One may also not know that this little remark concerns the nonparty conduct of Trotsky on the editorial board of *Pravda* in those years (1911) from which he, despite a decision of the Central Committee, dismissed its representative. But in the memory of people who had never read (or who soon forgot) this article by Lenin printed for the first time in 1932, people who had over the course of the following decades read these three words, tirelessly, persistently, emphatically repeated without any connection with the article from which it was taken—in the memories of these people (and there are tens of thousands such people, more of them than there are people who remember the origin of these words) a stereotyped chain of concepts has been erected: Trotsky is a little Judas, a traitor. There you have it!

It should also be pointed out that in his article Lenin compares the conduct of Trotsky not with the betrayal of the Biblical Judas, but with shameless little Judas Golovlov from the Shchedrin work.¹ But again, few people have read Shchedrin's work, whereas the Biblical Judas long ago became a stereotype, passed down through the generations. Conceptions merge. Case closed!

But I would not have known all of this even if I had had the complete works of Lenin in my vast library. It would never have occurred to me to look in volume 20 on page 96 to investigate the matter for myself, and I would cheerfully have passed along the baton of stereotypes to my son.

Knowing the human soul—especially the soul of such a person as I would have been if I had not made the friends I made—Stalin remembered Pushkin's wise aphorism: "malignant gossip, even without proof, leaves a deep mark." Even the great and honored writer Lion Feuchtwanger got caught on that hook. The story is worth telling, for it is instructive.

In 1937, Feuchtwanger visited Moscow. He was received by Stalin and present at the trial of Pyatakov, Radek, and the others, about which he wrote the small book *Moscow 1937*. The writer, an anti-fascist, a friend of the Soviet Union, which he saw as the fundamental force resisting Hitlerism, could not from the outside, from abroad, expose Stalin. That would be to strike a blow at the Soviet nation. (People today—in 1976—have only a dim idea of the threat Hitler posed to Europe in 1937.) This was not a casual conception; Feuchtwanger was not a casual type. It was the inner voice

of this fighter-writer, talking to him, determining his actions. In his book, the Pyatakov trial is accepted as a fair one. Shaken by the confessions of the defendants, he did not stop to notice that there was absolutely no other evidence against them. Each defendant implicated himself, hoping that by giving the necessary testimony to the court, they would ease their plight. While doing so, they could not but implicate those beside them in the dock, who were also implicating themselves and with themselves the others as well. It made a chain of self-incrimination that gave the impression of testimony about accomplices.

The orchestrators of all this correctly calculated that if you heap up such a mountain of confessions as will totally stun those hearing or reading about it, they will forget to reflect that self-incrimination was considered proof of guilt only during the Inquisition—but has been rejected, not without reason, by the jurists of our time. No one knows what methods were applied to influence the defendants in that prison cell or investigation chamber, where outside eyes could not see.

The book *Moscow 1937*, translated from the German, was printed in our country with incredible speed. On November 23, 1937, it was turned in for production and the next day, November 24, it was consigned to the printer. In a 24-hour period, it was typeset, proofread, and laid out; and it was over 100 pages long. It was only issued once, fresh on the heels of the trial, in order to convince us (including me in this hypothetical "what if" situation) of the following: the trial was just, even from this foreigner's point of view. Death to the Trotskyist spies!

If Feuchtwanger did not notice the flimsy foundation for Vyshinsky's juridical construct, how could we? Over time, newspaper accounts and books with the stenographic record of the trial—sources wherein you could easily trace the way this mutual incrimination of the defendants worked—and even the impressions of writers, all this disappeared from the readers' view. There remained a vague recollection: the sentence was merciless but just. They had it coming to them, those Trotskyist spies, terrorists, saboteurs!

The youth of those days are now in their fifties, very mature, a not insignificant layer of society. I was then 34, and people of my age as well now play no small role in the state. Could I simply cast from my mind what I had believed then? I do not consider myself a careerist, no—no, but if it happened that as a result of the executions, the wave upon wave of executions, and the advancement of new workers, which also came in waves, I might just once have been advanced to a post higher than the head of a newspaper department, would I, despite myself, imperceptibly, almost subconsciously, have developed the attitude that there is no reason to dig around in the swamps of the past, as the popular artist Cherkasov put it in *Pravda*? Perhaps I wouldn't have been cynical enough to say aloud that I should be thankful to the cult for what it gave me, but I would have felt gratitude in the depth of my soul.

And having been convinced that the Trotskyists and Zinovievists did not murder Kirov and did not shoot Eikh and Postyshev, I would all the same hardly have been able to fight off my 40-year-old hatred for them. Of course, my conscience, wanting to be clear, would have substantiated

their guilt with other, less serious reasons. They didn't murder, but they carried out factional work; meanwhile, Stalin organized no factions, even if he did execute more than half the delegates to the Seventeenth Party Congress. But he didn't shoot me! On the other hand, just after I heard that the old guard had perished (how sorry I was; I can't begin to describe how I felt!) I got very sad. It's natural that I would have been saddened for a while. But now that sadness had diminished and even begun to disappear. I would not even have begun to think to myself that precisely *for that reason* I had got ahead. I would have driven that unpleasant thought from my mind. I am an honorable man. I am not the kind who is able to walk over corpses. If that's what objectively occurred, was it any fault of mine?

What lies in the depths of another's heart is not for us to know. I won't undertake to expound on the thoughts and feelings of someone else. But I can speak about what I would suppose my own thoughts to have been.

I can say that for me, if for no one else, there was one book that convinced me forever that the Trotskyists were responsible for all our difficulties and that they themselves evidently created the ruts and obstacles we had to navigate. It is an astounding work translated from English about spies — not ordinary spies, but spies at the highest levels of Soviet life, from the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The authors of the work, the Americans M. Sayers and A. Kahn, call it *The Secret War Against Soviet Russia*. In this 450-page book, beginning from page 25 all the way to page 350, i.e., in more than two-thirds of the book, there is a reference to Trotsky in every paragraph as the main inspiration for all the espionage, all the sabotage, all the terror and treason. The

story goes that even before the revolution began he had sold himself to German intelligence, as had Krestinsky, Bukharin, Rosengolts, and many, many others. The truth is that all of them, this entire detachment of spies under Trotsky's command, carried out their espionage work while Lenin was alive, all the while being exceedingly close to him, valued and respected by him, and put forward by him. But the book was written in such an alluring way that this side of the matter easily escapes notice — not only the notice of ordinary readers but that of Stalin himself.

The book describes the secret murder of Menzhinsky and Gorky by doctors sent by Yagoda (but just who sent Yagoda is not mentioned). Later, they describe how Tukhachevsky, Kork, Yakir, Uborvich, and the other leaders of the Red Army, had prepared a Bonapartist coup according to a plan — again — inspired by Trotsky. They relate details that have been long forgotten since that time: the trial of the eight high commanders began at 11 a.m. on June 11 and by the next day they had been already sentenced. The haste which characterized this trial was second only to the one Stalin organized in Leningrad against the 14 who "inspired" Nicholaev. The judges who sentenced Tukhachevsky and his comrades to be shot were Voroshilov, Budenny, and Shaposhnikov.

In the book by our American friends, testimony of witnesses is not cited because there weren't any witnesses; this was after all a "secret war," so what kind of witnesses could there be? A brief note says: "Quotations and dialogue relating to the underground activity of the Trotskyists, except

(Continued on inside back cover)

Letters

Letter to Marilyn Vogt-Downey

Dear Marilyn,

We have received the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* from you. Thank you very much! We have translated into Russian the material about your visit to the USSR. The article was discussed by our meeting. We disagree with some of the criticism. But to my mind your article's reflection of the democratic movement is right. We'll spread it around.

Our trade union, "Independence," is growing. Our contacts are broader and broader. Workers support us. We have led the first consultative conference with workers from different regions. There were different opinions. So our aim — the consolidation of an independent base is not achieved yet.

Now Russia is preparing for the local Soviet elections. We call for a boycott of the elections, because of the anti-democratic functioning of the electoral system and the imperial-bureaucratic Soviet structure that can't satisfy the class interests of working and professional people. The number supporting the boycott idea is growing day by day.

We read Leon Trotsky's work, *What Is the USSR and Where Is It Going?* which you left. Please send us more of Trotsky's works.

Our meetings with you left a deep imprint and good memory. We hope our materials, which were handed to you, will be published in America.

With respect and thanks,
Leonid Pavloff

The Cold War Is Not Over

If war is politics by other means, and cold war is war by other politics, then the U.S. cold war — systematically created and sustained since 1945 against the USSR and the third world is just getting hotter. The war of words against the "evil empire," against the "Soviet threat," against "Soviet expansionism," has only been replaced by "the collapsing evils of communism," the "failure of communism," the need for the countries to embrace "American values" and capitalism. In other words, the pressure on the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, even West Germany, to adopt American perspectives has never been greater.

At a time when the Warsaw Pact is de facto disintegrating, when Soviet troops are being

unilaterally withdrawn, when Stalinism's dictatorship and political repression are receding, NATO still remains intact and poised, the American defense budget remains undiminished, and the government has replaced the bogey of "communism" with the bogeys of Panama, Noriega, drug wars, Marxist terrorists, and infiltrators surging throughout the third world — especially in El Salvador.

The contras still look desirable, although they may not be funded. Cuba is still maligned as a dangerous dictatorship, with aggression towards it increasing. And according to the U.S. government it is still necessary to spend billions on overseas troops and bases in the Philippines, in Korea, in Japan, etc.

No, the "cold war" isn't over, or rather this is just a new phase of it. Or better yet, this is the ending of the *old* cold war and the start of a *new* cold war. The imperialist and interventionist aims and requirements of U.S. domestic and foreign policy require new bogeymen, new threats, new crusading campaigns, new inquisitions, and new justifications.

Jeff Brown
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Caucasus (Continued from page 30)

During World War II, the movement of Soviet troops into northern Iran was accompanied by an authentic popular insurgency against the economic, political, and social oppression of the Persian monarchy and its feudal and capitalist supporters. A revolutionary workers' and peasants' government was established in Tabriz. Stalin was no happier with this development than the shah was. After the war, in 1946, Stalin agreed to withdraw Soviet troops back across the Arras River; the shah's forces moved in and crushed the movement in a bloody counterrevolution..

- 18. *Financial Times*, Jan. 16.
- 19. *New York Times*, Jan. 15.

Baitalsky (Continued from page 36)

where indicated, were taken from the materials of the trials that took place in the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court in August 1936, January 1937, and March 1938. Dialogues and events relating directly to Trotsky and his son Sedov, in cases not indicated in the text, have been taken from testimony of the accused in these trials."

But if I were not who I was, then of course I would pay not the slightest attention to the fact that the "materials from the trials" was the testimony of the accused. Each one incriminated himself but the fundamental guilt was shifted to Trotsky. That is what all three trials were programmed to do.

On the whole, these "materials" at the time the book was published — it was published in America in 1946 — contained no revelations as far as America was concerned. However, the book did contain something new to the Soviet readers, and this constituted its plump little raisin: The question of Lenin's Testament. Until that time, in our country not a word about it had been mentioned. And here is what our two friends said:

"Max Eastman was the first to publicize the so-called 'Testament' of Lenin which he presented as an authentic document allegedly written by Lenin in 1923. . . . To this day, the Trotskyist propagandists refer to 'Lenin's Testament' as if it were a genuine document establishing that Lenin had allegedly chosen Trotsky as his successor."

Max Eastman was an American journalist and he did publish the Testament in an English translation. Therefore, people abroad read this Testament thirty years before we did. Where I say "we," I mean those like the "what if" me — if I had not read it in 1928. If I had not long ago become familiar with it, I would have accepted as good coin this clever move: not to say outright that the Testament never existed, but at the same time through the mouths of these two friendly scoundrels to suggest that the Testament was a document faked by the Trotskyists.

The Sayers and Kahn book was translated into Russian and published in Moscow with firehouse haste: the whole process, including the printing, took two months. Five translators worked on it. And when this product of accelerated production appeared, *Pravda* began to run chapters from it, thus taking it to the broadest possible reading public. I would also have read and believed it.

And if anyone had tried to sketch for me a disrespectful picture of the origin of my biases, I would have grown angry and would not have listened to them. I would have irately condemned my critic, finding that what he was really doing, *in essence* was trying to make himself look smart and that the best answer to him (*in essence!*) would be to give him five years or so reeducation on punitive rations.

- 20. *Financial Times*, Jan. 17.
- 21. *New York Times*, Jan. 15.
- 22. *Financial Times*, Jan. 22.
- 23. *Financial Times*, Jan. 22 and 30.
- 24. *New York Times*, Jan. 27.
- 25. *New York Times*, Jan. 18.
- 26. *Financial Times*, Jan. 22.
- 27. *New York Times*, Jan. 30.
- 28. *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-40*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, pp. 50, 53, 49.
- 29. *Ibid.* p. 48.

Who wants to hear someone tell you how you have been filled with stuffing? Everyone wants to believe that he is the product of his own creative process.

A social group whose entire existence is linked to the state and totally depends on the state, and which without the state is no good at all and can do nothing — such a group cannot elaborate criticism of the shortcomings of the state which feeds it. It can only consciously elaborate apologies for the state.

"Out of the frying pan and into the fire." I wanted to put myself in the shoes of good people but it turned out that I have insulted them. Of course, I sympathize with them. And I really do sympathize with them. I believe in their ability to think reasonably; and I appeal to them.

As I just wrote, significantly over half the delegates to the Seventeenth Party Congress were shot in 1937-38. The party evaluated this terrible deed at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956. But what if someone had gotten up at the Eighteenth or Nineteenth Party Congress and proposed an evaluation? Of course, this would have been reckless. But what about the timeliness of the proposal? Was it just the right time or too early? What would a reasonable answer have been?

Or another question. The third of the four Moscow trials in 1936-38 has been recognized as illegal and the cases fabricated, despite the prestige of the judges: Voroshilov, Budenny, etc. Are you convinced that the other three trials were any different? Do you think that the guilt of Pyatakov and Bukharin, Kamenev and Krestinsky, were proven any more convincingly than the guilt of Tukhachevsky? To Kahn and Sayers, all the trials were the same. But to you? Why were you dissuaded from believing the Sayers/Kahn lies in one case but not in another?

There could be a thousand such questions. But too often satisfactory answers are not forthcoming.

[Next month: "I End Up in the First Circle"]

Notes

1. Little Judas was the nickname of one of the sons in *The Golovlovs*, by the nineteenth-century novelist M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin. In using the epithet, Lenin was conveying his skepticism over Trotsky's attempts in 1908-12 to heal the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks in the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. Lenin did this by referring to the hypocritical attempts of little Judas to reconcile tensions in the Golovlov family. Trotsky was editor of *Pravda* in Vienna, 1908-12.

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