

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

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On-the-Scene Report from Germany:	
East Germans Go to the Polls for a 'Coca Cola Election' by Marc Levy	1
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Theses on Poland and Solidarity by the National Organizing Committee of the FIT	4
Modest Turnout for March 24 Actions by Keith Mann	5
Editorial: No More Delays—Establish a National Anti-Intervention Coalition Now!	5
The Case of Daniel Libreros and the A Luchar Prisoners in Colombia	7
South Africa Hospital Workers Strike	8
Selma to Montgomery—25 Years Later Black Electoral Politics Today by Claire Cohen	9
Message of the Greyhound Strike: 'Replacement Workers' Threaten the Labor Movement by Naomi Allen	11
How Should UAW Respond to Crisis in Auto?	12
Interview with Soviet Trade Union Activists: Problems Facing Workers in the USSR Today	13
In Defense of Socialism by Roy Rollin	19
Eleven Years After the Iranian Revolution by Tom Barrett	22
Notebooks for the Grandchildren 39. I End Up in the First Circle by Mikhail Baitalsky	29
Letters	34

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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East Germans Go to the Polls for a 'Coca Cola Election'

by Marc Levy

On March 18, twelve million East German voters went to the polls for the first open parliamentary election in that part of Germany since the Reichstag elections of 1932. From a field of 33 parties organized in 24 electoral states, the only clear winner was the West German D-Mark.

As a result of domestic unrest and heavy pressure from Bonn, the German Democratic Republic (DDR) caretaker government under former Dresden Mayor Hans Modrow moved up the elections, originally planned for the middle of May. As a result there was not time for political groups to form, work out their programs, and establish meaningful alliances.

The vacuum was quickly filled by massive intervention from the West German political parties, which organized an electoral circus devoid of concrete political issues. The London *Times* reported that the major parties campaigned with consumer goods from the West. *Demokratischer Aufbruch* (Democratic Departure/DA) imported mountains of Coca Cola for free distribution at election rallies. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) preferred coffee, while the German Social Union (DSU) passed out bananas stamped with their campaign slogan: "Prosperity, not Socialism." This reporter took advantage of the free lunch offered by the liberal *Bund Freier Demokrater* (Free Democratic Alliance), which passed out free hot dogs (with mustard) on Berlin's Alexanderplatz the day before the elections.

Campaign literature, campaign workers, and logistic support were not all that the West German parties supplied. The major speakers at campaign rallies were well-known political figures from the West. The SPD featured Willi Brandt, who they made their honorary chairman. The Liberals fielded popular West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (originally from the East German city of Halle) and the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) campaigned with West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Even the Democratic Socialist Party (PDS) — formerly the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) — took the lead from its West German ally, the German Communist Party (DKP), organizing a grass-roots campaign with beards, bullhorns, and dirty-faced children. "For me, as an old comrade, this is the third radical reorganization [of the party]," 84-year-old Kurt Liebnecht told a local PDS campaign paper, "and finally we've got the most important factor, what we always lacked, the human touch."

In the midst of the campaign furor, *Neues Forum* (New Forum) and the other initiative groups that spearheaded the mass demonstrations of October which led to the fall of the

government and the disbanding of the hated Ministry for State Security were all but forgotten.

Historical Background

In order to understand the current relation of political forces, it is necessary to know something about the history of the DDR. Unlike the Soviet Union, the DDR was never a one-party state. After the war the German Communists set up a multiparty "Democratic Front" reflecting the composition of German society. The two traditional working class parties, Communist Party of Germany (KPD) and SPD, were fused into the SED. In addition, the Democratic Farmers Party of Germany (DBD), the Liberal Democratic Party of Germany (LDPD) representing professionals and small businessmen, the conservative CDU representing business and church interests, and even a nationalist party, the National Democratic Party of Germany (NDPD) representing former army officers and Junkers, were established. Each of these parties recognized "the leading role of the working class" (as expressed by the SED) and was allotted a fixed number of seats in the *Volkskammer* (parliament). Additional seats were held by representatives of the "mass organizations," principally the Free German Trade Union Alliance (FDGB), Free German Youth (FDJ), and the Democratic Women's League of Germany (DFD). Through its domination of the mass organizations, the SED held a de facto majority in the parliament and the other parties were reduced to rubber-stamping decisions made by the SED Politburo.

Parallel organizations, which grew up in the West, viewed their DDR counterparts with contempt and eschewed official contacts (with the exception of the SPD-West, which reestablished contacts to the ruling SED during the '80s). Toward the end of November, when the SED regime collapsed under the weight of the mass mobilizations and a general rebellion in the party ranks, the West parties forgot their differences with the puppet parties of the "Democratic Front" and moved in to take advantage of the situation.

The SPD was quickly able to establish an affiliate right-wing social democratic party, recruited to a large extent from the ranks of the SED. The liberal Federal Democratic Party (FDP) embraced the East German LDPD, which joined forces with two smaller groups, whose role was principally to provide the former "Front" party with democratic credentials. On the right, the ruling West German CDU embraced the East German party of the same name, which rehabilitated itself by kicking out its old collaborationist

leadership. Not to be outdone, the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU), sister party of the CDU, established its own sister party in the East, the German Social Union (DSU). This set the scene for the March elections.

Issues and Nonissues

The principal issue in the campaign was German unity, a question which has been widely misinterpreted in the international press, albeit for understandable reasons. The campaign for unity has nothing to do with Pan-Germanism or resurgent nationalism, but rather with the desire of the East German population to enjoy the much higher standard of living in the West. The quickest, most direct way to prosperity lies—as many people see it—in “joining the federation.” This is known as the Article 23 solution. Article 23 of the West German constitution provides for extending the laws of the Federal Republic to additional German states that might join the federation, as was the case with the Saarland in 1957.

Others are decidedly nervous about Article 23, since it would open the East to the capitalist market without providing protection for low rents, guaranteed employment, subsidized food prices, free childcare, and other social benefits. As a teacher at East Berlin’s Humboldt University put it: “Even if we receive the same salary in D-Marks as we now have in DDR-Marks, we will earn only two-thirds as much as our colleagues in the West and will have to pay the same prices.” Other workers who earn about one-third as much as their West German counterparts (assuming a one-to-one conversion of the mark) are in an even more precarious position. Such individuals tend to prefer the Article 146 solution. Article 146 of the West German constitution provides for a new constitution for a Greater Germany worked out by a constitutional convention. Under Article 146 the DDR could, at least in theory, introduce some of its social and economic benefits into a united Germany, although it is unlikely that the West would agree to measures like free childcare and guaranteed employment.

Those who prefer a separate, socialist DDR have at present little hope of maintaining their position. The novelist Stefan Heym, one of the most outspoken critics of the old SED regime, expressed their sentiments after the election returns came in on the evening of March 18. “There were two kinds of people who participated in the uprising in October. Those who wanted a better DDR and those who wanted no DDR at all. The latter have won. Nothing will remain of the DDR other than a footnote in history.” These were bitter words for people who risked blacklisting, prison, or exile for their oppositional activities.

The Election Results

The election results represented a victory for the D-Mark. Approximately 40 percent voted for the CDU despite the fact that the East CDU had been a loyal handraiser for the Stalinist SED regime for 40 years. The reasoning was clear enough: a CDU government rules the coalition in Bonn and is in a position to provide material help. A vote along ideological grounds would have favored the CDU’s coalition

partners, the DSU, which had the advantage of having no past, but garnered hardly more than 6 percent of the votes, or *Demokratischer Aufbruch*, which was one of the leading forces in the popular rebellion, but scored a scant 1 percent of the votes. It was clearly a vote for the man with the money, and that man was West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

The “big losers” in the election were the SPD, who at the new year were favored in the polls to win an absolute majority, but ended up with only 22 percent of the votes. Their mistake was to attempt to be all things for all people—the party of immediate unification for those who favored that solution, the party of cautious unification for those with qualms and second thoughts. The result of this policy was a massive loss of support to the right and left in the last weeks before the election. The PDS, which characterized itself as a “very left social democratic party” despite its 40-year history as Stalinist ruling party, was able to score 16 percent of the vote nationwide and reached nearly 30 percent in East Berlin. Their success was more due to the fact that they opposed total liquidation of the social system in the name of the “free market economy” than to the “human touch.”

Bündnis '90 (Alliance '90) which included New Forum, the group that touched off the political revolution, tallied 2.9 percent of the votes as compared to the Liberal slate with 5.3 percent, although New Forum and its allies received no money or other support from the West. The Green Party and the Independent Women’s Association won a scant 2 percent of the votes. The United Left, which was supported by the Fourth International, managed to win 0.2 percent of the votes, which was sufficient for a seat in the new *Volkskammer*.

Coalition Blues

After the smoke cleared, the DDR was left with a parliament committed—in its majority—to dissolving itself and the nation state it represents. The concrete problem of forming a government and framing a concrete program for unification is proving to be considerably more difficult than running an election campaign on vague promises.

After a meeting with their “sister parties” in Bonn, the three groups making up the conservative Alliance for Germany announced that they would not join in a common parliamentary faction, but would rather form a “working group.” The difference is not clear, but probably reflects concern on the part of the DSU that it could be swallowed up by its larger coalition partner, the CDU. Similarly, the three Liberal groups announced continued electoral cooperation, but declined to form a single party.

Although the Alliance parties together with the Liberals command a comfortable majority in the *Volkskammer*, they do not have the two-thirds majority necessary for changing the East German constitution, which remains in force. For this reason, the CDU put out feelers to the SPD, inviting it to form a “Grand Coalition.” The SPD is, however, sharply divided on the question of a coalition with the Alliance. Initial reaction was to refuse a coalition including the DSU. Prior to the elections the DSU conducted a particularly nasty mud-slinging campaign against the SPD, implying that it was dominated by former SED members, but this can hardly be

the real reason for the SPD's refusal to join the coalition. More likely, the SPD is engaged in a rather transparent maneuver to keep its own house together. The offer is one that the CDU cannot possibly accept. When it is rejected, the SPD can tell its members who are for a Grand Coalition that the CDU refused to meet its terms. Those who are against a coalition with the Alliance will be satisfied as well, since they are principally concerned with seeing that the coalition is not formed, however shallow the argumentation for rejecting it might be.

Even the question of who would assume the post of prime minister was left open for several days. Under normal circumstances, the leader of a party that wins over 40 percent of the votes would automatically stand as candidate for the head of the government in a parliamentary system. Nevertheless, CDU chief Lothar de Maizière declared after the elections that "personnel questions" would be left open until the coalition parties had a chance to meet. His modesty did little to dispel persistent rumors that he had served as an informer for the Ministry for State Security. Finally, on March 23, he agreed to stand after categorically denying the charges.

The issue of informing for the "Stasi" (State Security) is particularly sensitive since Wolfgang Schnur, a highly respected civil liberties attorney, was forced to resign as leader of *Demokratischer Aufbruch* after he was exposed as an informant a week before the elections. The Volkskammer will most likely form a commission to investigate the past of its members after it convenes at the beginning of April, since there is considerable popular sentiment against letting bygones be bygones and allowing the agents of Stalinist repression to assume responsible posts in the new government.

Immediate Prospects for Unification

The problems of unification were aptly characterized on election night by a short exchange between Stefan Heym and Dorothea Wilms, former minister of education in Bonn. Heym commented that Helmut Kohl had made a lot of promises to garner the necessary votes for a takeover of the DDR and it would be interesting to see how and if he would make good. Wilms countered that the chancellor had made no promises at all. Both were right. The CDU successfully managed to create the impression that prosperity and unification were just around the corner, without providing any concrete details as to how these goals might be reached.

The first proposed step toward unification is a monetary union between the two German states. On election night Reiner Eppelmann, the leader of the one-percent partner in the conservative Alliance, assured TV viewers in the DDR that they would be buying their Christmas gifts with "real marks" this year. Sources in Bonn were initially even more optimistic and mentioned the hypothetical date of July 1 for the introduction of the D-Mark as the official currency of the DDR. In fact, the limited convertibility of the East German mark is already assured. Although East Germans are only entitled to 200 DM per year, foreigners can freely exchange D-Marks for DDR-Marks at the rate of one to three. The exchange rate is somewhat unrealistic. First-class Havana

cigars are available for about 25 cents apiece, one-tenth of what they cost in the West. Subsidized foodstuffs like bread and meat are also extremely cheap by Western standards, and there have been complaints, particularly in Berlin, about Westerners buying up subsidized goods at give-away prices, although I was unable to note particular shortages in consumer goods as compared to previous visits under the old regime.

Introducing the D-Mark as legal tender in the DDR would bring few advantages and many problems. Wages, pensions, savings accounts, would all have to be converted at a fixed rate. And no one knows what rate is realistic economically, let alone acceptable to East Germans. Furthermore, there is the problem of the state debt, estimated at some 20 billion marks. A one-to-one conversion of the mark would place an impossible burden on the West German mark, so a long and complicated negotiation process seems inevitable.

The next step towards unification is the so-called economic union. What is meant by this concretely is unclear. Presumably, an economic union would open the DDR economy to Western investment with no holds barred. This move also faces considerable difficulties. State-owned DDR industries, faced with competition from the West, would quickly go under engendering massive unemployment, which is clearly unacceptable to a population that thought it was voting for prosperity. In the absence of protectionist measures, so-called joint ventures, allowing limited participation of Western investors in state-owned enterprises, would not change this picture in the least. Furthermore, the attractiveness of East Germany for Western investors is predicated largely on expectations of a highly skilled working class, supplied with the newest technology and willing to accept lower wages and higher unemployment rates than workers in the West, and it is by no means clear that East Germans seeking parity with the West will be willing to tolerate large wage differences and massive unemployment.

Political unity, the last stage of integration, is formally simple. All that is necessary is a two-thirds majority vote in the Volkskammer for either the Article 23 or the Article 146 solution (assuming that Article 146 is acceptable in the West). But, because of the unforeseeable social, political, and economic consequences of hasty unification, it is unlikely that any group in the new parliament will pose the question in the coming months. The situation in Germany is rather different than that in Poland or Hungary. The present unity drive is fueled by more than a general rejection of the Stalinist political and economic system. Poles and Hungarians may feel, at least for the time being, that anything is better than what they had, but East Germans who voted for the D-Mark view things somewhat differently. As they see it, two Germanys parted ways in 1949. One achieved a large measure of political freedom and one of the highest standards of living in the world; the other was subjected to Stalinist (they would say socialist) regimentation. Not only did they fail to achieve the same high standard of living, but they were treated like idiots, fed with lies in the official media that no thinking person could believe, particularly given the availability of alternative news sources from the West.

East Germans voted for a piece of the pie. It is unclear what will happen if they do not get it.

Possible Effects on the West

Up until now, the rebellion in the East has had no noticeable effect on social struggles in West Germany. Why should it? People in the East were rebelling against Stalinist autocracy. The West has other problems: 8 percent unemployment for almost a decade; cutbacks in social welfare, particularly in the health care system; plant closings. But the closer the two Germans come, the more likely it is that initiatives from the mobilization in the East will spring over to the West. As long as the two states remain separate, the Bonn government can try to shift the blame for economic upheavals in the DDR onto East Berlin. It can claim that

insufficient willingness to make the "necessary concessions" for German unity is the source of all the problems in an attempt to turn disillusionment against the forces that oppose a wholesale sellout of the DDR.

In a united Germany, on the other hand, the government would bear the sole responsibility for social and economic problems. Strikes against plant closings, demonstrations against unemployment, and cuts in the social welfare system could easily touch off similar protests in the West.

In addition, the industrialists' dream of high technology and low wages would be difficult to realize in a united Germany with a unified trade union movement.

(Continued on page 10)

Theses on Poland and Solidarity

The following theses reflect the viewpoint of the National Organizing Committee of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency:

1) The policy of the current leadership of Polish Solidarity is to eliminate central planning, dismantle state industry, and impose a harsh austerity program upon the Polish people pursuant to the advice of its own bourgeois economic advisers and the dictates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This is all done in the name of "restoring capitalism in Poland."

2) However, real objective obstacles stand in the way of any such capitalist restoration. These include the potential for massive resistance by Polish workers and farmers, the impossibility of finding much domestic capital in Poland, the uncertainty that foreign capital will invest in the billions expected given the country's long-term instability, as well as the general social program of the Solidarity government itself which has as its stated goal bringing about economic prosperity for Poland—something that runs completely contrary to the actual plans of the IMF and the international bourgeoisie.

3) The present situation, then, is marked by a dynamic tension between: A) the expressed intentions of the Solidarity government to restore capitalism and B) the objective situation which stands as a significant obstacle to truly implementing this program. A direct clash between these two sides of the present Polish reality is inevitable sooner or later.

4) In the meantime the effect of the present government's policies on the average Polish worker is devastating. In the first month or so after the removal of government subsidies for basic necessities on January 1, 1990, there was a rise of 600 percent in the price of coal, 400 percent in electricity, 250 percent for rail and intercity bus transportation, 100 percent for municipal bus tickets, telephone calls, and gasoline, 55 percent for ham, and 38 percent for bread. There is also a growing social differentiation in Polish society created by new disparities of wage levels and the threat of unemployment for millions who work for "unprofitable" firms.

5) Such measures move in the wrong direction. They cannot resolve the economic crisis brought on by decades of bureaucratic mismanagement. In fact, they objectively weaken the Polish workers' state, undermining the unity in action of the working class which made

the development of the Solidarity union possible in the first place and which alone can move the country toward a renewed prosperity. The present government's course is already encouraging the growth of *real* bourgeois forces in Polish society—though this process will take some time before it can pose a genuine threat of capitalist restoration for the country.

6) Revolutionary Marxists, therefore, firmly oppose the present policies and perspectives of the Solidarity government. We support any and every manifestation of resistance to them by the Polish masses, including the recent strikes by 35,000 miners.

7) A genuine proletarian revolutionary policy to overcome the Polish crisis can be discovered by the masses as a result of the present process. They are going through a profound experience, which is combined with a free and far-ranging discussion and debate about alternative possibilities. Solidarity itself is not a homogeneous organization. There are currents within it, and we can expect others to grow up both within it and outside of it, which will oppose the present course. Because of the objective reality cited above, a new mass leadership can arise in time to defeat any genuine social counterrevolution. In the final analysis, how the Polish masses intervene in the situation will certainly prove decisive.

8) The outlines of an alternative social policy must include an effort to resolve Poland's economic impasse through democratically controlled planning bodies—as opposed to both the old, bureaucratic system of planning and the anarchy of a capitalist-style market. Collective ownership should be maintained wherever it is possible to do so. Where concessions to bourgeois market forces do prove necessary—as inevitably they will, given the depth of the Polish crisis—they must be strictly regulated and controlled to make sure that they serve the interests of the Polish workers and farmers, not primarily those of any domestic or international bourgeoisie.

9) Also crucial for the future of working people in Poland is a complete purge of the old, corrupt, and wasteful bureaucratic apparatus. This has not been carried out by the present Solidarity government, and cannot be carried

out given its present program. That failure is one of this leadership's most acute defaults. A new administrative apparatus needs to be established for the country that will be subordinate in all things to the masses and democratically controlled by them. There should be no privileges whatsoever for those in government, the administration of industry, or other positions of authority.

10) Finally, a renewal of revolutionary consciousness in Poland will require a rediscovery of proletarian internationalism—an appreciation of the fact that there is no long-term solution to Poland's problems in isolation from the socialist revolution in the rest of the world. The Polish people will need to actively support other working people struggling against oppression throughout the globe.

11) Taken together, these social and political measures—the maintenance of proletarian forms of property in a democratically controlled society, the overthrow of the old bureaucracy, and the establishment of a proletarian internationalist foreign policy—constitute the main features of what the Trotskyist movement has always called for in the deformed and degenerated workers' states: a political revolution.

12) Poland is now being projected by world imperialism as a test case. That is an accurate assessment of the importance of events in that country. But a victory for the international bourgeoisie in bringing about a capitalist restoration in Poland is by no means assured. As the imperialists are well aware, such a defeat will only be imposed on the Polish people as a result of a long and difficult struggle. We are still far closer to the beginning of that process of struggle than we are to the end of it. The history of the Polish workers—their rebellions against Stalinist tyranny in 1956, 1970, and 1976, the past decade when they organized the Solidarity union and successfully resisted Jaruzelski's martial law, and their actions today which show that their combativity has not been significantly dampened—gives us a profound hope for the future of the Polish workers' state, the future of Eastern Europe as a whole, and the future of the international proletarian revolution. ●

Modest Turnout for March 24 Actions

by Keith Mann

Nationally coordinated demonstrations against U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean were held in several cities on March 24. Unfortunately, the high stakes involved were not matched by the sort of turnout necessary to give a clear and unambiguous message to the U.S. rulers that its aggressions against the people of Central America and the Caribbean are unacceptable to the people of North America. Only ten thousand people marched in Washington D.C. About the same number took to the streets in San Francisco. The Los Angeles demonstration brought out 5,000, the Seattle march 1,500, and several hundred marched in Austin, Cleveland, and Denver. Though it was cold and damp in Washington, this probably served to keep away only those in the immediate D.C. area.

These modest turnouts indicate that there is at present a large gap between the objective needs of the moment and the continued anti-intervention sentiment of the North American population on the one hand, and the ability of the movement to mobilize the type of larger mass demonstrations that we have seen at several junctures during the 1980's on the other. Such a situation requires that anti-intervention forces make a serious reassessment of the strategy and tactics which have guided the movement over the last period. Such an assessment must involve a consideration of the objective needs, possibilities, and limitations of the present situation, as well as a rigorous examination of the subjective factors involved.

The March 24 actions took place in the context of a growing danger of another U.S. military invasion in the region. The defeat of the Sandinista National Liberation

Editorial

No More Delays—Establish a National Anti-Intervention Coalition Now!

Washington continues to step up its aggressive interventionist policies against the peoples of Central America and Cuba. It has registered two big victories in the past months: the installation of a puppet regime in Panama following the U.S. invasion of that country; and the defeat of the Sandinistas in the February 25 elections in Nicaragua.

What can stop the U.S. from further escalating its offensive against the FMLN in El Salvador and against the revolutionary government of Cuba? One essential element must be a conscious strengthening of the anti-intervention movement in the U.S. This means—in the first place—establishing a national coalition of all anti-intervention groups to organize coordinated mass actions on a sustained basis. It also means centering the demands of such a coalition around the question of self-determination for all of the countries of Central America and the Caribbean.

The anti-intervention movement in the U.S. is ten years old. Many activists in that movement have been primarily "country oriented," that is, involved in support efforts for either Nicaragua (through the Nicaragua Network), El Salvador (through the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador), or Guatemala (through the Guatemala Network). Labor and religious anti-intervention organizations have generally steered clear of involvement with other sectors of the movement—with the notable exception of the April 1987 demonstrations when nearly a quarter of a million people took to the streets in united actions in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco.

Lobbying, material aid, trips to Central America, civil disobedience, vigils, and ad hoc hastily organized demonstrations have often been counterposed to building the mass movement on a systematic basis, united in an ongoing national coalition. Some activists felt that such a coalition was not necessary: The Sandinista revolution had survived ten years of relentless attacks by U.S. imperialism, the FMLN appeared stronger than ever, Noriega had turned against Washington, and the growth of popular movements in other Latin American countries was proceeding apace. So most activists continued building individual anti-intervention or solidarity organizations in the U.S. without taking on the additional responsibility of establishing a national coalition to unite all of the groups.

Change in the Relationship of Forces

But this disunity within the movement and the lack of a clear mass action strategy meant that sufficient pressure was not brought upon the U.S. government to end contra aid and economic sanctions against Nicaragua. The kind of strategy for the movement that appeared to some to work in the past clearly did not work, and it will work even less under today's less favorable conditions.

U.S. imperialism is winning victories against the struggle for self-determination in Central America and the Caribbean. It is also getting away with more as a result of the Bush-Gorbachev understanding and the politics of detente. The Soviet Union has given the U.S. a virtual free hand in the Western hemisphere to overthrow governments that act independently of Washington and to attack liberation movements of workers and peasants.

This led the Soviets—by withholding vitally needed oil or threatening to withhold it—to pressure the Sandinistas into making wholesale concessions to U.S.-subsidized capitalist forces in Nicaragua. The Soviet Union and the U.S. also insisted that the Nicaraguan government cut off all aid to the FMLN. One consequence of this was Ortega's signing the December 12 San Isidro accords calling on the FMLN to demobilize.

The Kremlin muted its criticism of Washington's invasion of Panama and the overthrow of Noriega. Now it undermines the Cuban government with a growing chorus of complaints and denunciations, which carry with them the implicit threat of curbing Soviet aid to that country.

In exchange, the U.S. gave its seal of approval to the Kremlin's use of military force in Azerbaijan and even invited Gorbachev to send troops into Romania. Also, increased U.S. aid and trade to Moscow are now likely.

In the face of this situation, U.S. anti-intervention forces must reassess past policies. If the fragmentation and divisions in our movement persist, Bush will be encouraged to move more aggressively in the Central America/Caribbean region. Cuba has now been moved to imperialism's front burner. The warning signs are everywhere, pointing to an escalation of the U.S. effort to weaken and eventually overthrow the Cuban revolution.

Establish a National Anti-Intervention Coalition Now

The aftermath of the nationwide March 24 actions provides an occasion for the anti-intervention movement to evaluate its course over the past years and determine what changes are needed now.

The movement must unite if it is to carry out its responsibility to the people of Central America and the Caribbean. A far greater effort must be waged to involve masses of students who—just as during Vietnam—can energize the movement and help give it the mass base it lacks today. The movement must also reach out much more to labor and religious groups and seriously seek to win them to a genuine role in decision making.

There is no time to waste. All forces opposing U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean must be part of one, inclusive, democratic, national coalition for united action. ●

Front (FSLN) in the February 25 elections in Nicaragua has served to isolate the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador, the liberation forces in Guatemala, and revolutionary Cuba. The U.S. has already capitalized on this situation by increasing its aggressions against Cuba. This has occurred on the military, diplomatic, and propagandistic planes as has been seen by the armed aggression against a Cuban cargo ship, the cynical and hypocritical U.S.-sponsored United Nations resolution on "human rights abuses" in Cuba, and the recent launching of "T.V. Martí."

The success of Vice President Quayle's second trip to Latin America, where he was greeted with open arms (as opposed to the cool reception he received on an earlier trip, including the refusal of several Latin American regimes to even meet with him), indicates that Washington has already largely overcome the political isolation it suffered among Latin American regimes for its brazen invasion of Panama last December.

This situation has been made even worse by the continued foreign policy concessions that Mikhail Gorbachev has made to imperialism. The Soviet government becomes daily a less and less reliable ally to national liberation movements throughout the world, especially in Central America where it senses that concessions to U.S. imperialism will be the most appreciated. The bourgeois press has gleefully documented the diminishing political and economic aid the Soviet Union has given to Cuba.

Given this situation, the threat of another U.S. invasion is a distinct possibility. This is why a united national anti-intervention movement is needed now more than ever. At the same time, however, some of the same objective factors that demand such a movement have helped to create subjective obstacles to that task. For example, the defeat of the FSLN has had a demoralizing effect on many who have been active in the anti-intervention and solidarity movements. The sustained, months-long media campaign to demonize the corrupt Noriega dictatorship in Panama served to neutralize much anti-intervention sentiment in this country as far as Panama was concerned. It has proved particularly difficult to involve the labor movement in protests concerning Panama. This has been in striking contrast to the good work that has been done in the labor movement around El Salvador, which includes the establishment of important ties between Salvadoran and U.S. labor throughout the 1980s. As a result, the reactionary foreign policy positions of the upper echelons of the AFL-CIO have been somewhat neutralized, at least as far as El Salvador is concerned.

Nevertheless, the small size of the March 24 actions cannot be blamed entirely on the adverse political situation. Serious shortcomings on the part of those with influence in the movement are also responsible for the failure of the March 24 actions to mobilize greater numbers of demonstrators. Some involved with the Romero Coalition—the coalition charged with organizing the actions—pointed out that the coalition was formed at a meeting last January 15 only ten weeks before the march. It is true that ten weeks is a relatively short time for building a major national demonstration. However, most of those groups present at the January 15 meeting were also present at an earlier Washington D.C.

meeting last October 8 when the March 24 call was originally issued. But the resolutions passed at that meeting remained a dead letter. Had they been acted on, organizers would have had five and one-half months, rather than two and one-half months, to build the demonstration. And even in the limited time, much more could have been done. Local committees responsible for preparing the demonstrations were built on an extremely narrow basis. In New York, for example, only three organizing meetings were held. These meetings were attended by as few as 15 and never more than 25 people. Labor participation was minimal as was input from African-American organizations and the religious community.

At the center of the organizing efforts was the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES). CISPES devoted much time and resources to building the event, and took responsibility for many aspects of its preparations. While CISPES should be commended for its efforts, the central problem with the Romero Coalition was *precisely the fact that one organization—even one as well known and authoritative as CISPES—held a monopoly on organizing the actions*. No single organization is large enough or inclusive enough to substitute itself for an authentic democratic coalition of the many antiwar, solidarity, church, community, political, and labor organizations which have been part of the movement in the past. Nor does it suffice for one organization to set an agenda and then invite others to participate. Genuine coalition building means that all decisions should be arrived at democratically at all stages—including the initial planning for an action.

While the objective conditions cited above mitigated against the largest and broadest involvement possible, other events have shown that, even under less than ideal conditions, broad coalitions and well-publicized events can be quite successful—even those called on relatively short notice. For example, over 100 individuals representing 60 organizations came to an initial planning meeting of the New York-based Hands Off Cuba Coalition. With relatively little notice, this coalition was able to mobilize over 2,500 people for a demonstration April 7 in New York City. This event took place at the same time as the well-publicized Socialist Scholars Conference and after there were public threats of violence leveled at the demonstration in the Spanish-language press for weeks preceding the event, not to mention the legacy of 30 years of vicious imperialist propaganda against Cuba. This makes it an issue much less likely to draw large numbers of people than a march with a broader focus on Central America and the Caribbean. So it is clear that the March 24 demonstration fell far short of its potential.

A central feature of March 24—especially in Washington—was civil disobedience (CD). Over 600 were arrested at the end of the Washington rally. The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* has argued before—most recently in our March 1990 issue—that such actions, which are narrow by definition, should be held at separate times and places from the legal protests. Unfortunately, the CD event was held in close physical and temporal proximity to the legal march and rally. Furthermore, CISPES activists who served as bus captains took advantage of their position to aggressively agitate in favor of the CD over the bus microphone. While the January 15 meeting democratically decided to hold the CD

as part of the March 24 program *for those who wished to participate*, this sort of behavior on the part of those charged with organizing and security functions only served to narrow the scope of the action as a whole.

Another aspect of the march which reflected the overriding political influence of CISPES was the presence of hundreds of hand-held signs distributed on the day of the march which read "For a Negotiated Solution." Like the CD action, it was decided by majority vote at the January 15 meeting that this demand would be an official part of the program. Yet many anti-intervention activists oppose this demand, because to carry such signs at the U.S. Capitol and the White House asks our government to participate in those negotiations and recognizes a role for the U.S. government if and when they take place. Such a position cuts across, and is in fact counterposed to, the central demand that all anti-intervention activists support—"U.S. Out of Central America." This is even more the case now that a government openly supported by the U.S. government has been elected in Nicaragua with massive U.S. financial and political support. Because the demand was democratically determined to be part of the action, those of us who disagree with it would not unilaterally seek to overturn it. Nevertheless, the

prominence it received cut across the effectiveness of the action and of the demands that everyone did agree on.

Yet, despite an adverse relationship of forces and the organizational shortcomings discussed above, aspects of the March 24 actions pointed to the potential for building a large, broad anti-intervention movement today. For example, the composition of the Washington march was quite encouraging. African-Americans and Hispanics participated in greater numbers and constituted a higher percentage of demonstrators in this march than has been the case in previous years. There was a distinct trade union presence, particularly from Local 1199 Drug, Hospital, and Health Care workers as well as marchers from several United Steelworkers of America locals. They were joined by high school and college students from throughout the Northeast and as far away as Illinois and Minnesota. Church groups were present as well. Furthermore, other anti-intervention forces, though not sufficiently involved in preparations for the march, took the call seriously and helped to build the march on their own. The New York-based Coalition Against U.S. Intervention in Panama, Latin America, and the Caribbean helped publicize the march and

(Continued on page 21)

Emergency Defense Campaign — Fact Sheet Update:

The Case of Daniel Libreros and the *A Luchar* Prisoners in Colombia

April 5, 1990 — During the night of March 30-31, 1990, Daniel Libreros was released from captivity in Cali, Colombia, following an international campaign of protest against his imprisonment. A trade union and human rights lawyer, and a member of the National Executive Committee of the organization *A Luchar* (In Struggle), Libreros had been arrested by the Third Military Brigade on March 27, while acting as attorney for ten other members of *A Luchar* who were arrested earlier in the month.

The Third Military Brigade, commanded by José Manuel Bonnet, is notorious throughout Colombia for its use of torture. Although Libreros himself was in good condition when his family was allowed to visit him on March 29, the other *A Luchar* members in custody in Cali have been severely tortured, including one woman who has been raped.

A Luchar is presently under attack by the Colombian authorities because it took the position that the elections held in that country earlier this month, and the second round scheduled for May, are fraudulent and should be boycotted. The government and the press have accused the group of being the political arm of a guerrilla movement known as the Army of National Liberation (ELN). Eighty *A Luchar* members were originally arrested in Cali with the claim that they were part of the urban network of the ELN. All except those Libreros went to visit were subsequently released. Even after his release, however, the ten remain in prison.

An international campaign of protest continues to be needed to secure freedom for the ten *A Luchar* members and the prosecution of the military personnel responsible for their torture and rape, as well as to demand respect for the democratic rights of *A Luchar* as an organization.

A Luchar has called for a special week of international protest May 7-13. Telegrams and messages during that week and in the time leading up to it should be sent to:

**Embassy of Colombia, 2118 Leroy Pl., NW, Washington, DC 20008,
Fax number: 202-232-8643**

Presidente de Colombia, Virgilio Barco, Palacio de Nariño, Bogotá, Colombia

**Please send copies to: Emergency Defense Campaign,
P.O. Box 1890 Stuyvesant Sta., New York, NY 10009**

South Africa Hospital Workers Strike

The following is taken from a bulletin issued by the Health Workers Union of South Africa, which is an independent union (not affiliated with the South African trade union federations COSATU or NACTU) and is presently based in the Western Cape.

In a letter dated March 12, the Health Workers Society explained, "The strike is now entering its second week and the financial demands on the union are growing by the day. For this reason a strike fund has been started. We in Health Workers Society are now making an urgent appeal to support the union in its struggle. We wish to request both financial and moral support."

Messages and financial contributions can be sent to Health Workers Society, P.O. Box 481, Salt River 7925, South Africa.

Our Reasons for the Strike

Workers for the government have very few rights. Workers in the private sector have many more rights. Workers for the government have been suffering and have been exploited for years. They have been complaining to management about the problems for years. The managements at the hospitals always say they can do nothing about the complaints. They send the complaints to the higher authorities in the government. The higher authorities have been saying for years, "your complaints are being investigated."

What Are Our Complaints?

1. Low Wages

The starting wage at a government hospital is R260 (\$98) per month. Average wages are between R300 and R400 per month. No one can survive in today's world with such wages.

2. Maternity Leave

Workers must resign when they go on maternity leave. They only get three months' maternity leave and must draw unemployment which is less than half their salaries. There is no guarantee of getting their job back.

3. Temporary Status

Most general workers are regarded as temporary workers. This means they can be given two days' notice without explanation. It takes two years of service before they can join the Pension Fund. When they go on pension they do not get a lump sum.

4. Long Hours

Workers are working a 44-hour week. They leave for work early in the morning and get home late at night. They do not have a lot of time to spend with their families. Sometimes their children don't even see their parents.

5. No Recognition

The government refuses to recognize the union. They recognize staff associations which have been doing nothing for the workers for years. They know that the union will do something for the workers. That is why workers are angry because the government does not want to recognize the Health Workers Union.

6. Privatization

Recently, the government has been wanting to sell the hospitals or some services at hospitals to private companies. Workers were not consulted about this. The workers fear

they will lose their jobs or their benefits. They fear they will be forced to work harder for lower wages. They know private companies want to make profits. They feel that privatization will make going to hospital more expensive. They know that the poorest workers go to government hospitals. Workers will not be able to afford to get sick.

Why Workers Had to Strike

Because workers know patients will suffer if they strike, they have put up with all the suffering for years. They could not take it any longer.

Workers do not want anyone to suffer because of the strike. But they feel it is in the hands of the authorities to respond to the workers' demands quickly before any patients have to suffer.

What We Are Asking For

1. R1500 minimum wage; 2. Six months' paid maternity leave; 3. Permanent status; 4. 40-hour week; 5. Recognition of the union; 6. An end to privatization.

What Is Our History?

In 1985, an organization called Health Workers Society set up an advice office for health workers. This led to workers' committees being set up at a few private hospitals. These committees joined together to form the Health Workers Union in December 1985.

In September 1985, the workers at Groote Schuur formed the Groote Schuur Health Workers Association and the majority of members soon joined this association. They forced a meeting with management. Although not getting official recognition, they have been meeting regularly with GSH management since then.

GSH Health Workers Association joined the Health Workers Union in April 1987. Since December 1985, Health Workers Union has grown quickly in state and private hospitals, old age homes, and even animal welfare workplaces. We now have 50 branches in the Western Cape and a membership of 4,500.

Over the years we have fought many struggles and won many victories for health workers. Our members are strong and militant and we do not wait for others to lead the way. We are busy building workers' unity through links with other unions and our involvement in the anti-LRA (Labor Relations Amendments) campaign. We believe in worker control and working class leadership of the struggle. ●

March 7 was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the march by Black Americans in Alabama, from Selma to Montgomery, demanding the right to vote. For many African-Americans this event holds significance as one of the major victories in the civil rights struggle of the 1950s and '60s. On the other hand, African-Americans are today acutely aware of the lost momentum, and even reversals of previous gains, since that time.

The mainstream civil rights movement has always placed a strong emphasis on electoral politics as a means of measuring progress towards liberation. In the '80s, even many African-Americans who consider themselves to be revolutionaries have come to accept electoral politics within the existing two-party system as a legitimate and major means of "struggle" for liberation and self-determination—thus their involvement in the Jesse Jackson campaigns of 1984 and 1988.

For revolutionary socialists of all races who disagree with this approach, and who wish to work in today's Black liberation movement, the dilemma is how to relate to the masses of Black activists in a way that makes clear our total solidarity with their struggle for self-determination and empower-

ment with the struggle itself provided African-Americans with a rich tradition of mass activity which can be used as a powerful model for future struggles.

The right of all people to have a vote is a worthwhile demand. The vote can be used as an important tool in our fight for liberation, but we have to know how to use it effectively. Voting in the kind of elections now held in the USA will not be sufficient, in and of itself, to guarantee real political power in our capitalist "democracy." The experience of African-Americans in the 25 years since the voting rights victory is a strong demonstration of the inability of the present system to provide real grass-roots democracy and real rank-and-file control. Rather, it is a way of diverting mass struggles, and of co-opting and marginalizing their leaders. This was certainly exemplified by the Jackson campaigns, the experience with Harold Washington's campaign and mayoralty in Chicago, and the career of every single Black politician who has attempted to work within the two-party capitalist system thus far.

The reason for this is simply that both the Democratic and Republican parties are guided and controlled by the big-money interests in the U.S. today, the capitalist class. No

Selma to Montgomery—25 Years Later Black Electoral Politics Today

by Claire Cohen

ment, and at the same time present a convincing argument for our principled stand against supporting politicians, regardless of color, in the two main capitalist parties—the Democrats and Republicans.

African-Americans fought for the right to vote with the assumption that this would be a way of gaining some power to control their own lives. Many believed that Blacks could achieve at least a measure of liberation through electing African-American leaders, who they thought would be responsible to them and represent their interests. But over time it has become clear to an increasing number of Black people that this strategy has not led to greater control by African-Americans of the political decisions that affect them. It has instead seriously weakened the Black liberation movement and slowed its momentum. Many Black leaders have been co-opted. Some have been demoralized. Others have become marginalized. At the same time the masses remain effectively disenfranchised—that is, cut off from real decision making—despite their ability to vote.

The struggle to achieve the right to vote was an important fight, despite its contradictions. It helped to legitimize the concept of the right of all people to participate equally in the political processes by which they are governed. It lent credence to the idea that particular constituencies must be able to choose their own representatives who should reflect their interests and be accountable to them. And the ex-

perience with the struggle itself provided African-Americans with a rich tradition of mass activity which can be used as a powerful model for future struggles.

What is needed to guarantee our liberation is a different kind of system—a democratic, socialist system, in which economic and social decisions are made on the basis of what is in the interests of working people who make up the majority of this society, not on the basis of how to make more profits for those who are already rich. In such a truly participatory socialist democracy, voting would finally become an act which carried with it some real power. Thus, the task of Black activists at this point in history is to work toward creating such a system. That's the way in which we can get our struggle moving forward again.

And the only way to work toward such a system is to stop relying on the promises of politicians and begin relying on ourselves, on a grass-roots movement in the Black community. Such a movement would have to address the grave problems confronting us, problems like jobs, housing, decent education, medical care, drugs. And it will have to put pressure on the system—no matter who is in office—to meet the people's needs. This will give Black people a sense of their own power once again, just as the civil rights and Black

Action Needed!

Below is a short appeal published in the Spring 1990 issue of NARAL News (National Abortion Rights Action League):

AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland has appointed a special committee to study whether the labor federation should take a position on choice, and if so what that position should be. A decision on this question is expected when the AFL-CIO Executive Council meets in May.

If the AFL-CIO takes a pro-choice position its affiliate unions will be free to lobby for abor-

tion rights at every level of government. The National Right to Life Committee has already begun sending a flood of letters to President Lane Kirkland and other members of the Executive Council to deter them from taking a pro-choice position. If the federation does take a pro-choice position, some officials of the Catholic Church of New York have threatened to start a campaign to persuade union members to withhold part of their membership dues.

Assistance from labor unions could make a critical difference in the ability of pro-choice

forces to stop legislators from enacting extremist and restrictive legislation.

We need each of you to write to President Kirkland in support of a pro-choice AFL-CIO resolution. If you or any members of your family are union members please include that information in your letter and identify the union.

Letters should be addressed to:

Lane Kirkland, President, AFL-CIO, 815 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. Union members should also send a copy of their letter to the president of their own union.

nationalist movements did in the 1950s and early '60s, as well as help to bring home the limitations of the capitalist system.

In the context of such a real grass-roots movement, a new kind of electoral politics can also emerge. Genuine Black electoral activity must be completely responsible to our community and to no one else. It must declare its total independence from the ruling rich and their capitalist vote-catching machines. When we can create such an independent Black electoral apparatus, responsible to the Black rank and file, then our votes will become a simple and logical extension of our broader movement. And the continued mobilization of the rank and file in the community will serve as a guarantee that whatever politicians we elect will, indeed, serve us, and not our oppressors. Today, when Black people are only called upon to cast a vote once every two or four years, we have no method to control our elected officials once they are in office.

To enlist unconvinced Black activists in building this kind of a movement, revolutionary socialists need to explicitly and unequivocally acknowledge the powerfully uplifting pride that most African-Americans feel in seeing "one of our own make it" within the system, and the fact that many Blacks feel that they derive some benefits from having Black politicians in office.

But while most African-Americans derive satisfaction from seeing an increasing number of Blacks in political office, they are just as frustrated by the continuing, if not increasing, economic, social, and cultural crisis in the Black community. Black activists have responded to this contradictory and confusing state of affairs by either dropping out of

the movement, taking the "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" route, becoming part of Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam (which will be the subject of a forthcoming article), or returning to the strategy of mass struggle and democratic, grass-roots organizing.

Revolutionary socialists need to support this last strategy and join forces with those activists who are involved in it. So as not to repeat and reinforce the destructive racial dynamics of our society, non-Black revolutionary socialists need to respect the right of Black people themselves to lead their own struggle, and see themselves in a supportive and collaborative, rather than a leading, role.

Given a new upsurge of interest and activity in Black communities and among Black students across the U.S., there is an important new opportunity for a fruitful dialogue today on the lessons of 25 years of Black electoral activity, as well as on broader strategic problems facing the Black liberation movement. By recognizing and accepting the contradictions in the current movement, by supporting all honest efforts at democratic mass mobilization, and by refraining from dogmatic denunciations of tendencies that we may disagree with—striving instead for an open discussion of strategies and ideas of all kinds in a way that will enable us to forthrightly discuss the merits of our own perspectives and those of others—the revolutionary socialist movement should be able to make a valuable and appreciated contribution to the strengthening of the Black struggle, without marginalizing ourselves or being resented as sectarian. ●

East Germany (Continued from page 4)

The View from Bonn

None of this has been lost on West German policy makers. As soon as the polls closed on election day, Kohl, the apostle of immediate unification, began putting on the brakes. In a television discussion of the election results he advised caution and predicted that the necessary structural changes would take "two to three years"!

The desire to postpone German unity is also reflected in the ruling CDU's foreign policy stance. The demand that a unified Germany remain within NATO is clearly unacceptable to the Soviet Union and thoroughly bizarre as well. It is difficult to imagine a united Germany with American troops stationed in the western part of the country and Soviet troops in the eastern part, both armed with short-range nuclear weapons which would fall on German territory. Working out the details of some sort of collective security agreement to get around these problems will take considerable time and give Bonn the opportunity to hold things up as long as necessary while placing the blame for delaying German unity on the Soviet Union.

Kohl's equivocation on the question of the Polish western border can be understood in the same way. In addition to domestic concerns about losing votes to the radical right Republican Party in state and national elections scheduled for this year, Kohl can use the border issue to delay unification

and drive a wedge between East Germany and its allies in the Warsaw Pact, who are afraid that a united Germany might harbor latent expansionist ambitions.

Prospects for Socialism?

It is clear that the opportunity for creating socialism with a human face provided by the mass mobilizations of last fall has passed. When power lies around on the street, someone has to pick it up and, due to the weak starting position of socialist forces, the liquidationist tendencies in the DDR and their Western allies were able to seize the day.

Nevertheless, the DDR will prove to be a very difficult morsel to digest. And it remains to be seen how social conflicts will develop when unification euphoria is confronted with hard facts. The fall of Stalinism and the new opportunity for socialist forces to meet, discuss, organize, and intervene in the political process in the coming months will provide new openings in Germany, both East and West.

Everyone here seems convinced that some sort of wonder is in the offing. Whether it will be a new Economic Wonder accompanied by a wave of conservatism, as in the '50s, or a new 1968 remains an open question. ●

Message of the Greyhound Strike

'Replacement Workers' Threaten the Labor Movement

by Naomi Allen

On Friday, March 2, the 9,000 bus drivers, mechanics, and service personnel who work for Greyhound Lines went on strike. The next day striker Bob Waterhouse was killed on the picket line in Redding, California. Waterhouse, a 30-year veteran at Greyhound who was preparing to retire, was run over and crushed by a bus driven by a scab driver, who then left the scene. Police didn't catch up with him until he was 13 miles out of town.

The death was ruled accidental. But it was no accident. Greyhound's management is recruiting inexperienced, untrained "replacement workers" to drive and maintain the buses, endangering picketing strikers, pedestrians, and passengers.

Nationwide protests called by the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) were held on March 9 as a memorial to Bob Waterhouse and to support striking workers at Greyhound terminals across the country. At New York's Port Authority bus terminal, about 400 trade unionists from about 20 different unions held a spirited march and rally, and listened to speeches from representatives of labor and the Black community pledging support and aid to the strikers. Unfortunately, except for some financial donations to the ATU strike fund, most of the support and aid were verbal only.

More than 90 percent of the Greyhound workers, organized by the ATU, rejected Greyhound's only contract offer. It included no wage increases, gave the company unrestricted rights to contract out bus routes and maintenance work to nonunion companies, eliminated seniority, and weakened the grievance procedure. The company also wants to reduce sick leave, vacations, holiday pay, and health benefits.

In 1987, ATU members took a 30 percent wage cut. Wages and benefits were also cut in 1983 after a seven-week strike. As a result, Greyhound workers are making the same wages they did in 1975, while the cost of living has gone up 125 percent in those 15 years!

Ever since Ronald Reagan broke the Professional Air Traffic Controllers' (PATCO) strike in 1981 by firing all the strikers and hiring permanent replacements, the labor movement has been on the run. Several companies hired replacement workers during the '80s and kept them on payrolls after the strikes ended. In March 1989, overturning an appeals court ruling favoring striking TWA flight attendants, the Supreme Court gave employers the right to hire permanent scabs to replace striking workers. Twelve hundred TWA flight attendants whose jobs had been taken by strikebreakers were left out in the cold. At Eastern Air Lines, where pilots, flight attendants, and maintenance workers went on strike a year ago over wage cutbacks, replacement

workers have enabled the company to rebuild its flight schedule to two-thirds its prestrike size. And thousands of workers hired to replace strikers remain on the job at the Austin, Minnesota, Hormel plant—scene of the landmark strike by United Food and Commercial Workers Local P-9 in 1985-86—the International Paper Company in Jay, Maine, The Boise Cascade Corporation, the Phelps Dodge Corporation, and Continental Airlines.

The *New York Times* called replacement workers "Management's Big Gun," and labor leaders complain that the tactic has upset the traditional balance that has characterized labor disputes in American history: the threat of strike versus the threat of lockout, with all to be forgiven once a settlement is reached.

The labor bureaucracy wants to play by the old rules. But the rules have changed. Management is no longer satisfied to reach a contract it can live with. Now the goal is to destroy the unions. Four decades of business unionism and class collaboration, as well as the destruction of traditions of labor militance and solidarity, have made that goal a realistic one. When PATCO collapsed at Reagan's touch, bosses throughout America realized that their sights were aimed too low.

Symptomatic of the problem is the labor leadership's attempts to find a solution: Lane Kirkland, head of the AFL-CIO, said recently that he would ask Congress to ban the hiring of permanent replacement workers during labor disputes, and Senate Democrats introduced such a bill in February. The Amalgamated Transit Union is seeking a ruling by the National Labor Relations Board that would force Greyhound to take striking workers back before hiring replacement workers. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has agreed to rule on a case brought by a small Texas company that could strengthen management's hand in using scabs to bust unions.

The type of support and aid that could really affect the outcome of the Greyhound strike has not been tried by the union leaderships. To close down Greyhound's operation and prevent the hiring and training of scabs would require mobilizing the entire labor movement on picket lines and demonstrations and conducting a vast public relations campaign to win support from other working people. The labor leadership fears such a mobilization because it would not be easy to control it, to limit its activities strictly to winning the Greyhound strike itself. But nothing short of a real mass mobilization will turn the present tide of defeats and union busting.

Legal and legislative efforts can be useful to the labor movement, but only as a supplement to the fight we wage for

How Should UAW Respond to Crisis in Auto?

The following article is reprinted from the March issue of the Kansas City Socialist, issued by the Kansas City local organizing committee of the FIT.

There is a crisis in the auto industry, no doubt about it. Five years ago, 15,000 Kansas City-area workers were employed by Ford and General Motors. Half of those jobs are now gone, along with thousands of jobs in other industries dependent on them. The resulting loss in wages and benefits is greater than what the Chiefs and Royals generate *plus* the money being spent for the new Bartle Hall.

Of course the crisis is not confined to our metropolitan area. Plants have been shut down all over the United States and Canada. Why is this happening?

The main response from the leaders of the United Auto Workers union (UAW) is to condemn "foreign competition." This is an inadequate answer.

First of all, how "foreign" is the competition and how "American" are the Big Three?

General Motors owns the following stakes in "foreign" companies: 50% of Daewoo Motor (Korea), 38% of Isuzu (Japan), 5% of Suzuki (Japan), 100% of Lotus (Britain), 50% of Saab (Sweden). It has joint ventures and/or manufacturing agreements with Subaru (Japan), Toyota (Japan), and Volvo (Sweden).

Ford: 75% of Aston-Martin (Britain), 25% of Mazda (Japan), 10% of Kia (Korea), 100% of Jaguar (Britain). Its joint ventures include: Volkswagen (Germany), Fiat (Italy), Nissan (Japan), Isuzu (Japan).

Chrysler owns 100% of Lamborghini (Italy), 12% of Mitsubishi (Japan), and a joint venture with Renault (France).

And of course the Big Three have extensive international operations of their own. These operations include those in third world countries such as Mexico that are increasingly supplying components formerly manufactured in the U.S.

Japanese companies have greatly expanded their operations in North America, employing

substantial numbers of American workers. So a simplistic "Buy American" approach doesn't address the needs of American workers, including auto workers.

Capital has become increasingly multinational. At the same time the UAW bureaucracy has become increasingly narrow and xenophobic. It is easier to bash the Japanese than fight the Big Three.

The crisis is caused primarily by two factors:

1) After some unusually good sales years, consumer demand for new cars has slipped back to a more normal level. With fear of recession, and personal debt pinching, demand will most likely shrink further.

2) Increases in productivity and profitability, due to a combination of automation, changed shop-floor practices, and "out-sourcing" of work to subcontractors, or "off-shore" plants, have encouraged plant closings.

The current UAW contracts, negotiated in 1987, were supposed to give unprecedented job security. Just the opposite has happened. Never have so many plants been closed.

The Big Three weren't supposed to close any plants. The only layoffs permitted were temporary ones because of a decline in sales. But the union went along with the fiction of several plants, including Leeds, being put on "indefinite furlough." Only recently, after great pressure from the ranks, and with contract negotiations coming up, did the UAW leadership decide to file grievances around these closings.

If you want more information about the job security protection offered by the present contract, talk to the former employees of General Motors' Leeds plant. Since their "temporary closing" in 1988 there have been at least a dozen suicides among laid-off workers and their divorce rate is four times greater than average. Finally, a few months ago, GM acknowledged that the plant would never be reopened.

Or talk to the workers at Chrysler's Fenton #1 plant in St. Louis, or Jefferson Avenue in Detroit. Most workers will be laid off from these plants and the plants will be officially permanently closed as of the expiration of the present contract.

The UAW made concessions to get this "job security." They agreed to many changes in working conditions. They integrated themselves enthusiastically into class collaborationist "team concept" projects which enabled the Big Three to further chip away at jobs.

Contract negotiations will begin shortly. The Big Three will be demanding big new concessions from the union to make them "competitive." They will point to the Japanese "transplant" operations that the UAW has failed to organize and demand that the UAW agree to similar "Japanese-style" working conditions. We can also expect that the company will want to roll back payments for health insurance and other benefits.

In May, the UAW will hold its bargaining convention in Kansas City to determine its contract goals. To avoid a complete rout for the workers the dead-end policies of the Solidarity House bureaucrats must be reversed. A genuine program for protecting auto workers during the present crisis would include:

1) A 35-hour workweek with no reduction in pay. With strict limitations on overtime, this would increase the work force by at least 12 percent. British auto workers at Rover Group (the remnant of British Leyland) recently won a 37-hour week after a 17-week strike.

2) Scrap Team Concept, Quality of Work-Life Circles, and all such gimmicks of class collaboration on the shop floor.

3) Forget about profit-sharing schemes and return to basing income on annual wage increases with cost-of-living protection.

4) A ban on further plant closings — no ifs, ands, or buts.

5) A campaign by the UAW, and the rest of organized labor, to win a national health insurance plan covering everyone.

6) Stepped-up efforts to organize the "transplants" and the nonunion suppliers to the Big Three.

7) Establish real links of solidarity with auto workers in other countries — above all the embattled Mexican workers fighting the Big Three. Put the "Buy American" slogan where it belongs — in the garbage can. ●

ourselves, not as a substitute for it. The key to changing the situation is for the union movement in the U.S. to start to mobilize its rank-and-file membership in mass actions of all kinds — marches, informational pickets, rallies, educational activities, etc., as well as strikes — against the offensive of the employers.

That's the way the United Mine Workers recently won their long strike against the Pittston Coal Company. They organized not only the miners in the union involved in the walkout, but their families and the entire community. They set up "Camp Solidarity" as an organizing center for the strike, and received support, in the form of material aid and expressions of solidarity, from unions and working people around the country. Most important, the miners did not allow themselves to be hamstrung by government intervention and court injunctions limiting pickets. The most important actions in the strike, from continuing efforts to physically

block scabs from entering the mine, to a sympathy strike conducted by miners throughout West Virginia, to the occupation of a Pittston coal processing facility by 100 strikers with thousands of supporters surrounding the building, were technically illegal. But without them the strike would have been defeated.

The labor movement also has to make an effort to win as allies other sectors of the population who are most likely to be recruited as replacement workers in strike situations. This includes in the first place the unemployed and the communities of oppressed nationalities — such as Blacks and Latinos. To the extent that the rulers of this country succeed in portraying the labor movement as a narrow "special interest" group that is only interested in the wages and working conditions of its own members, to that extent our task

(Continued on page 33)

The following is an interview with four members of a new independent trade union in the USSR called Justice. Justice was formed in the summer of 1989 in Leningrad and is one of a number of new groupings that have emerged in the past year seeking to address important

problems facing the working class and to organize independently of the official Stalinist trade union apparatus. The activists of Justice publish a journal called *Rubicon*, ten issues of which had appeared by September 1989. *Rubicon* contains reports, interviews, proposals, and analyses that concern the workers' movement and workers' struggles.

The interview was held with Igor Dashkevich, 36 years old, a former worker, now the editor of *Rubicon*; Vladimir Ilyich Gomelsky, age about 60, who has worked in factories and enterprises for many years and is a former political prisoner; Nikolai Chevalkov, about 40 years old, who works in the Baltic Shipbuilding Works in Leningrad; and Rodion Nikolaevich Gryazev, around 30 years old, an engineer in a scientific institute.

The interview was conducted in Leningrad in July 1989 by Marilyn Vogt-Downey who also translated it. We owe a special thanks to Maryam Ostrovsky who helped with translation problems.

Q: In the United States, people often assume that almost everyone in the Soviet Union supports Gorbachev's policies and also supports Gorbachev. Is this an accurate assessment? What does perestroika mean to you?

Igor Dashkevich: Perestroika has two sides. The first aspect is undoubtedly to strengthen the power of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. And the second aspect is that it, of course, gives many rights and freedoms to the people of the Soviet Union.

Vladimir Ilyich Gomelsky: Of course, from a general political point of view, it is very important for us. But of course, when the matter shifts to the economic aspects, things are worse, an utter disaster.

ID: You mean that the economic reforms are lagging behind the political reforms.

VIG: These are reforms imposed by the party, and the party serves the interests of the apparatus, of course. Some very interesting data has been published that poverty affects more than 86 percent of the population in the Soviet Union now. And the rich comprise a slightly larger percentage than in America. The superrich make up 2 percent. And these superrich want to protect the posts that are the source of their wealth. And everything is directed toward that end. And they won't allow anything to be done, since precisely they, the superrich, occupy all the posts of the ruling party, and no one else—and all the posts in the trade unions too. And to expect anything from them is simply naive.

Those who expect a lot from Gorbachev will always be dissatisfied. I, for example, expect a lot less from him and therefore I can always reconcile myself with whatever hap-

Interview with Soviet Trade Union Activists

Problems Facing Workers in the USSR Today

pens. That is my point of view. But it wasn't Gorbachev who made me feel this way—what he can or cannot do. He always now uses revolutionary-sounding words. He says that we don't need the kind of situation where some administer and others work. When he

talks to workers, he uses revolutionary phrases. What he has in mind is not important. But what he says in no way settles the matter. That there shouldn't be some who govern and others who work is an acknowledgment of the existence of a class. There are some who possess and control but do not work, he says. One has to add that some govern and others work but do not have any control to guarantee anything in life. And the strikes now in which thousands are participating, these show all of this.

Q: What difference has self-accounting made? Now they say that the plan will no longer play a role in production, that a factory must survive on its own, that the workers in a plant will be divided into many brigades which will compete with one another and share the pay or profits among themselves. What has this meant?

VIG: This is only words. It is a wish. Perhaps they really hope it will be true. But it is all pure rhetoric.

Q: So it isn't taking place?

VIG: No, No.

Nikolai Chevalkov: In our factory last year, from August 1, we shifted to self-accounting. Then they published factory figures on the distribution of profits. The workers read them through and found that not everything tallied and redid the administration's calculations to find out where all the rest of the money was. The administration tore up the reports: "Forget self-accounting. Go on with everything as it was."

Rodion Nikolaevich Gryazev: Perestroika has several aspects. economic and political. The political aspect allows us to set up informal groups, meet with whomever we want, etc. But this isn't enough. This is only the narrow limits that have been set from above, to let off steam from the people. But these limits are not wide enough. The people want more and more. But we will not receive more. That means that if they will not give us more, then we will have to find ways to get more independently. And that will no longer be perestroika but something else.

Economically speaking, they have also given us only a little, very little. At first there were small steps toward self-accounting. But then orders began coming from the top again. Fundamentally, *khozraschet* [self-accounting] is over. They declare that *khozraschet* is coming into existence. But we are not on our own. In reality they put more and more limits on our independence. The same happens in the plants. The economic reforms are moving ever slower, even slower than the political reforms. You can still organize demonstrations, you can try to elect a deputy that you support, and the like. But economically, things are much more complicated.

'It is necessary that we ourselves have control.'

That is what the strikes of the miners in Kemerovo and Mezhdurechensk were about. One of their demands was to grant independence to their mines. They want the status of a state enterprise. That would mean that they have access to better technology, all the extra money they earned would go to the collective for disposal, the collective would resolve the problems of housing, etc. The Ministry said "we" will consider and decide all the problems. But I say: "It is not necessary, Minister, for you to resolve the problems. Give the workers the opportunity to resolve the problems. They themselves will find the solutions. Give them the means and give them the funds and they will decide. There is no need for a ministry up there above us. It is necessary that we ourselves have control. We need workers' self-management. The minister can give advice but not orders.

VIG: Do you know what the most important problem is? They now distribute all the national product, the national income in the following way: They gather everything from throughout the Soviet Union for the top—they being the ministries, the government. So there remains only the basic minimum one needs to live. And it never comes back to us. It all remains for the administrators. And now there is a process against precisely this, that is, people no longer want to turn everything over to the top. They want to keep it themselves. Whatever they receive, whatever they earn, to keep. But the ministries are used to taking away up to 95 percent of the profits. That is, the kind of exploitation that goes on—all that has been created is taken by the tops, so that around 40 billion rubles go to the apparatus. And now in general there is a struggle going on against that principle. People no longer want to give everything to the top.

RNG: Another possibility *khozraschet* offered was the establishment of a dividend fund. That is, all the means that were accumulated by the enterprise once *khozraschet* got going would be considered dividends of the collective and under the collective's control. The profits of the enterprise would be a dividend that would be paid out to the workers of the collective in various ways.

Q: It seems that you are saying that the striking miners wanted a genuine system of self-accounting. They accept the idea and want it implemented. This sounds like it is real self-determination. But tell me, from where will the funds come to build roads, improve railroads, build clinics, produce the mechanisms for the overall improvement of life? There must be a national fund to carry out these tasks for all.

RNG: There will be a tax. Every independent enterprise must pay a tax to the state budget and to the local budget, that is, finance the local authority. There will be a standing tax that will go toward the common needs, to the the public fund.

Q: Who will be there on top?

RNG: I suppose that there should be five or six ministries—health, ecology, transport, etc. These ministries must distribute the social fund, for social security, for example. For

pensions, invalids, for the aged. These ministries must distribute the public funds. They must implement the law.

ID: The economic reform is also an effort to put some distance between the party apparatus and the economic problems. If earlier the party was responsible for the economic success, now it can declare itself not responsible, transfer formal power into the hands of the managerial apparatus, formally into the hands of the self-managing workers—and at the same time play off the workers against the directors, or against the council of the collective while itself formally remaining on the sidelines.

In Poland, in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, the striking workers burned, as we know, the headquarters of the party committees. The same happened in Russia during the popular uprisings in the 1960s in Novocherkassk. They also destroyed the offices of the city committee of the party and of the militia. And this is what the party wants to avoid now.

NC: I don't think the ministries need to be divided up. Rather the health ministry could include all the areas—invalids, medicines, social security, etc.—as committees within it. That is not such a big problem. But these committees would not enjoy all the rights of a ministry. And there would only need to be five or so people on them; no more. And the ministries would then not need to be so enormous as they are now.

But to talk about the strikes, in Kuzbas, Donbas, and even here in Leningrad, what were they all about? They were not only over the empty stores, but mostly over the fact that the local powers do absolutely nothing. They do nothing at all.

RNG: The local power is in the hands of people who do not accept responsibility for all their decisions. All the power is in the hands of the party apparatus. All decisions are taken by the party apparatus that always has the final say. These people are responsible for their decisions. Absolutely. They make a decision but if something isn't right they blame others—the economic apparatus, the soviet apparatus. But never the party apparatus.

That's why there is a struggle, over this irresponsibility.

VIG: They do what is advantageous to themselves.

NC: That is the problem. They take no responsibility. Take the first secretary of Leningrad. He has built a construction of the century, this dam. . . .

VIG: If he had done things any other way they [the tops] would have kicked him out. And from there it is hard to get back.

But their interests are linked. They do what is advantageous to themselves and to those above them. And to them it is all absolutely clear. That is, they are defending their own privileges and the position of those above them—which defends their privileges also. Now those on top understand that they are on the edge of an abyss, that everything is collapsing and they need to protect their positions—that is, they don't want any big changes. So the lower levels—the local party apparatus—now have the leadership responsibilities. But the party and state leadership are of course in this together, linked into one chain. Insofar as they plunder, they have all plundered together. It is linked very firmly all the way to the top.

Q: It seems that the most important changes that have taken place are linked to glasnost, the new openness.

VIG: The freedom of speech—yes, the relative freedom of speech.

Q: For example, now they are speaking openly about problems that were previously hidden. It is not that the problems did not exist before. They did. But now there is access to more information.

NC: By no means!

Q: There isn't?

VIG: No, of course there is more information available.

Q: Take the data about the plan, for example—where the money is being allocated.

VIG: Listen, it is all explained rather simply. It is unavoidable. Before there was a dictatorship, and the exploitation was concealed—it was a state secret where all the funds went. But now in order to preserve their class, they want to preserve it on democratic principles, as they do in the West. The class is preserved; the exploitation is preserved; but there is glasnost, openness. But it is inevitable that with this a struggle begins. To defend their interests, everyone begins to struggle. And the bureaucrats understand this. Indeed, in the West, there were also struggles in earlier years—a workers' movement grew up. Workers began to fight. We are now in precisely that period.

They want to defend their privileges by democratic methods. Not by violence or terror because the economy is falling apart and doesn't work anymore and that is something none of them wants. That means that they must somehow inspire the workers to think that they are no longer working for the tops but for themselves. By doing so, they are not only safeguarding themselves, but are giving up a little of what was theirs. So it is all a balance between the interests of the workers and the interests of this top, privileged group. That is, they are giving up what they can give and the rest they do not want to give up at all. And the strikers want to take more away from them and that is why there are these strikes.

Q: Do you think that they will try to raise prices?

NC: Raise prices? No way. There would be immediate strikes.

VIG: This will not be happening now anymore because it has already been clearly proven that raising prices would not only lead to a still worse standard of life for the workers but would leave them facing a crisis still worse than the one they are in now. Therefore, they are afraid of this. And what is important to them is not raising the prices but their self-preservation. They see that raising prices will threaten their survival, and they will not do it.

Q: And will they move to a convertible ruble?

NC: A convertible ruble? No.

RNG: Not to a convertible ruble.

VIG: It is inevitable.

Q: They need it.

RNG: It is something they are discussing.

Q: But this would also present a problem. There would be inflation, rising prices.

'They are sitting on a volcano that is about to explode.'

VIG: You know, they do not have this problem. They have quite another problem. They have in fact only one problem: That is, to save themselves. They don't understand it very well—what they must do in order to survive. They do not understand the situation of the millions of workers. They are sitting on a volcano that is about to explode. But they don't yet understand this. So [Prime Minister] Ryzhkov speaks up and defends these rogues who ordered this whole affair, even though he is very farsighted and one would think that he would have long ago renounced them just as the party has renounced Stalinism. If the party had not renounced Stalinism, its fate would have been sealed. That would have been the end of the party. The only course was to renounce Stalinism in order to stave off the crisis. They will change even the name of the party in order to save the party. Thus, they do not see the problem.

We think that they are worrying about what to do with the ruble, but it seems to me that this government is incapable of coping with such problems. It is on its way out. The next one will have to think about these things. But those people are not in power now.

Q: What kind of informal groups exist now? What types of issues are being raised and by whom?

ID: Many groups are now only beginning to form. The most prominent are focusing on general democratic issues. Therefore all informal organizations that exist in the Soviet Union give the workers' problems and trade union questions second- or third-rate importance. For example, the journal *Rubicon* is the only journal in the Soviet Union that writes about trade union and workers' movements.

Q: The only one?

ID: Yes.

Q: And how many people, workers, know of its existence? How widely is it known?

ID: People in many cities, we could say.

NC: In Leningrad, at least, people know about it.

VIG: Not all Leningrad knows. You see, glasnost extends to only an upper social layer. Now it is beginning to affect more people gradually. Millions watch television and are beginning to feel its effects. But they watch television actively, not passively. These strikes are already mass movements. One hundred thousand are participating. This is already great progress. It will spread. But the situation is not changing, in reality. The economic situation is not changing. In fact, it is getting worse.

Q: We also read a great deal about the nationalities problem. But I must say that during the time that I have been in the Soviet Union, I have spoken with a number of Russian people and rarely found any who have not fallen prey to the Russian nationalist propaganda—chauvinist pride in the Russian empire, paternalism toward non-Russians, etc. It seems that because the oppressed nationalities now—under the openings created by glasnost—have begun

'If the party had not renounced Stalinism, its fate would have been sealed.'

to try to organize toward extending their self-determination, the bureaucrats have considered it necessary to try to reinforce the general Russian chauvinist feelings. Is this a true reading of the situation? Does your movement have any contacts with the movements, for example in Nagorno-Karabagh or Yerevan?

VIG: Yes. I think that all the orders are coming from the top, from the apparatus. Because when the party begins to get shaky and move away from defending their interests, the local apparatchiks don't need the party any more and seek other points of support. And this is what is happening again. The apparatchiks must save themselves by any means necessary. If the party's dialog ceases to meet their needs they renounce this party. And then they'll need a national group. They have to preserve themselves and their right to exploit. And this is also in the interest of the local national group, the local ruling classes and those on top. But, all the same, I think that the empire must come apart all over again. They must secede. Then after it has been freed, it is possible that it will be reunited again. But it must go through disunity, through freedom.

ID: In the Baltic, last year, the local leaders of the Communist Party changed. Earlier, there were agents of Moscow in power. Now, the first secretary is a nationalist-thinking person who is among those party members there who are calculating ways to preserve the influence of the Communist Party by proclaiming the national interests in the first place. Many Russian members of the local Communist parties are not satisfied with this turn of events. They have been offended by the party. And they are even considering setting up a parallel Communist party that would defend, as they say, their interests, as, for example, a Russian Communist Estonian Party, a Russian Communist Latvian Party, etc.

Q: And that is happening now?

ID: The local Communist Party apparatus does not support them and neither does Gorbachev. Moscow now supports the nationalist-thinking Communists and the Russian Communist Party members who are in a minority are not supported by Moscow.

Q: Some of the documents that have been long concealed are Lenin's last letters, particularly his writings on the nationalities question. His writings on this issue are not yet widely understood. I must say that I rarely hear many anywhere say "Of course, Nagorno-Karabagh should be reunited with Armenia." There is wider support for Estonian demands. It is important to reread these writings of Lenin on this question. I think that the national trade unions that we were discussing earlier are another expression of the aspiration for self-determination. The dialectic of the situation would mean that this is a stage of development. In order to allow workers from the oppressed nationalities to win their self-determination, it is necessary for them to form such independent unions if they so choose.

VIG: Without question. But I would not call them "oppressed." That is something different. I would say they are minority peoples. And here we are allegedly against discrimination by a ruling nation. Actually we are for the discrimination of that nation. Insofar as these peoples were deprived of all rights and of the right to self-determination. And therefore, it is not right now to be against such unions. They are not "yellow" unions but free unions.

Q: What are "yellow" unions?

ID: A "yellow" union is one that has been formed against the workers' interests.

Q: Like the U.S. government has done in El Salvador, yes, I see.

VIG: The United Front of Workers (UFW) is a "yellow" union.

ID: The task of the UFW is a political one. It is a political agent of the party apparatus in the trade union movement. It is not an organization to win economic gains for the workers. A workers' union is an economic formation to defend the economic interests of workers.

VIG: Tell me, are you a member of the Communist Party?

Q: Oh! Absolutely not. Never was in my life and never will be!!

(General hearty laughter all around)

VIG: But you said you were a Marxist.

Q: Yes, I am a Marxist.

VIG: Then you have in your country Marxists who are against the Communist Party?

Q: We do not consider the Communist Party to be Marxist.

VIG: Correct. Yes.

Q: The Communist Party claims that it is Marxist. Therefore the U.S. government propaganda has been able to equate Marxism and communism with the totalitarian system in the USSR which the Communist Party defended. This general situation has brought terrible damage to the workers' movement of the world for more than 65 years.

VIG: Then you have a party of bureaucrats there, it would seem to me.

Q: Yes, it is a party of bureaucrats. They have not been a revolutionary party since the 1920s. What is your general attitude toward the Leningrad Popular Front (LPF)?

NC: We have a group in the Popular Front.

ID: In general we support it. But, strictly speaking, we are not convinced that it will succeed. There are problems getting true collaboration because the working commission of the LPF is made up predominantly of intellectuals with a liberal orientation. And it is unclear whether they will really defend the rights of workers. For example, the documents of the LPF do not include a point defending the right to strike, even though many in the LPF have proposed such a point.

Q: The problems of workers' rights — right to independent trade unions, etc. — are widely discussed. But specific

problems are not discussed so much. For example, specific demands regarding the situation of women.

NC: Problems of women are discussed a great deal! There are discussions of special funds being established.

VIG: The situation of women is so terrible that everyone is talking about it.

Q: It seems that the government's response to the problems of women is to strengthen the family. That is the solution Gorbachev offered in his book.

ID: Strengthening the family cannot be a solution under the present circumstances because the workers' pay is so low that a husband's wage alone would not be enough to support a decent standard of living for a family. All the talk about women staying home to raise the children is unrealistic.

VIG: And more than half the women work. Workers in industry are women. Industry would suffer without them. There are women doing all the heavy work.

ID: But when men receive the possibility to work normally . . .

VIG: and they will . . .

ID: then they will be able to give more to production.

RNG: And not only will more be produced, but less will be taken by the tops.

VIG: The textile industry, for example, used to be a male industry. But now it is all women. And at the same time, 95 percent of what the industry makes is taken away by the tops, all the money.

NC: I think it is 93 percent of the income. The profits of an enterprise are at the disposal of the government, the ministries.

Q: And the difference between the wage of women and men here is almost as bad as in the USA. Women make about 65 percent of what men make.

ID: Yes, there is a big differential. Formally, in the Soviet Union there are all conditions to insure that women do not have to be chained to the family—kindergartens, public dining rooms, milk kitchens, etc. But they are all of such a poor quality that every woman, or almost every woman, longs to be able to raise her children herself. When the living standard is finally raised and the kindergartens are improved, a woman can leave her child knowing it will not get sick and will be well fed.

Q: What can we socialist and workers in the capitalist world do to help you free yourselves from the dictatorship of the bureaucrats?

VIG: One of the most important things would be to let every radio station broadcast programs every day at least twice a day about the social inequities here and show the exploitation that takes place here. That was their big mistake. If they would have understood this and had begun such broadcasts earlier—there is such a book which speaks about the social layers in the Soviet Union. They used to base broadcasts on it. They must have broadcast about it every week at least two or three times. The things that are now coming to the surface we in the Soviet Union would have learned about sooner. But it was hidden. That is one thing. What is most important is for us is to know about the country in which we live.

'The situation of women is so terrible that everyone is talking about it.'

What else could be done? While getting information out, it is necessary to help all trade unions and strikes that begin; and it is necessary to come here and demand to meet with the workers in the trade unions and not with the apparatus. It is necessary to break all links with the apparatus. And demand this. But in the West they don't seem to be able to understand this at all. Delegation after delegation arrives. But we consider them simply traitors. They are all phony, the Communist Party, the representatives of the trade unions, but the delegations come always, get drunk, most likely get drunk with our officials and to them, as they say here, it goes in one ear and out the other. And they come here, and leave, although we already demanded the United States under no circumstances allow our trade union bureaucrats the right to enter America as long as our trade unions remain state controlled.

These trips back and forth must be stopped and our situation must be condemned for what it is. To hold conversations here with our bureaucrats is not in our interest. But they don't understand it and these bureaucrats are to us even worse than an exploiting class. Do you understand? They are worse in fact. The trade union bureaucrats have us bound hand and foot. This, in essence, is our most evil enemy, our most dangerous enemy. The ruling class, it is a normal enemy. It's there, that's the way it goes. And the party itself, as bad as it is, is not as damaging and harmful as these "yellow" trade union bureaucrats.

It is necessary to decisively break with them and constantly say that they do not represent our interests. They are traitors to our cause. For 70 years they have served this apparatus and now absolutely no changes have taken place in connection with those who are on top of us. All the same people sit up there just as before, do you see? The party has changed, the government has been altered, the Supreme Soviet is no longer what it was. But as far as the trade unions go, absolutely nothing at all has been changed. All the Stalinists are still sitting there in the apparatus just as it was—the worst black reaction. This is true all over the Soviet Union. And they do not allow the workers to develop a movement. They control them with local officials. It is against these people that a struggle must be waged. And it is necessary to say that these people are the accomplices of the exploitation itself.

Q: You were in prison?

VIG: I was sentenced to two-and-a-half years on the basis of an article of the criminal code but there was an amnesty on the fiftieth anniversary of the revolution. So it only turned out to be 15 months. I had worked alongside prisoners for many years before that. But myself served only 15 months, here in Leningrad under Article 193 of the Criminal Code—distributing ideas which undermine Soviet power. In the 1970s, for this same offense, the term would have been much longer.

Q: And what had you done?

VIG: Primarily it was because I was so active in the trade union. So the rogues came—there where I worked. The administration from the party organization warned me but the formal pretext was a letter that we sent to the party congress. We said that there is a group of the population that is privileged and enjoys advantages and that this question should be taken up and that the situation was not fair. That is what is now being said openly.

So they created a lie and the major false charge was that no such group existed. This served as the basis for the charge of “knowingly making false accusations.”

Q: And Igor, what charges did they raise against you?

ID: I was charged under Article 80, Section I, evading military service.

Q: And that meant a two-year term?

ID: Yes. In answer to your question, we do not need just money, but technical assistance and literature.

Q: I warn you that just like you, we also have a parasitic bureaucracy heading our trade unions. And not only in the United States but throughout the capitalist world this problem exists.

(Later on in the Street)

RNG: Moral support is very important always when a new movement is only just beginning to form itself as is now happening in our country. So that you know that at least someone supports you. And when you organize public opinion to support us, it does inspire a person to keep up his efforts, his certainty of the need to do all this, the cause, the new movement. Therefore this international environment, building support for this movement in various countries, will always be important. We must also receive information so that we can evaluate the entire situation objectively—so as to make the right decisions.

Why do we have glasnost? Why do we have perestroika and democratization? Because, in principle, it was no longer possible to hide those things that were already known in the West. Many, many of our people have gone abroad. They read books, newspapers, and find out about things that they don't write about in the Soviet Union. They come back and are surprised that we are not writing about it. Ultimately, a disenchantment with our society begins to set in. More and more people are affected. If under Stalin no one traveled abroad, now thousands do. Different kinds of workers, sailors, and diplomats, all this prompted the need for glasnost, to finally raise themes that didn't exist in the past. And ultimately new measures were needed and any other course was simply impossible because of the chaos, the crisis.

The ruling class wants to live better. And the workers who are in such conditions as these can no longer produce quality goods. They cannot work better. And they can no longer guarantee a better life to anyone on top. Moreover, the middle layers, the middle class of leaders, is not concerned with the workers and cannot guarantee a better life to the workers. They gave the workers a little freedom, a small opening. But the people, of course, do not like this. They want more, they want everything: complete freedom, total

independence. And this begins the process that we are now observing.

A struggle is beginning. And this struggle is very much in need of help, even if it is an outside view. Since we are located on the inside of something in the process of formation, we can see many things in the wrong way. Why did we find out that Stalin turned out to be a villain? How did we find out that we were living in a stagnant society? Because they gave us new information about these things. Before we did not know anything about these things. We all believed that we were going along the correct path. Then we got this new information that came from the outside. And those on top, the higher echelons, received information from the independent press. It is not independent, of course. Our press wanted to become objective, more or less. There are some people who write objectively and provide new information. Through this process we learned that we were living in a stagnant society, as this time is called, and that we were face to face with a crisis.

We need additional information and views from the outside so that we can adopt the correct decision. Who is likely to make the most correct decision? The one with the most information, with the most varied information. Then one can place different points of view side by side and adopt a decision. And it will be one that is more or less objective. And the more information one has, the more views and interpretations of events one has heard, the more valid the decision.

After all, why did Lenin always end up right and why did he always end up on the top? Because he was closely linked with the people. He knew their interests and needs. He always listened to the opinion of the people. But now, the ministers do not even know how much a metro ticket costs. That's because they do not live in close touch with the people.

They don't live the life of the people, while Lenin listened to the people. He listened to them a great deal. And after that, he made his decision. And because of that, therefore, he was right. Therefore, Lenin was always different. That should have continued. But the situation is constantly changing.

When we were struggling against capitalism, everybody had the same interest—to overthrow the tsar. But after the revolution, people developed different interests. The party needed to listen to the people. But we began to forget to do that. After the 1920s, no one listened anymore.

The apparatchiks sit in an office and make decisions and think they are doing the right thing, that what they are doing is in the interest of the people. And so we have a crisis and it continues to get worse. And it turned out that a new class had appeared—a class of leaders who have everything. And they keep saying to the workers, “work harder,” “work harder,” “we need to increase discipline.” Others say, “It is necessary to give you rights, full rights, give you freedom. The freedom to work, the right to live, the right to think, the right to be creative.” We hear “You have to work,” “You have to be more disciplined.” This is the Stalinist model. It shows that the perestroika or restructuring has not yet brought changes in the area of politics. It took one step and then it stopped. And now it is standing in one place. ●

In Defense of Socialism

by Roy Rollin

These remarks (slightly edited) were made at a New York forum, sponsored by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, on February 23, 1990.

Let me begin by paraphrasing Marc Antony: We have come here tonight not to bury socialism, but to defend it and reaffirm its relevancy to the problems of today's world. And in order to do that it is necessary to bury Stalinism.

Of course the ruling class and its media hacks who are today outshouting each other in proclaiming the death of communism forget that this is hardly the first time that they have hastened to do so. Revolutionary Marxism was declared null and void, after all, at the turn of the century, by the likes of Eduard Bernstein—a self-styled socialist, no less. It was once again supposed to have been run out of town by the prosperity of the roaring twenties. Werner Sombart wrote the obituary that time around. And many of us in this room no doubt remember how socialism's coffin was nailed shut once and for all by what was supposed to have been the "American Century," during the 1950s.

Well, as we know, on each of those occasions the corpse has proven itself more alive than ever—coming back with a vengeance to mock those who had pronounced its death. And how could it be otherwise? For what is socialism but the movement of the working class in struggle against the exploitation and oppression of the capitalist system? As long as that exploitation and oppression continue, socialism will remain on the order of the day. And what else is Marxism but the mode of analyzing that struggle and, more importantly, providing a program of action for the working class.

Thirty years ago a renegade named Daniel Bell wrote a book called *The End of Ideology*, which was supposed to serve as yet another postmortem for Marxism. Today, the official propaganda minister of the U.S. State Department, Francis Fukuyama, goes one up on Bell, proclaiming the "end of history." He goes so far as to boast that not only has "the class issue been resolved in the West," but "the egalitarianism of modern America represents the essential achievement of the classless society envisioned by Marx." What planet is this guy living on?

At least when Bell wrote his book the standard of living of certain sectors of the American working class had risen not inconsiderably due to the uncontested supremacy of American imperialism at the time. But still, as we know, the American Century met its defeat in the Bay of Pigs, in the rice paddies of Vietnam, and on the streets of the Black ghettos and on college campuses across the U.S. itself. The

"end of ideology" most definitely met its own Waterloo during the events of May 1968, in France—when the French working class opened up a new era in European politics.

Now we have no reason to think that the "end of history" will turn out any better for its authors. In spite of—or rather on account of—the Reagan boom, American capitalism and the international capitalist system have only succeeded in intensifying the contradictions that constantly tear them apart—which Marx diagnosed over a century ago. Today, more and more wealth is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands—whether we measure it in terms of the working class and the capitalist class or in terms of the imperialist centers and the semi-industrialized and semicolonial countries. In the U.S. over 31 million people are today living below the official government poverty level. (And let us not think that the government is unconcerned with this number. They propose to reduce it by lowering the official poverty level.)

Three million are homeless as American cities begin to rival those of the third world, and over 37 million have no access to medical care of any kind. Real wages have declined by as much as 15 percent over the last twenty years, while the cost of living continues to skyrocket. And if things are bad for working people in general, they're twice as bad for Blacks and other oppressed minorities—so bad in fact that life expectancy is now higher in Bangladesh than it is in Harlem.

Do you want to view the magic of the marketplace at work? Go to see Michael Moore's *Roger & Me*. Watch a whole industry and a whole city dependent upon it disappear! No doubt this is the "egalitarianism of capitalism" that Fukuyama speaks of. Then again, Anatole France said it best when he proclaimed that under capitalism "equality" meant that both the rich and the poor were equally free to sleep on the street.

On a world scale, the contradictions of capitalism are likewise intensifying rather than declining as the whole continent of Latin America is ready to go under in a sea of indebtedness and four-digit inflation. During the last decade, the decade of capitalist boom, over 200 million people joined the ranks of the absolute poor, which now adds up to over 1.2 billion, one-quarter of humanity. A further 1.9 billion are drinking contaminated water. As of two years ago these poor were repaying their "debt" to the rich, to the tune of \$50 billion dollars a year.

And with this intensification of exploitation and oppression the class struggle is on the upswing, not on the decline. The 30 million plus votes that the workers and peasants of Brazil—a country rotten-ripe for revolution even though it has been touted for years as a showcase economic miracle—gave to Lula [Luis Inácio da Silva] and the Workers Party in the recent presidential elections are in and of themselves a clear statement that socialism is far from being on its last legs.

The same applies to South Africa, where the last decade saw the emergence of powerful unions of hundreds of thousands of Black workers, many of whom are not willing to settle for the "equal opportunity" exploitation of the reformist racists in Johannesburg and Washington. Whatever we may think about the overall policies of the South African Communist Party, it's no accident that Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu speak in front of red flags emblazoned with hammers and sickles. Apparently the

workers of South Africa, and the rest of the sweatshop paradises of world capitalism, have yet to take note of socialism's obituaries.

The international bourgeoisie has been able to draw a great deal of solace from recent events in China, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union. They hope to use them as a smokescreen to discredit the idea of socialism by identifying it with the bankrupt Stalinist bureaucracies that rule over these transitional societies. At the same time, they want to bolster the image of capitalism as the best of all possible worlds. And, of course, there is also the hope created by the opening of the Eastern European and Soviet markets.

What's happening in these countries represents a very important world historical development which Marxists must explain. Not only the bourgeois press, but a great deal of the left as well, has long identified these bureaucratized societies as some sort of "socialism" and in doing so has done more than a little damage to the image of socialism in the eyes of millions of Western workers. In reality, what we have here is not a crisis of socialism, communism, Marxism, or Leninism, but a crisis of Stalinism. By Stalinism we mean a privileged and parasitic administrative bureaucracy which has usurped any and every bit of political power from the working class. Its complete collapse means the decisive downfall of the Stalinist utopia of building "socialism in a single country" in an epoch when the productive forces of humanity have long since burst asunder the confines of the nation state.

In the Soviet Union, Stalinism was only able to wrestle power away from the masses of working people through a protracted process of political counter-revolution in which Stalin and his bureaucratic brethren had to not only politically, but physically, crush the genuine Marxists, the genuine communists, the genuine Leninists. These had rallied around Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition in the Bolshevik party to fight this degeneration every step of the way and to uphold the genuine Marxist and Leninist tradition of proletarian internationalism — aiding revolutions whenever and wherever they might break out as the best way of cutting through the isolation imposed upon the Soviet Union, an isolation that had given rise to the bureaucracy in the first place. They understood that a classless and stateless society, the kind of society envisaged by Marx and Lenin, not only had to be built on an international foundation, but through the self-activity and self-organization of the working class.

Today we have seen this perspective, this genuine Marxist and Leninist perspective — upheld by Trotsky and the Left Opposition in the 1920s and '30s and by the Fourth International ever since — boldly borne out by the course of current

events. The bureaucratic variant, what was once referred to by many as "currently existing socialism," has demonstrated beyond all doubt that it is not viable, that it could not and cannot combat capitalist oppression and move the interests of the international working class forward. Only a genuine proletarian internationalist perspective can do so.

Now, this is not to say that everything that has been achieved in the Soviet Union and the other bureaucratically deformed workers' states has been in vain, or has been a complete and unmitigated disaster, as the bourgeoisie and its left apologists now lecture us. By overthrowing the bourgeoisie — expropriating it socially, economically, and politically — and instituting in place of the anarchy of capitalist competition and the rule of the imperialist world market a planned, collectivized economy, these countries were able to transform themselves from semifeudal societies into modern industrial states where the working class, for the most part, constitutes a majority of the population. This was only possible because the capitalist law of value was replaced as the prime factor in economic development by the regulation of an economic plan — albeit a supercentralized bureaucratic misplanning as we have seen.

Up until recently the growth rates in these states far surpassed anything seen in even the advanced imperialist powers. However, the rule of the bureaucracy, through its waste, its parasitism, its narrow nationalism, and its monopolizing of any and every bit of decision-making power, has made it impossible to make the transition from a labor extensive to a labor intensive type of economic development, from quantity to quality so to speak, and has become an absolute

break on the further development of the productive forces. Its continued rule is what brought these states to the brink of collapse and, as Trotsky said over fifty years ago in his classic work *The Revolution Betrayed*, workers' democracy has become a life-and-death question for these economies, as is real international socialist planning based on an international division of labor between the various workers' states, along with an extension of the revolution to the capitalist world, especially the imperialist metropolis. A working class political revolution is necessary; the bureaucracy will not reform itself out of existence.

It is necessary to defend every and any conquest that remains in these countries — the nationalized industries, the state monopolies of foreign trade, and the cradle-to-grave social welfare measures. These have not yet been demolished in Eastern Europe or the USSR, despite the recent efforts of reformist bureaucrats and anti-Stalinists. Workers need to resist any and every attack on them, whether from the capitalists or the bureaucracy, whether



from within or without. Trotsky long ago pointed out not only that the political revolution is the best defense of these past social gains which the bureaucracy is constantly undermining, but that it is impossible for the working class to make any new conquests without the existing gains being defended and expanded upon in the course of the struggle.

Obviously, both the capitalist ruling classes and the Stalinist bureaucracies have quite a material interest in promoting the illusion that Stalinism equals socialism, and at the same time trying to erase the genuine Marxist tradition represented by Trotskyism from the collective memory of humankind. But what of the self-styled socialists who have gone along with this? Where do they stand in the midst of today's turmoil? And what are their prospects for the future?

Hopefully, about as bright as the bureaucracies they have apologized for all these years. Of course, the worst example of Stalinist sycophancy is to be found in the official Kremlin franchise, the Communist Party-USA of Gus Hall. Having given uncritical support to any and every counterrevolutionary crime committed by the bureaucracy—from Stalin to Brezhnev—the CP now sings paeans of praise to Gorbachev's glasnost, in effect admitting that everything they said for the past 60 years was a lie. Today, Gus Hall himself admits that mistakes were made by the resident leaders of genius in the lands of "really existing socialism." Had anyone said the same thing a few years ago, Hall himself would no doubt have labeled them "counterrevolutionaries," or worse.

As for the EuroStalinists, they make Hall and company look like flaming revolutionists. *Marxism Today*, the flagship of British EuroReformism, which is probably to the right of the leadership of the British Labor Party, has rushed to join hands with the "Leninism is dead" doomsayers, proclaiming that today's crisis of Stalinism—that is, the very rotten politics which they themselves practiced for so long—has revealed the historic validity of Menshevism and the reformist social democracy of Eduard Bernstein and Karl Kautsky!

And why not? After all, this entire gang, from Gus Hall to Eric Hobsbawm, share the same desire to administer capitalism on behalf of the capitalists, as do the classical reformists of the Second International they now seek to rejoin. As for the Stalinophiles and Stalinoids around such journals as *The Guardian* and *Monthly Review*, they fare no better, wringing their hands in despair and shaking their heads in dismay as their self-styled bridges to socialism collapse around them. They too are ready to beg forgiveness

from the high priests of reformism for ever straying from the path of craven class collaboration through their flirtations with what they thought was Leninism.

Of course, what they all fail to see now, as before, is that those bridges to socialism are collapsing precisely because they have been blocked for years by Stalinist bureaucracies which have no interest in going forward, but every interest in staying put even if it means bringing everyone else on the bridge down with them. They hailed these bureaucracies for years while deriding or ignoring their critics from the left. Now that those bureaucracies are falling like dominoes, so too are their cheerleaders.

One thing however that has not fallen is their hatred for and ignorance of Trotskyism. And how could it be otherwise? For what else is the historic demise of Stalinism but the historic vindication of Trotskyism? For the Stalinists, Stalinophiles, and Stalinoids of all stripes, there is but one place today, the dungheap of history where they have long belonged.

So history has not ended, nor has the class struggle, its driving force. It is more alive than ever in each of the three sectors of the world revolution—from Brazil and South Africa to the ambulance drivers' strike in Great Britain, to the beginnings of the political revolution in the bureaucratized workers' states. Of course, we should not become euphoric, but neither should we expect the worst. As Trotsky said, the fate of the workers' states would be decided by the struggle of living social forces both on the national and the international level, and if we are to prove our worth as revolutionists it is our duty to place ourselves in that struggle, showing through common actions with the masses of working people that our program, the program of genuine revolutionary Marxism, is worth considerably more than the paper it is printed on.

The working class has only just begun to enter the struggle after years of atomization and depoliticization at the hands of the bureaucracy. Armed with that revolutionary perspective that only genuine revolutionary Marxism—Trotskyism—has to offer, a perspective that has proven its validity by standing the test of time and whose tradition has remained unblemished by the betrayals committed by Stalinism and social democracy, the proletarian world revolution can and will loudly proclaim to the bourgeois prognosticators of its imminent demise the immortal words of our beloved comrade Rosa Luxemburg: "Your order is built on sand. I am, I was, and I always will be!" ●

March 24 (Continued from page 7)

demonstrated in Washington with its banners. A contingent from the Hands off Cuba Coalition was also present.

These features of the march indicate that it is possible for the anti-intervention movement to close the gap between the present objective needs and its current state of organization. We understand that today our mobilizations will be relatively modest. But they can and must be larger

than the D.C. turnout on March 24. Our goal must be the largest, most united demonstrations possible today. If we can succeed in organizing them we will have an effect on U.S. government policy, and will also lay the basis for an even broader mobilization of the American people when that becomes a possibility. Now more than ever, a united national anti-intervention movement can and must be built. ●

Eleven Years After the Iranian Revolution

by Tom Barrett

In the great march of human history, eleven years is a brief period. In politics, however, eleven years is a long time indeed. Not much more time than that separated the defeat of the 1905 Russian revolution and the victory of 1917. It is therefore remarkable for many reasons that the Islamic Republican government, which was brought to power by the February 1979 revolution in Iran, not only continues to hold virtually uncontested power, but is still able to mobilize millions of supporters in the streets. The masses assembled in Azadi Square on February 11 (see photo on this page) seem to disprove the contention of many leftists that the Islamic Republican party has lost popular support because it failed to live up to the promises it made. Azadi Square itself is symbolic of the 1979 revolution's promise. "Azadi" means "freedom" in the Persian language; before 1979 the square was known as Pahlavi Square, named for the royal family. The strange-looking structure in the upper left of the Agence France-Presse photograph is a monument which the shah had built to himself. In 1979 the square was renamed, not by a decree from above, but by thousands of Iranian people who gathered there to celebrate the shah's overthrow. Eleven years later freedom remains an unkept promise, not a reality. The poverty and repression which the Iranian people knew under the shah are still with them.

The massive expression of adoration at Ayatollah Khomeini's funeral in 1989, as well as the eleventh anniversary commemoration in Azadi Square, can be considered in many respects a judgment of the Islamic Republic, at least on the part of the poorest people of Tehran. The outpouring of grief for Khomeini has made everyone who recognizes the reactionary political content of the Islamic fundamentalist movement quite uncomfortable. If the Iranian people have been so impoverished, and if the Islamic Republic is so oppressive, why is there continued support for it? Since by so many measures the Iranian people's conditions of life have worsened since the fall of the shah, why aren't they organizing against the mullahs' regime in the same way that they did against the shah's?

Neither the Iranian left nor the international socialist movement has adequately analyzed the Islamic revolutionary movement, either before or after its rise to power. It defies left-wing "conventional wisdom"; it challenges all the usual theories. As a consequence, serious errors

have been made both during the period of struggle against the shah and after the coming to power of Khomeini which have tended to isolate the socialist organizations, allowing the unquestionably reactionary Islamic clergy to fill the political vacuum in the poorest neighborhoods of Iran's cities.

Two serious approaches to an understanding of the events in Iran are represented by, first, a bourgeois account, *Iran: the Untold Story* by Mohamed Heikal, and second, "The Swan Song of Khomeinism," an article by Salah Jaber, which appeared in the June 26, 1989, issue of *International Viewpoint*, the English-language magazine of the Fourth International.

An Arab Journalist's Account

In his preface to *Iran: the Untold Story*, a 217-page book published by Pantheon Books in New York, Mohamed Heikal writes:

We should look to history, not for justification of contemporary prejudices, but for guidance on how to act. This would save us from the oversimplified "solutions" put forward by theoreticians who feel that they have to produce instant answers. . . . Americans have a special responsibility to look at the Iranian Revolution as dispassionately as possible. They should surely have appreciated, from the fate of General and Mme. Chiang Kai-shek, that even the most glamorous and friendly rulers are not necessarily going to stay forever, and that a strong lobby in Congress is no substitute for firm support at home. Had this been remembered there might have been less readiness to take the Shah and



Millions, February 11, celebrated the 1979 Iranian revolution in Tehran's Azadi Square.

[Empress] Soraya or the Shah and [Empress] Farah at their own valuation.

Heikal is an Egyptian bourgeois journalist and politician who served as editor of *Al Ahrām*, the largest daily newspaper in the Arabic language, from 1957 to 1974. A close associate of Gamal Abdel Nasser, he served as Egypt's minister of information and foreign minister in 1970. As a reporter, he has covered Iranian events since the oil crisis of 1950 and has come to know the principal players, including the shah, the ill-fated prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh, Ayatollah Kashani, Khomeini's predecessor as the leading Shii leader, Khomeini himself, and other political figures. His first book, *Iran on a Volcano*, appeared in 1951. He has reported on Iran ever since and writes from firsthand knowledge. For those reasons alone his book would be a valuable one. However, Heikal brings another perspective to his account of Iran's turbulent post-World War II history, the perspective of a religious Muslim and an Arab nationalist. He understands the relationship of Islam to the Middle Eastern culture not from intellectual study but from personal experience from his earliest childhood. He reflects as well the aspirations and frustrations of the bourgeoisie of the semicolonial countries, caught between the arrogant imperialists and the worker and peasant masses.

Iran: the Untold Story is directed to an audience composed of those intellectuals whom the ruling classes of the Western imperialist countries pay to do their thinking for them, people like Heikal himself. His advice to "Americans," that is, to the American ruling class, is valid as well for revolutionists, whose responsibility is to use their intellectual abilities to provide leadership for the working class. As Heikal states again in his preface: "... the Iranian Revolution, for all its special peculiarities, is unlikely to prove unique, either in its Islamic or in its revolutionary aspects."

Heikal correctly identifies the fundamental driving force of Iranian history over the past century-and-a-half—imperialist plunder. His account begins with a description of the Anglo-Russian rivalry for control of the Iranian plateau during the nineteenth century, before the discovery of oil or indeed before oil became the predominant fuel for industry and transport. Though imperialist apologists can point to some economic improvements and modernizations in some countries which the Western metropolises have dominated, the imperialist presence in Iran can best be described as a gang rape. Heikal writes:

The most notorious of the Europeans who hoped to plunder Persia, Baron Julius de Reuter, achieved nothing. As Curzon wrote of the concession granted to Reuter by Nasroddin Shah [one of the most vicious tyrants in world history, who ruled from 1847 to 1896] in 1872, "When published to the world, it was found to contain the most complete and extraordinary surrender of the entire industrial resources of a kingdom into foreign hands that had probably ever been dreamed of, much less accomplished, in history." The concession covered existing and potential undertakings of every description—railways and tramways, mines, canals, roads, public works mills, factories, telegraphs, banks, and the farming of the customs for twenty-five years.

And all this for an annual payment of 10,000 pounds! ... Popular resentment, to which were added Russian protests, forced the Shah to back down. The concession was cancelled.

Few Westerners have been able to understand why the Islamic clergy was able to capture the leadership of the Iranian revolution. We have in previous issues of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* advanced the idea of a revolutionary egalitarian tradition in Islam and a connection between Shiism and Iranian nationalism causing revolutionary-minded intellectuals to popularize their ideas in religious terms. Heikal does not disagree with that, but he explains it more fully and reveals a long history of conflict between the religious leadership and the state in Iran.

One of the causes of the split in Christianity between Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy had to do with the church's relationship to the state: the Greek Orthodox Church was always subordinate to temporal power—to the Byzantine emperor and later to the Russian tsar—whereas the Roman Catholic Church had an independent authority, often greater than royal authority. In parallel fashion the Sunni Muslim clergy has historically subordinated itself to state power—for centuries ceding religious authority to the Ottoman sultans, the successors of the Byzantine emperors. The Shii religious leaders never accepted temporal domination, however, and Khomeini spoke contemptuously throughout his life of the *fuqaha es-sultan*—"the king's theologians."

Qom, which is halfway between Tehran, the modern capital, and Esfahan, the capital of Iran's first Shii dynasty, is one of two centers where the Shiite higher clergy are trained, the other being at Najaf in Iraq. Qom has been historically a parallel capital of Iran, a city where religious authority supersedes state authority, a kind of Islamic Vatican. Uninterruptedly from the mid-nineteenth century until the 1979 revolution, it has been a center of opposition to whatever shah has been in power.

Religious leaders organized most of the opposition against imperialist plunder from the time of Nasroddin Shah, including the "Tobacco Revolution" (a massive boycott of tobacco in protest against a humiliating concession granted to a British businessman), the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, and the oil crisis of 1950-53. Reza Shah, the last shah's father, who ruled from 1925 to 1941, attempted to break the clergy's power by putting them on the government payroll. "But he met with such fierce resistance," writes Heikal, "not only from the divines but from their flocks, who continued to give them financial support, that he had to abandon the attempt. A Persian citizen may be prepared to cheat the tax-collector, but not his ayatollah."

Heikal's account shows that the 1979 revolution was not an aberration but rather was consistent with Iranian history and tradition. Nationalist intellectuals and Shii fundamentalists may seem to us like strange bedfellows, and ultimately the alliance did collapse, but Heikal gives a clear explanation of why the alliance came about, an explanation which goes beyond cultural nationalism and the popularization of modern ideas to an "uneducated and superstitious" working class and peasantry.

The Weaknesses of Heikal's Analysis

Iran: the Untold Story was published, originally in Britain, in 1981. A great deal has happened since then; though Heikal's information is quite useful, his analysis does not equip the reader to understand what has transpired in Iran since the book was published.

Heikal is not a neutral observer in Middle Eastern politics. He has a class position and an ideology: he is a bourgeois nationalist. As such he sees the problem of his country and of other countries dominated by imperialism as fundamentally a problem of nationality. For him the first step in the liberation of Egypt or Iran is national unity, which means the unity of all classes.

He acknowledges, for example, that the nationalization of Iran's oil in 1953 was a disaster, leading to massive unemployment, shortages of goods, and the fragmenting of Dr. Mossadegh's nationalist coalition. He does not, however, explain why. The reason is that he *cannot* explain why, and in fact he glosses over the events which led to the last shah's 1953 counter-coup by telling us that he has no intention of retelling the events of Mossadegh's regime.

The problem, then as now, was that *foreign* domination is not the fundamental problem. It has been an important problem for the past century-and-a-half, but it is not fundamental. The fundamental problem is *bourgeois* domination, which is *both* foreign and domestic, and neither the unity of all patriotic Iranians nor the unity of all religious Muslims can address it. In 1953 and today, the nationalistic measures have been carried out at the top. Though workers, students, soldiers, and peasants have been mobilized in mass street demonstrations, decision-making power has been limited to a very small group, which has no intention of giving political or economic power to the working masses in any way.

There are many consequences to national revolution without social revolution, and none of them are good. The first, as we mentioned, is the problem of imperialist retaliation. This is inevitable. The multinational oil companies will not give up power or profits without a fight, and they will inflict any amount of suffering on a people who stands up to them. However, it is much more difficult to organize a nation to resist world-class "economic violence" if the people are excluded from real political power. When decisions are made behind their backs the struggle ceases to be their struggle and becomes the ayatollahs' struggle, the intellectuals' struggle, the bureaucrats' struggle, or whatever. Flowing from this is the serious problem of military defense against both foreign invasion and domestic coup. As 1953 proved, the bourgeois army is in no way a reliable ally to a people fighting imperialism. The enlisted soldiers have the same interests as their working brothers and sisters, but as long as they remain subordinate to their senior officers they cannot act in those interests. Political democracy, and its military reflection, a people's army, are prerequisites to success in the revolutionary process.

When revolution is unleashed, class conflicts do not lessen: they intensify. This happened in Iran, and Heikal underestimates the significance of the working class's role in the 1979 revolution. He further underestimates the importance of the workers' movement's political tendencies. Iran, unlike

other Islamic countries, has had a strong socialist movement, with long traditions. The Tudeh ("Masses") Party, the Soviet-oriented Communist party, grew to significant size during the 1930s and played an important role during the 1946-53 period. Heikal acknowledges it, but does not explain it, except in terms of Soviet influence as a continuation of tsarist Russian influence. During the 1960s Maoism gained a big following among Iranian students, some of whom took to the countryside to engage in guerrilla warfare against the shah's army. *Socialist revolution was a distinct possibility in Iran in 1979.*

The failure of the Iranian working class to make a socialist revolution has had disastrous consequences. In terms of real social forces, the religious leadership's power base is quite narrow. It rules in the bourgeoisie's interests, but it does not have the bourgeoisie's support. It was brought to power by the workers and peasants, but it has given them nothing but economic deprivation. As the people began to demand a better standard of living from those whom they put into power, the regime has responded with repressive violence far worse than anything carried out by the shah. The Islamic Republic has executed five times more leftist activists during its ten years in power than the shah's regime did in the twenty-five years following the CIA-engineered counter-coup. Among Khomeini's victims have been some of his strongest supporters. Sadeq Qotbzadeh was shot at Evin Prison; Abolhassan Bani-Sadr is in exile in France, working to overthrow the Islamic Republic. Both men were as devoted to Khomeini as sons to a father. Meanwhile, thousands of young Iranians died in the eight-year-long war with Iraq.

The social and political issues in countries where precapitalist civilization was quite advanced but which were left behind by the industrial revolution are especially complex. I know of no thorough explanation contained within the cover of a single book. Mohamed Heikal rejects Marxism and consequently deprives himself of many useful analytical tools with which to understand Iran's history and politics. Nevertheless, his talents as a journalist are unquestionable, and the facts he presents are useful to those of us who have Marxism's powerful tools at our disposal.

'The Swan Song of Khomeinism'

Salah Jaber's "The Swan Song of Khomeinism" does put the tools of Marxism to use in an attempt to understand Khomeini's ten-year hold on power and his place in history. To his credit, Jaber states the problem forthrightly:

The impressive breadth of the mourning for Khomeini's death . . . was a resounding refutation of the claims by many Iranian oppositionists of both right and left that the "Islamic" regime had lost any mass base and was maintaining itself only by terror. This self-delusion was shared worldwide by many who—for good or bad reasons—were looking forward to the end of Khomeinism.

Jaber's contention is that the Islamic Republic of 1989 is the "natural outcome" of the revolutionary process which overthrew the shah in 1979. According to his view, the incontrovertibly "profoundly reactionary network of mullahs and fundamentalist activists" defined the character of the Iranian

revolution from the very beginning, and that the political disaster which ensued was the only logical result. In order to support this contention, however, Jaber uses a rather one-sided analysis and ignores a number of important historical facts, even though a great many of his points are well taken.

There is no question that the Iranian political process has proceeded more or less consistently with Khomeini's original plans. But what were they? Was Khomeini's original agenda an "uninterrupted regression of a revolution that began with national-democratic demands . . . a sort of permanent revolution in reverse"?

The revolutionary forces in 1979 were in no way homogeneous. There were three distinct broad political formations which came together during the 1978-79 period to overthrow the shah, leaving aside the shifting allegiances of the working masses. Both Heikal and Jaber tend to gloss over the differences within the revolutionary coalition, implying that since the Khomeinist faction won, the others were not important. Jaber says:

. . . there were of course a series of breaks in the Iranian process, as its leadership broke with one or another category that had converged with it in its twofold opposition to the shah and his American tutors. Nonetheless, the establishment of the "Islamic" dictatorship in no way constituted a break of the process itself.

That is not enough. Who were the "categories that had converged with it" and what was the nature of these "breaks in the . . . process"? In fact, in his glossing over of the contradictions within the revolutionary coalition, Jaber makes a serious factual error:

The historic failure of modernist bourgeois Iranian nationalism, represented by Mossadegh and his fall in 1953, the discrediting of Stalinism represented by the Tudeh Party in the wake of Mossadegh's fall, as well as the inadequacy of a revolutionary left following guerrilla-type models, left the field open for another candidate to overthrow the shah—the fundamentalist faction of the Shi'ite clergy headed up by Khomeini.

The truth is that 1953 did not close the book either on "modernist bourgeois Iranian nationalism" or on "Stalinism," either as "represented by the Tudeh Party" or in any other manifestation. Both the bourgeois liberals and the former guerrillas, with whom the Tudeh Party made a political alliance, were important political forces on the Iranian scene in the 1970s, and they were key components of the 1979 coalition. Today, they are both important elements of the anti-Khomeinist opposition, and though they have been defeated, they have not been crushed. Furthermore, as Jaber himself makes clear, the Khomeinist movement itself is by no means homogeneous, nor has it ever been.

Mossadegh's political formation was known as the National Front, and, though illegal, it continued to exist after 1953. Because it was the direct victim of the shah's 1953 coup it tended to be a pole of attraction for those who opposed the shah's dictatorship. The National Front maintained a base of support among the older generation of Iranian middle-class intellectuals, most of whom had actively supported the

National Front when it was in power. After 1953 these people were not all rounded up and imprisoned, nor did they all go into exile or die. They continued to go about their lives, working often as professionals or educators, and they passed on to their children their own opposition to the shah. Their support to the National Front was not based on a point-by-point agreement with any program—indeed there was no such program or ideological unanimity within the National Front—but on a generalized Iranian patriotism and desire for real modernization, rather than the facade of modernization which the shah provided.

However, like all bourgeois political formations which attempt to play a progressive role in society, the National Front had the fatal flaw of an ingrained distrust of the working masses—the proletariat, peasantry, and the urban subproletariat. The cosmopolitan National Front leaders had neither the ability nor the inclination to reach out to the broad masses of Iranians, whom they considered to be an ignorant rabble. On the other hand, without the "ignorant rabble" they could not hope to gain power from the shah and his British and later American partners. The National Front was forced to make alliances with the representatives of these other social forces. In 1953 that meant the Tudeh Party and the Islamic fundamentalist clergy, led at that time by Ayatollah Kashani.

The Tudeh Party, consistent with the People's Front policy which Stalinists have followed since 1935, naturally fell into line behind the National Front, as the political party of the "progressive bourgeoisie." Stalinist policy was no different in Iran in 1946-53 than it was in France or Spain in the 1930s or Chile in 1970-73. It needs no further elaboration.

Ayatollah Kashani was also allied with the National Front. Since the shah and CIA were able to defeat Mossadegh it is unclear if the alliance of bourgeois progressives and religious fundamentalists could have held together indefinitely, and if it did not hold together, who would come out on top. The shah's victory in 1953 rendered the question moot until the 1979-81 period. So it is important to know exactly what the religious leadership's agenda has been, what it has had in common with the bourgeois liberals, on one side, and with the working class on the other, and where it has come into conflict with both of these forces.

The Islamic Clergy's Contradictory Role

The clergy's agenda, like the clergy itself, has conflicting elements within it. The fundamental tension is between the radical egalitarian tradition of Islam, especially of Shieh, and the interests of the precapitalist aristocracy of landowners, tribal chiefs, and wealthy *bazari* (traditional merchants). In Iran the tension, both ideologically and socially, is even more intense than in other Islamic societies.

In Iran the conversion to Islam was a genuine people's revolution. It overthrew the four-hundred-year tyranny of the Sassani dynasty and the Zoroastrian priests, and replaced it with a government based on written law, which applied to all, and a religion in which all were considered equal in the eyes of God. We may look at religion today as anachronistic; however, in the seventh century, Islam created probably the most just society on earth at that time. This tradition is not at all dead, either in Iran or in the Islamic world as a whole.

The realities of class society, of course, settled in on Islamic society as elsewhere in the world, as Heikal has noted, and religion entered the service of the state. The Shieh (which means "sect," known as the Alawi in Turkey and Syria) was militarily defeated and persecuted thereafter.

Something quite different happened in Iran, however, which created the biggest contradiction to its earlier traditions: in the sixteenth century, a Shii dynasty, the Safavi, came to power. It put an end to the persecution of Shii Muslims within Iran and ironically to Shieh's identification solely with the downtrodden. For two hundred years it fought a two-front war against the Sunnis — the Ottoman Turks (who ruled Iraq) on the west, and the Afghans on the east. The Safavi eventually fell in the eighteenth century, but during their rule Iran enjoyed prosperity and power. Their achievements can still be seen in modern Esfahan, in the art, architecture, craftsmanship, and literature. Because of this history, Shiism became identified with *Iran* as a nation: Religion and patriotism became mixed, in the same manner that Roman Catholicism and patriotism have become mixed in Poland and Ireland. On the other hand, Iranian Shiism lost much of its anti-aristocratic fervor. As Iran's wealth was expropriated in the nineteenth century by Western European imperialism, Shiism unified the poor and the preimperialist rich against the British and Russians. Not only the Western Europeans, but Western European "modernism" — its industry, its ideology, everything about it — became the enemy.

From our Marxist perspective, the rejection of even the progressive aspects of capitalism seems strange. We must remember, however, that in nineteenth-century Iran capitalism had no progressive aspects. Precapitalist Iran was a more civilized and advanced society than precapitalist Europe, and the coming of imperialism and the unwashed European barbarians — as Iranians perceived them — was a step backward for Iran. The people's standard of living dropped, even to the point of a general population decrease. None of the profits made by English and Russian speculators was reinvested to develop Iran. Consequently, the masses' resentment towards the Europeans dovetailed with the religious leaders' opposition to anything in contradiction with Islamic tradition.

The Pahlavi shahs, Reza Shah (ruled 1925-41) and Mohammad Reza Shahanshah Aryamehr (ruled 1941-79), attempted to create a modern nation-state in Iran, regardless of the people's wishes. Reza Palani Khan, an army colonel, staged a military coup, had himself crowned as Reza Shah, and then attempted to duplicate the achievements of the Kemalist Republic in neighboring Turkey. He outlawed the *chador* (the Iranian women's veil); he attempted to settle the nomadic tribes forcibly; and he attempted to impose the Farsi language on the entire country. As mentioned before, he attempted to put the clergy on the state payroll and under state control. He failed on all counts.

He might have had the same kind of success which Atatürk had in Turkey had he not maintained and in fact deepened Iran's dependence on imperialism. Turkey, despite its decay, was still one of the great powers of Europe until the First World War: it was never part of any colonial empire. After the war, Britain attempted to reduce Turkey to colonial status, but Atatürk rallied the Turkish people to defeat

Britain's Greek puppet. Consequently, he enjoyed popular support in spite of his policies, which did little to bring freedom or prosperity to the Turkish masses. Reza Shah's "modernization" was carried out in cooperation with British imperialism, not against it, and the British were far more interested in maintaining their influence in Iran than in gaining influence in Turkey.

There were three reasons, the most important of which was oil. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company began exploiting the oilfields in Arabestan (today Khuzistan) province in preparation for World War I. Even today, Iran's oil reserves are second only to Saudi Arabia's. Reza Shah continued the concession, though the company's name changed to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in deference to Reza Shah's decree that the rest of the world call his country by the same name that its people have always called it (today the AIOC is known as British Petroleum). The other two were based on strategic-military considerations: Iran's proximity to British-controlled India and to the Soviet Union.

When Reza Shah expressed support for Nazi Germany the British forced him to abdicate in favor of his son and to go into exile in South Africa. Of course, in the immediate postwar period his rule was seriously challenged, both by the National Front and by independence struggles in Kurdistan and Azerbaijan, Iran's northwestern provinces. The crisis was settled in 1953, when the shah in collaboration with the U.S. CIA staged a counter coup, overthrowing Mossadegh's National Front government and establishing the dictatorship which lasted until 1979.

The last shah moved to consolidate absolute power in 1963, in a series of decrees which he called the "White Revolution." It included a land reform — which limited the khans to owning one village apiece(!) — and a crash program of diversifying Iranian industry and transportation. Reza Shah's attempt to settle the nomads and impose Persian language and culture on all provinces was resumed. The secret police — the SAVAK — carried out a brutal repression against all who opposed the "White Revolution." It was at this time that Khomeini went into exile at Najaf.

The clergy's agenda, then, can be summarized as follows: resistance to all Western influence, including industry, science, women's equality, and secular education; opposition to land reform and to curbs on the landowners' and tribal chiefs' power; rejection of any law or authority other than that of Islam. As Jaber points out, the mosques maintained a charity network to provide assistance to the poor (giving charity is one of the "Five Pillars of Islam," required of all Muslims), and in so doing they gained the loyalty of the poorest people in the city slums. Different religious leaders stressed different aspects of their opposition to modernization — some reflecting the interests of the landowners and others emphasizing service to the poor. At no time, however, did Khomeini or any other mullah attempt to hide any part of his agenda. Jaber is completely correct to point that out. However, there are complex reasons why a revolutionary coalition formed around religious leadership, and it is too simplistic to assert that Khomeini's program stamped the 1979 revolution with an unalterably reactionary character.

The Attraction of Islam to Radicalizing Youth

One of the Iranian revolution's stranger aspects was the attraction of radical students and intellectuals to Khomeini and his movement (leaving aside the alliance of the religious movement with traditional left-wing forces). Why were educated young people like Sadeq Ootbzadeh or the students who occupied the American embassy in 1979 drawn to an openly anti-intellectual, anti-scientific, superstitious, and reactionary movement? The answer lies in a radical interpretation of Islamic traditions, as described earlier, to coincide with the anti-imperialist radicalization of the 1960s. Its primary author was Dr. Ali Shariati, a theology professor at the University of Tehran, who was imprisoned during the 1970s and died in London under mysterious circumstances shortly before the revolution began. He developed an Iranian parallel to Latin American liberation theology, and it captured the imagination of hundreds of young Iranians. Betty Friedan, a founder of the National Organization for Women, was flabbergasted to visit Iran and find young women students violently criticizing her feminist ideas as they proudly wore their *chadors*. The shah attempted to exploit the Islamic connection by portraying his opposition as a mixture of Islamic reactionaries and communists—he called them “Islamic Marxists.” His claim was that they were opposed to him because they opposed modernization and wanted to return Iran to the Middle Ages and at the same time put it under Moscow's domination. To American liberals—like Betty Friedan—(not to mention conservatives) who were ignorant of Iranian history and politics, the shah's lies and half-truths made sense.

These young people were motivated by anti-imperialist nationalism, and in the 1960s it was not unusual for radicalizing youth, influenced by the ideas of Frantz Fanon and the Chinese Cultural Revolution, to reject all aspects of capitalism and European culture. Since Islam's adherents are nearly all in dominated countries, many militants, including African-Americans like Malcolm X, embraced it as the religion of the oppressed. Their motivation was fundamentally *revolutionary*, not reactionary.

Radicalizing young people in Iran, like their counterparts in many other countries, attempted to take their message of radical social change to the people who in their view had the most to gain: the poor people of the slums and the villages. There they found deep religious beliefs and strong loyalty to the clergy, caused by the mosques' charity, as Jaber notes, and the usual hold that religion has over poor people, which Marx himself recognized. The young radicals successfully attempted to combine the poor people's religious fervor with their natural resentment against the rich and powerful. Following Mao's advice to “serve the people,” they participated in the clergy's charitable activities. Though their attempt to organize a guerrilla war against the shah ultimately failed, the experience had a big influence on the young militants, and the two guerrilla-war organizations, the Fadayeen and the Mujahedeen, were important components of the 1979 revolutionary coalition.

The anti-shah alliance thus brought together the traditional clerical opposition and revolutionary-minded youth, products of the predominantly student radicalization of the 1960s. To this a third element was added: the National Front.

It may seem strange that bourgeois liberals should join in such an alliance, but there are several reasons for it: (1) an attempt to restrain the revolution from within, to keep it from challenging bourgeois rule; (2) the opportunities for skilled political maneuverers to wrest power from inexperienced young radicals and clergymen; (3) conversely, the mullahs' need for experienced managers and diplomats to run a government; and (4) the acceptability of the National Front to the imperialist powers. Indeed, the shah in his final days in power turned to a National Front politician, Shahpur Bakhtiar, in a vain attempt to save his regime from overthrow.

After the shah's fall the National Front formed the first republican government, with Mehdi Bazargan as prime minister. Karim Sanjabi, the National Front's chairman, became foreign minister. This government remained in place from February 1979 until the American embassy takeover in November. During this period the revolution's direction was not predetermined. During this period the clerics could have been defeated and the revolution turned in a socialist direction.

Why Khomeini Won

It is too often forgotten that the masses make revolution, not their political leaders. In Iran it was the proletariat which made the decisive difference in victory over the shah. His fate was sealed when the oil workers went on strike and the Air Force—the *homafars*, the most proletarian section of the armed forces—mutinied and came over to the revolution. The shah's economic policies had created a working class which by 1978 comprised about 40 percent of the population and as they rose against him, workers elected councils throughout the factories, military bases, and slum neighborhoods. Sometimes they were called *anjomans* and sometimes *shoras* (*shora* is exactly analogous to the Russian *soviet*, and in Farsi the word *shoravi* is used to refer to the USSR). The councils' character and objectives varied considerably, depending on the region, the industry, or the neighborhood. They reflected their constituencies, in true democratic fashion. The Khomeinist component of the revolutionary coalition took control of the revolution by taking control of the *shoras*.

This “break in the process” cannot be dismissed with a single phrase, as Jaber does. Khomeini's conquest of hegemony over the Iranian revolution was carried out by taking advantage of the left's confusion and completely outflanking it, and with the use of antidemocratic violence worthy of Mussolini. As the bourgeois National Front government moved to curb the working class by decree and legal measures, the clergy organized gangs of subproletarian hooligans, usually called the “Party of God,” or *hezbollah* in Farsi. The *hezbollahis* beat up feminists, socialists, labor activists, and later supporters of Bazargan, and still later, supporters of Bani-Sadr and the Mujahedeen. Through violent intimidation, the reactionary clergy was able to gain control of the *shoras*. They caught the left unprepared for an attack from this quarter.

I will not attempt to discuss the errors and shortcomings of every left tendency on the Iranian political scene: what I will do, however, is what Jaber should have done—draw a balance on the Trotskyist movement's work in the Iranian

revolution so that it can build on its strengths and correct its weaknesses in preparation for the next revolutionary opportunity for the Iranian working class. It is not enough simply to hope that the Iranian left will find after Khomeini's death "an opportunity to rebuild itself on new bases, drawing the lessons from its grave errors in the past" without discussing what those errors were and how they can be corrected.

Whatever mistakes Iranian Trotskyists made are not simply their responsibility. It is of no use to find scapegoats, either within the Iranian Trotskyist leadership or the world Trotskyist leadership. The responsibility belongs to the Fourth International as a whole, and its responsibility now is to make certain that the proper lessons are drawn, not to fix blame on individuals or groups.

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency in the U.S. has its origin in the Socialist Workers Party and is continuing its fight for readmission to that organization. It is therefore natural that our discussion will focus on its ideas and policies. Because of the SWP leadership's relationship with one group of Iranian Trotskyists who had been in exile in the U.S. before 1979, the views of the U.S. party had a significant influence on the development of political perspectives within Iran itself after the overthrow of the shah.

There were several serious misunderstandings of the unfolding Iranian revolution, misunderstandings which flowed from false methodology and outright ignorance of the facts, at least on the part of the American SWP leadership and those influenced by it. This was *not* simply a product of the anti-Trotskyism against which the Fourth Internationalist Tendency has been fighting for over five years, though this played a role. Rather, it reflected a longstanding problem in the party which was in its turn a key cause of the SWP leadership's movement away from Trotskyism in the years following 1979.

Methodologically, SWP leaders and members have often tended to substitute abstract parallels to the Bolshevik experience for serious concrete analysis of political events. This temptation was especially strong in the case of the Iranian revolution, for there are so many valid historical and cultural parallels between Iran and Russia. Instead of examining the real situation in Iran, they looked — in the period before the seizure of the U.S. embassy and the "hostage crisis" — for it to mirror Russian events of 1917. As a parallel to the struggle between the Russian soviets and Kerensky's Provisional Government they looked for a showdown between Bazargan's bourgeois government and the *shoras*, with the *shoras* playing the revolutionary role. As a parallel to Kornilov's attack on the Provisional Government, they saw the counterrevolution in General Oveissi's armies in the mountains of Kurdistan.

These parallels failed to materialize, however, and they found themselves completely disoriented. They were unprepared when the attack on the *shoras* as independent expressions of revolutionary democracy came *from within the revolution*, i.e., from its Khomeinist wing. They were not prepared to defend these institutions from young toughs from Shahr-e-Rey (South Tehran) who took over the *shoras* with lead pipes and brass knuckles, and declared that the only vote Iranians need is to say *Allah-o-akbar* ("God is the greatest," the beginning of the Islamic Call to Prayer). Be-

sides their faulty logic, the SWP and those whom they influenced were completely ignorant of the role which the clergy had played for over a century in opposition to imperialism and the shahs which served it. They did not understand the contradictory character of a movement which opposed imperialism from a precapitalist, rather than a socialist, perspective.

The assault on the U.S. embassy was the decisive battle in Khomeini's struggle for power, and the left throughout the world completely misunderstood it, including the SWP. It was completely correct to fight against the anti-Iran hysteria and President Jimmy Carter's war drive as the "hostage crisis" unfolded. That was the party's basic task in the United States, and it carried it out as it should have. However, the party completely misread the power shift in Iran itself. Immediately upon the seizure of the embassy the Bazargan government resigned, and Khomeini took complete control, appointing Abolhassan Bani-Sadr to be prime minister and Sadeq Qotbzadeh to be foreign minister. Both had been his close associates since his exile in Najaf. The SWP considered this a victory for the masses against the bourgeoisie; in fact, it was a defeat. As Carter threatened war, Khomeini played on genuine anti-imperialist mass sentiment to unify the Iranian people against the U.S., which in theory any revolutionist would commend. However, Khomeini cynically used this campaign to stamp out any opposition to himself and his Islamic fundamentalist program, most especially within the *shoras*.

Within a few months, he was successful and began a campaign of repression and thought control, led by Sadeq Khalkhali, which was worse than anything the shah ever did. The revolution was being killed. Ultimately all of the other components of the revolutionary coalition — with the ironic exception of the National Front — fell victim to repressive violence. Bani-Sadr went into exile in France, and Qotbzadeh was executed. Both were examples of young intellectuals inspired by Islam's revolutionary traditions as explained by Shariatti. The Mujahedeen went underground and began a guerrilla and terrorist campaign against the Islamic Republic, even to the extent of collaborating with Iraq in the last years of the war. The Fadayeen, the majority of whom had come under the sway of the Tudeh Party, also went underground.

In the opinion of this author, the revolution had already been completely defeated by September 1980 when Iraq launched the eight-year war. Even if that was difficult to see at the time, it should now be clear in retrospect. Both the SWP and the FI as a whole failed to recognize this fact, though the FI, unlike the SWP, did make a sharp and correct differentiation between the various elements that had made up the revolutionary coalition. It took a firm stand in favor of the Iranian proletariat — against the counterrevolutionary bourgeois and Islamic forces that had already launched their terror campaign against it.

The FI in its majority concluded by 1984 that defense of Iran in the war was no longer a valid revolutionary position, and it made the necessary correction. Jaber, however, "over-corrects" the original error by asserting that the revolution

(Continued on inside back cover)

Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

39. I End Up in the First Circle

From the cells for the condemned, I was transferred to a country place near Moscow. Not far from an agricultural exhibit there was a scientific experimental "unit." No, it wasn't the miracles of Lysenko that were being cultivated but some others. The Master himself was interested in the system that was being constructed at this unit. He received regular progress reports with projected completion dates that were constantly being moved back. The matter went back and forth. The Master wanted this system. The unit itself was a rare variety of camp — a camp performing the functions of a scientific institution.

The showing off began the minute you set foot into the camp. We lived in a zone outsiders were not allowed to see but they did sometimes come into our laboratories and workshops. Therefore, at work, the civilian and prisoner engineers used mutually civil forms of address without "Citizen" (and without "Comrade" as well), but first name and patronymic. Furthermore, we did not wear convict clothes, but more neutral clothing — overalls.

Three-quarters of the prisoners at our site were qualified mechanics and radio-technicians. The other prisoners were first-rate engineers. Not one of them was a common criminal, but they were all imprisoned for very diverse crimes: for "gossip" — they were therefore called "blabbermouths" — or for having believed Stalin's promises, like Alekseev; for "espionage" for America; or for terrorism (they accidentally tore up a newspaper with Stalin's portrait in it). However, most of what we had in our midst were officers and soldiers of the Soviet army who had been convicted for having been prisoners of war. The camp was not large, 500 or 600 people.

It was this camp that inspired A. Solzhenitsyn to write his novel *The First Circle*, a work that is in my view exceptional. Many people in our country talk about the traditions of Gorky but forget about the Tolstoyan traditions. The first element of the Tolstoyan tradition was fearless truth; and of this Solzhenitsyn is a genuine heir. I take pleasure in anticipating how Time, the ultimate and supreme judge of literature, will bury hundreds of pathetic novels that were extolled as soon as they appeared but will praise the works

of Solzhenitsyn, which are now anathematized and suppressed.

Putting on a show for guests from scientific institutes who were visiting the unit made some sense — one out of ten might fall for it. But the same thing was done at meetings with relatives. In the storeroom hung a great many secondhand suits and hats. We changed into these, put on our neckties (which were also hanging in the storeroom), and they would take us to the meetings. These meetings in Butyrka were arranged at long narrow tables, whole groups at a time. The relatives were seated on a bench on one side of the table and we were on the other side. Behind us stood the Mr. Fidgets [guards]. We were allowed to speak only Russian so the Fidgets could understand. What the people who sat at these long tables went through — without the right even to kiss one another — I could not begin to describe. This has been depicted with stunning force in Solzhenitsyn's novel.

Everything that he described, I experienced myself or saw with my own eyes. How can people, even those who have heard of the existence of the camps but have never seen them and fear more than fire even to talk about them — how can they confirm that the novel was slanderous? From whom do they know what the camps were like? From the Fidgets? The objective point of view in this matter is not some arithmetic average of the opinion of the prisoner and the opinion of the Fidgets. Here an arithmetic average is impossible. Either you accept the opinion of the one who was tortured and all those who in their mind's eye have shared that suffering; or you accept the opinion of the torturers and those who in one way or another benefited from it.

Only those who were imprisoned in the camps know the objective truth about them. And everything that Solzhenitsyn wrote about the camps was the objective truth.

We were taken to these meetings in a sky-blue bus with four windows and little white curtains. On the bus shone the designation "service vehicle." But inside, it was your basic Black Raven — fully sealed, without the slightest ray of light, with places for the prisoner convoys in the back compartment.

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.

The window and the white silk curtains were attached to an external panel. The outside panel was a little different from the other Black Ravens, with their right-angled edges. On our express the panels were streamlined.

In truth, our blue Black Raven, civilian in form but convict in content, had profound symbolic significance.

* * *

Do you remember what tufta was?¹ In our unit worked an imprisoned engineer, a great tufta expert. They gave him the nickname PBM, Professor of Black Magic. He was forever fooling the officials through various technological schemes. He “obscured things,” as it was expressed in the local dialect. The officials let themselves be fooled, since by so doing they themselves could “obscure things” in the higher agencies, creating the impression that in our technological Potemkin village creative life was in full swing, producing eight billion pounds of inventions. They based their calculations on inventions in the works the same way Malenkov calculated the harvests for purposes of reporting to Comrade Stalin and the Soviet people. The prisoners not without reason called their unit the Sharashkin works, or simply a Sharashka for short.²

The Sharashka’s PBM was first class, and he received a higher quality food. Generally, they fed us all we could eat — such camps no more exist; there are none. Then, however, the most valued specialists were fed exceptionally well. After all, we were making an important machine for the Master himself! The camp official almost daily checked to see that nothing had been stolen from the kitchen (common criminals worked there). It was the first and last time I had seen a camp kitchen from which nothing was stolen.

The talented engineers, deprived of freedom, continued to think about the things they had thought about while free, and in producing this Machine for the Great Master, they sought to apply their talents. This explains the strange phenomenon that not everyone cheated, or engaged in tufta, although everyone understood well just how much the entire “Sharashka” unit as a whole was based on it. My friend Aleksandr, enthralled by new ideas in the area of toothed gearing, tried while in the camp to patent his inventions. He said that he could not do otherwise: either you go to hell in a hurry or you continue to think. To do black magic made him sick.

A wide path stretched the entire length of the living zone of our camp. We called it the main alley and walked along it after work as you would a park. There were, however, no trees along it. We conversed and reminisced about our wives.

There were three of us: Aleksandr, Efim, and I. Another time, a fourth man joined us, an engineer from the Stalin automobile plant (now Likhachev). There — and not there alone! — they arrested and imprisoned all the Jewish engineers there were. It would be more pleasant if I were to keep quiet about this fact but my task is not to make it more pleasant for those who are fond of hushing things up. Anti-Semitism is like mold: it starts growing where it is damp. You don’t have to plant it. This is not a question of third-rate importance that for some odd reason interests a handful of isolated individuals. It is a problem that concerns a hundred peoples. If one is humiliated, it is an insult to all one hundred.

Furthermore, it is inseparable from the nationalities problem as a whole, which is ultimately revealed. What happened to the engineers in the ZIS [Stalin automobile plant], to the antifascist Jewish committee, to the Moscow doctors, to the Jewish doctors in other cities, and to Mikhoelson was not strange. What is strange is something else: to make believe that none of these things happened.

The antic cosmopolitan campaign was furnished, like all the Stalinist propaganda campaigns, with skimpy but indestructible verbal formulas. From on high came down several sobriquets to stigmatize the undesirables: “contemptible,” “depraved,” “anti-patriotic,” “rootless,” “having no family or roots” were five immutable sobriquets. In some instances, they would give the Russian pseudonym of a writer or critic and then cite in parentheses the Jewish name. Strict observance of verbal formulas was one of the characteristics of Stalinism, which had its origin in the lack of confidence of the tops in those below. Without them someone will suddenly say something in his own words and it will not be quite right. Centralization of thought leads without fail to the centralized preparation of items of verbal consumption, and the innumerable lamentations over linguistic clichés are naive to say the least. Those who wait for opinions from on high cannot speak with their own words. They are afraid of spoiling the higher thought by an unfortunate formulation.

During Stalin’s time, even obituaries were a cliché — with two variants: some were “with regret,” the others “with deep regret.” In 1948, one of my good friends died, the journalist Yevgeny Bermont. The announcement from the Writer’s Union was printed in two newspapers, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and *Soviet Art*. In the latter, they said: “with deep regret.” Boris Gorbатов, a secretary of the Union board at that time, got into trouble because he did not notice that one of his colleagues gave the newspaper a text not authorized for one of such rank.

By 1953, the antic cosmopolitan campaign had taken a wild direction with the Doctors’ Plot (I hope to speak about it later) — Jews were fired not only from hospitals, but even from stores. It was a difficult experience for many people. The page about this campaign has for some unexplained reason been completely removed from history. Other unpleasant pages have been mentioned mainly by way of adding to our intellectual perfection by showing these as negative consequences that have been overcome. But about this page, not a peep has been heard even to implement such an approach. Should we conclude, therefore, that this page has not yet been overcome?

* * *

Documents from this epoch describe a curious picture of obsequious morality. If before my arrest I didn’t have enough causes for gaiety, in Sharashka, reading the newspapers, I had a jolly good time almost every evening. There you could, while walking with friends down the main alley, laugh out loud. Take for example the poem “Our Land,” dedicated to conservationist planting. I read it in the March issue of *New World* in 1949.

May Stalin’s teachings become
the reality of our time

in all their greatness and simplicity,
with abundance the world has never known,
with a beauty the world has never seen.

And in conclusion, addressing the people of Mars (it is necessary to carry the praise of Stalin even to Mars!), the author foresees:

And the years will pass and
you will see from there suddenly
a miracle on earth.
And your wise old scholars
seeing the green distant world
will declare
some unprecedented genius has appeared
changing the face of the Earth.

In his zeal, the author far outdid all Stalin's other psalterly players and songsters, getting all the way to Mars. He chose the right target: the innumerable canals of Mars definitely show that there too, in addition to wise old scholars, they also have camps (which are also ancient, judging by the abundance of canals), and ancient Sharashkas and all that ancient culture so dear to the heart, in all its features calling to mind such earthly miracles as the construction of the pyramids, the humanism of Genghis Khan, and the mercy of the Inquisition.

I read and was surprised, not at the content and poetic quality of the verse but at the author. Can he really be serious? Our newspapers laugh at songs like "The East begins to glow/ the sun rises/ for Mao-tse Tung has appeared." Who are you to laugh?

Today's readers can guess for themselves the name of the author. I name him for the benefit of the grandchildren, since I am not thoroughly convinced that he will end up among the classic writers: Nikolai Gribachev. But he was not alone. The songsters' names are legend. Read this:

And he entered that room where Lenin lived
during the first sacred year of October.
Here everything breathed a strength austere and wise
and in the night shadows the times long passed returned.
So it was as if those decrees
about peace and land
had only just been adopted by Russia.
As if Stalin himself had just
entered under the arches; and Lenin with him —
the two together — decided the fate of numberless peoples
of our native land at that very table.

This excerpt is not from a song by some obscure radio hack but from a very much respected author who during the October days was already an adult and read newspapers. But for the benefit of the lie, he asserted, knowing well how it clashed with reality, that Lenin together with Stalin decided the fate of our peoples. Moreover, you will notice that to Lenin is ascribed Stalin's manner of "deciding fate." Sit at the table and with one stroke of your red pencil decide the fate of a small and defenseless people. Lenin *did not do* that. Moreover, he did *not* solve problems *together* with Stalin.

In the verse of this respected poet, there was not only outright falsehood but a direct attack on Lenin. The poem is called "A Night at Smolny." Its author is Nikolai Tikhonov.

Children learn history not from textbooks alone but from novels, poems, memoirs, and songs.

Having begun speaking about how the falsifiers of history imperceptibly get authors under their influence so that they write for Stalin's benefit but by so doing write against Lenin, I must cite an amazing fact which I would not believe if I had not seen it with my own eyes.

After Lenin's death, the recollections of A.M. Gorky, "Vladimir Lenin," were published — in the most recent editions, the title was changed to "V.I. Lenin." Not long ago, I got to see first editions of this article that by some miracle had survived. One was a separate brochure published in Moscow in 1924; the other was in the pages of the journal *Russian Contemporary*, no. 1 of that year. Both were *Soviet* and not foreign editions. I cite the lines where Gorky conveys his conversation with Lenin in his office:

"Yes, I often heard him praise comrades. And even about those who, according to rumors, allegedly did not enjoy his personal sympathies, Lenin was able to speak giving them credit for their energy.

"Surprised by his complimentary evaluation of one such comrade, I noted that for many this assessment would seem unexpected.

"Yes, yes, I know they lie about my attitude toward him. They lie a great deal, and it seems, particularly much about me and Trotsky."

"Striking the table with his hand, he said,

"But could you show me another person who could in one year organize an almost model army, and moreover win the respect of military experts? We have such a person. We have everything. We will perform miracles!"

"He generally loved people and his love was selfless."

That is what Gorky reported in 1924 — what he reported, we will note, when his memory was fresh. The conversation, it seems from the content, took place no earlier than 1920 ("organize an almost model army in one year" means it was one year after the Red Army was proclaimed).

I now take up the later editions of Gorky, and find the article "V.I. Lenin." But instead of the lines I just quoted — printed, I repeat, in the Soviet press — I read, after the author's first paragraph ("Yes, I often heard," printed without any changes) these lines:

"I was very surprised at his high evaluation of the organizational talents of L.D. Trotsky. Vladimir Ilyich noticed my surprise.

"Yes, I know that some lie about my attitude toward him. But what is, is; and what isn't, just isn't. This I also know. He did know how to organize military specialists."

"Falling silent for a minute, he added quietly and sadly:

"But all the same, he is not ours. He is with us, but not ours. He is ambitious. And there is something in him that is not good, like Lassalle."

In the second version of the recollection, the publication dates cited are "1924, 1930." The reader is led to believe that Gorky himself "re-recalled" in 1930 his conversation with Lenin and introduced important corrections. According to the original, fresh recollection, he talked about an *unexpected* evaluation — not of Trotsky, the evaluation of whom did not surprise Aleksei Maksimovich [Gorky], but of another whose name is not given. There is "one such com-

rade,” about whose relations with Lenin “many lie.” Gorky even remembered the details: Lenin struck the table with his hand. According to the re-remembered version of the conversation, it was only about Lenin’s attitude toward Trotsky that people told lies. What happened to “one such comrade”? Why did people stop lying about him? Could it be because by the beginning of the 1930s, a new set of lies had been cooked up alongside which it was no good recalling the previous lies?

But this is not the central feature of the “re-recollections.” The main feature is the two different references to Trotsky. When the article was first published, the reference is totally positive, with Lenin speaking about him as the organizer of the Red Army. Furthermore, he didn’t simply organize it, but made it almost a model army after only one year’s time. But in the later editions of that same article, the reference is directly the opposite. First, he organized not the Red Army but military specialists, i.e., tsarist officers; and toward what end? It is not said; perhaps for the same ends as Kaledin, Kolchak, and Denikin organized their armies [counterrevolutionary forces which fought against the Red Army in the civil war]. Second, he is ambitious and not ours. Thus, the hint, included in the first sentence, is so reinforced that a child could comprehend it: We have here a potential enemy.

A devastating reference! What proof do we have that Lenin said that?

It is not only that the words attributed to Lenin in the later editions are directly opposite those cited in the first editions. But the later reference is also the opposite of the description of Trotsky which Lenin gave in a document genuinely his—Lenin’s testament.

As regards Lenin’s attitudes, about which, as Gorky wrote, he knew from rumors, today there is no reason to pay any attention to them. There are 54 volumes of Lenin’s works and they contain letters of Lenin to the one and the other “such comrades” never before printed. From the authentic letters his attitude toward both is fully clarified. Read the primary sources!

The second version of the conversation (and it is the only one available to the mass of Soviet readers) suggests to every attentive reader an idea: It seems as if Lenin said *one thing* to Gorky about Politburo members (and Trotsky was a Politburo member all throughout Lenin’s life), and in his personal letters and his political testament he said *another thing*. They wanted to cast a shadow over Trotsky but they cast it over Lenin. This is the fruit of the Stalinist methods of falsification of history. Will we continue to eat the poisoned apple of false knowledge?

It is not believable that the corrections were introduced by the free hand of the writer. Even the date at the end of the article does not convince me. The immense power of the general secretary mentioned in the testament, combined with his dishonesty—this represented an awesome force. After Lenin’s death, it grew ten times over.

Just as we do not know what made Bukharin confess to espionage, so is concealed from us the means applied on Gorky and his works. Let us say that in 1930, nine or ten years after the conversation he described, Aleksei Maksimovich came to the conclusion that Trotsky was not at all what he seemed to be at one time. That could happen. Then, Gorky

had the right (and even the duty) to add a postscript to his article by saying: I, Gorky, thought one way about Trotsky then but now I think something else. But never should he attribute his altered views to Lenin; and less still should this be made retroactive! No, I do not believe that Gorky voluntarily amended his article. I see Stalin’s hand.

And it doesn’t change things that other repairs in the article were supplemented with the admission: “That is how I thought 13 years ago and I was mistaken.” Fine. However, again, the matter arises: his *views* changed, but what about the events being remembered?

* * * *

Among the sovereigns of the East, there may have been some who surpassed Stalin in perfidy and duplicity. However, none of them decided so brazenly to fabricate legends about themselves and their main enemy. How Stalin hated Trotsky! From his book *Problems of Leninism*, it is clear: for Stalin, the first problem for Leninism was the struggle against Trotsky personally. This conclusion arises in the second major work of Stalin, his book *The Short Course*. And Lenin’s testament confirms most clearly that everything began as far back as the first years after the October revolution, when it did not yet have any theoretical underpinnings but was dictated only by envy for the brilliant orator of the revolution, as Trotsky was then described. Stalin thought up the theory later on. In all his books, Lenin used the word “Trotskyists” three or four times—to mean the supporters of Trotsky on the problem under discussion at that particular moment (in vols. 13, 19, 20). But the word “Trotskyism,” meaning some political current or body of views, I have never found in Lenin’s works. In the testament, he speaks of Trotsky’s non-Bolshevism, for which we are not to “hold him personally to blame.” Later in the testament, Lenin speaks again and again about the relationship between Stalin and Trotsky and also about the disloyalty of the former and the self-assurance of the latter.

All this applies to the writings of Lenin himself and not to the commentaries of the compilers of his works, which is quite another matter: With respect to them, one will find an “ism” at every step.

The Christian scholastics have found that all things contrary to the church had their origins in the intrigues of Satan. Those who succumbed to the Devil were condemned to burn in the eternal fires of Hell. In the same way, Stalin explained everything bad, everything harmful to the workers’ movement by the intrigues of this Devil with his little Mephistophelian beard and the spark of Hell’s flames reflecting in his eyeglasses. Those once seduced by him will be forever on the list of the angels who guard the gates of Hell.

The others, the mere mortals, who have never read a word from the Satanic black magic writings, must never come in contact with them, for it is inevitable that they would succumb. For them, a loose, two- or three-sentence retelling of the entire diabolical essence of this accursed deviation would be enough. Before uttering Trotsky’s name, all the true believers must cross themselves in front of an icon.

Hating Trotsky, Stalin saw his pernicious hand everywhere. Murdered, lying with his skull split, Trotsky

continued to be feared and cursed. In the grip of megalomania, Stalin had to exaggerate the role of the man he had murdered, ascribing to him a whole host of crimes in order, by so doing, to further extoll Stalin's own conquest. He himself created a certain Trotsky cult, but an inside-out one, with a minus sign. In order to go down in history as a David, he had to depict his opponent as a Goliath, who was going into a battle against Leninism accompanied by a whole army of real and imaginary philistines. He and he alone as the contemporary David of Marxism has saved us from the terrible giant! And then, as would be expected, he began to sing psalms. However, they were not to God but to himself.

I don't care what set of philistines you count me among.

Greyhound (Continued from page 12)

becomes more difficult. The power of organized labor needs to be mobilized in support of others—to create jobs for all, for affirmative action goals for women and Blacks and other minorities, for improved education and housing, against racist violence, for an all-inclusive national health-care plan, etc. If the unions are seen as fighting for these things, which will benefit millions of working people and others in this society who are not actually union members today, it will be much more difficult for the bosses to recruit the "replacement workers" they want and need to carry out their attack on the unions, and much easier for the unions to convince others to honor picket lines.

Another lesson that we can learn from the Pittston miners is the importance of running our own candidates for government office, rather than relying on "friends" in the Democratic Party who turn out not to be very friendly once they are in office. Shortly after the occupation of the processing plant, a member of the UMW, Jack Stump, launched a campaign as a write-in candidate for the state legislature. He won a landmark victory for labor against the Democratic incumbent, whose son was a district court judge who had levied \$32 million in fines against the union.

Three weeks after the Greyhound workers walked off their jobs, the *New York Daily News* threatened to hire permanent replacements in the event any of the paper's ten unions went on strike when their contracts expired on April 6. The *News* has offered some of the unions pay increases in exchange for an increased workweek, a no-strike clause, a free hand for management in setting work rules, and a "zipper clause" that eliminates past practices and handshake agreements not included in the written contract.

After members of the Newspaper Guild, representing 800 editorial, advertising, accounting, and circulation employees voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike, the *News* placed "help wanted" ads in all four New York daily papers. The next day thousands of unemployed or inadequately employed New Yorkers lined up around the block to apply for jobs. Almost immediately Bertram Powers, president of Typographical Union No. 6,

However, when I lie dying, I will think about one thing only: Have I convinced you that the best guarantees against repetition of the past is a full knowledge of it?

[Next Month: "Let Us Delve Into the Psalms of the New David."]

Notes

1. Tufta, referred to in previous sections of the Notebooks, is the process of padding production figures to appear to meet or overdo plan quotas. It is often the cause of shoddy work.

2. Derived from a Soviet slang expression meaning a sinister enterprise based on bluff and deceit.

said his 199 members would cross picket lines in the event of a strike. Typographical workers, stereotypers, and engravers all won lifetime job guarantees during the '70s in exchange for concessions on automation. Those guarantees might be jeopardized if the employees struck. Leaders of other unions fear that the *News* is determined either to win crippling concessions or to close down the paper, in which case the strikers might lose most of the severance benefits they would otherwise have.

Once again, the state AFL-CIO has turned toward the legislature for the assistance that can really only come from the ranks of the labor movement. They have drafted a bill that would bar the *News* from hiring out-of-state replacements during a strike. Apparently it's okay if the strike is broken by native New Yorkers.

When 2,466 unionized employees are represented by ten different craft unions, the most obvious question has to be: Why not amalgamate into an industrial union that can unify the work force instead of allowing the employer to divide and conquer? Elimination of craft divisions and jurisdictional squabbles is one of the most urgent, and long overdue, steps needed by the labor movement, and not just at the *Daily News*, but in construction, rail, and elsewhere. Then too, as at Greyhound, the labor movement can organize mass picketing, consumer boycotts, and public relations campaigns to help swing the public onto the side of the workers.

The employers' successful use of replacement workers and the disastrous consequences for strikers in the past decade have contributed to a loss of confidence in the strike as a useful weapon of labor. Strikes involving 1,000 or more workers have declined from 290 a year during the 1970s to about 50 a year since 1985, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Without the strike weapon, unionized workers are increasingly at the mercy of employers, who see no reason to pull their punches. This perception has contributed to the declining attractiveness of unions to unorganized workers. It's clear that a firm and militant course by organized labor is the only one that will reverse this downward spiral of defeat and demoralization. ●

Our Bodies! Our Choice!

The Fight for Reproductive Rights

by Evelyn Sell

\$1.00

Evelyn Sell is a member of the United Teachers of Los Angeles union and the National Organization for Women. She was a founder and state officer of the Texas Abortion Coalition in the early 1970s (part of the movement that led to the *Roe v. Wade* decision). This pamphlet, which discusses past and present struggles for the right to choose, is a useful guide to the battles that lie ahead.

Order from FIT, PO Box 1947, New York, NY 10009

Unduly Narrow View of Eastern Strike

In my view, Bill Onasch in his article "Eastern Strikers Face Huge Obstacles" (*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, March 1990) takes an unduly narrow and negative position on the strike.

This is not to discount the correct points Onasch makes in connection with how the strike has been conducted, especially the failure of the International Association of Machinists' leadership to approve a strategy of shutting down virtually all of the nation's airlines and railroads in sympathy with the Eastern strikers.

But despite this failure and other serious shortcomings by the union leadership, thousands of rank-and-file members are today waging an important struggle which contains positive elements not sufficiently appreciated by Onasch. For example, responding to a statement by a member of the Socialist Workers Party who is active in the strike, Onasch writes:

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

Lorenzo is prevented "from winning" by pulling him and Eastern down, even if the workers do not get their jobs back. More than any other individual in the U.S. today, Lorenzo symbolizes union busting. He broke the union at Continental and he is trying to do the same at Eastern. If he succeeds, union busting will claim another victory and the jobs of other organized workers in the airline industry will be placed in greater jeopardy. Moreover, another heavy blow will have been leveled against the trade union movement as a whole.

Writing about the same subject Onasch addressed, Kim Moody takes a more positive view in his March 1990 *Labor Notes* article:

Although a conventional resolution of this strike seems unlikely, the [Eastern] strikers take pride in having blocked Frank Lorenzo's union-busting strategy. Indeed, it appears that the strike has turned union busting into company busting.

It is not at all uncommon these days for workers engaged in a protracted fight with an employer to say "We may go down, but we'll do everything we can to take the company down with us." These workers reflect the growing combativity in the U.S. working class. They demonstrate a willingness to make what are sometimes very heavy sacrifices to get back at the boss. This helps the class as a whole because it encourages other workers to fight back, while at the same time serving notice to other

companies with union-busting plans that they may be in for one helluva fight if they try to implement those plans. Finally, some of the workers involved—in this case the Eastern strikers—get steeled in the struggle and may be in a position in the future to be heard from again as the class struggle continues to heat up.

Obviously, the purpose of a strike is to defend or improve workers' economic and working conditions. Implicit in this is that workers get their jobs back when the strike is over. But what happens when an employer forces workers out on strike under circumstances in which their chances for reinstatement range from remote to nonexistent? Then they have a choice: to accept defeat, disperse, and thereby allow another company to break another union; or to take a stand and fight back, regardless of the uncertainty of reemployment. Thousands of Eastern workers chose the latter course. Although there have been serious setbacks to their strike, they maintain it as of this writing and they have succeeded in placing the company's continued existence in doubt. That is the objective reality of this fight and that is the basis on which we have to deal with it. The strike clearly warrants the full support of the labor movement (as Onasch also urges, despite his stated reservations).

Incidentally, the final outcome is still to be decided. The headline of the *Labor Notes* article is "Eastern Airlines Heads for a Crash." The data presented in support of this conclusion is consistent with what the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* are saying. Lorenzo may yet turn Eastern around, but there are substantial doubts that he will be able to do so. And if in the weeks or months ahead Lorenzo and Eastern go "belly up," make no mistake about it: that would be a big victory for the labor movement, starting with the courageous strikers now into their second year on the picket line.

Richard Scully
New York

Bill Onasch Replies

I am not convinced by Richard Scully's arguments that my article in the March issue of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* "takes an unduly narrow and negative position on the strike."

If the Eastern strikers don't get their jobs back this will be a serious defeat not only for them but for the entire labor movement. It will have a chilling effect on union militancy. It will be seized on by every union bureaucrat, as a horrible example, in arguing against future proposals to strike. It will embolden every employer—from the Big Three automakers down to the smallest cockroach capitalist—to take a tougher position with the unions. We saw all this after the PATCO strike. Labor has still not recovered from the effects of that defeat.

As this is written, the future of Eastern is still uncertain. There appears to be renewed interest by the secured creditors in pulling the pin and demanding a liquidation of the carrier. But this has little to do with the IAM's cam-

paign against Lorenzo. Lorenzo probably never intended to make a go of Eastern. He has ripped off Eastern for just about all he can. When he has devoured the last morsel he'll step aside and let the creditors pick over the bones of the carcass.

It will be small consolation if Eastern goes under. Eastern workers may take some satisfaction that if they lost their livelihoods at least they took the bastard Lorenzo and the scabs down with them. (Unfortunately, Lorenzo will not be threatened with poverty. He will still be a rich man and will still have Continental Airlines.) But will the destruction of Eastern inspire other workers to fight? I don't think so.

Few workers are prepared to risk a fight to the death for improvements in wages or benefits. If the alternative to accepting the bosses' demands is the destruction of the company and loss of jobs, in most cases the workers will accept the bosses' demands.

The anti-Lorenzo strategy did not flow from the militant determination of the Eastern workers. It was devised by the union bureaucracy and is part-and-parcel of their class collaborationist outlook. They promote illusions that there are good capitalists—such as Carl Icahn!—and a few rogues like Frank Lorenzo. They seek to punish the rogues by driving them out of business, thereby giving some motivation for the good capitalists to continue to collaborate with the bureaucrats.

The Eastern workers of course are not just up against Lorenzo. As in every major strike they confront a united capitalist class and its state. Without class consciousness strikes today are two-thirds lost from the start.

As Scully notes, sometimes workers are forced into situations where the employer tries to provoke a strike. When this happens to isolated groups the workers involved must decide whether to fight and risk losing everything or try to beat an orderly retreat to survive and fight again another day. These are tough choices. We have seen both responses over the last decade. There have been some proud struggles but precious few victories for the workers.

This pattern is not likely to be broken as long as the bosses pick and choose the fights, taking on targeted unions where the relationship of forces favors the employers. It certainly will not be broken as long as the present union bureaucracy rides in the saddle.

The tragedy of the Eastern strike is that it didn't have to be a war of attrition with Lorenzo's bankrupt company. The unions involved had every legal right to tie up all of the nation's airlines and railroads. The might of all organized labor would have been brought to bear on behalf of the embattled Eastern workers. The relationship of forces would have been reversed.

I agree with Scully that "thousands of rank-and-file members are today waging an important struggle which contains positive elements." The determination of the Eastern strikers, and the active support that they have received from thousands of other trade unionists, manifested in mass rallies and contributions of material support, has been magnificent. Unfortunately, this has been largely squandered by the treacherous and bungling bureaucrats.

Revolutionary socialists have two tasks in regard to the Eastern strike:

- 1) To unconditionally support the strike as long as the workers conduct their struggle.
- 2) We also have to try to help the Eastern strikers, and all the rest of the labor movement following their fight, to draw the lessons of this experience. To do this we must tell it like it is, unpleasant as the reality may be.

Report from Britain

March 26, 1990—The poll tax campaign is heating up. Here in Hackney, when the Borough Council set its rate (499 pounds per capita), 5,000 people turned out to lobby. A few dozen started to run wild and smash shop windows and loot. It turns out that the police(!) are liable to pay for this damage, which it is their job to prevent. A few days later we had a public meeting and the two Hackney MPs were heckled for not refusing to pay the poll tax. (Subsequently Diane Abbott—the first Black woman MP—came out and said she would not pay.) This Saturday there is a national demonstration. I expect it will be huge.

The ambulance dispute has been "settled," rather unsatisfactorily. But now several unions are asking for a 35-hour week.

Eileen Gersh
London

Marxism and Religion

R.L. Huebner's review of *Marxism and Liberation Theology*, by Michael Löwy (*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, February 1990), expresses an ambiguity about religion which is shocking to see in Marxist criticism.

I disagree with Mr. Huebner. I think Marx's meaning is perfectly obvious and beyond dispute when he says "religion is the opium of the people." Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, and other leading Marxists have been just as plainspoken: religion is opium, spiritual booze, fictitious knowledge, myth, superstition, fantasy. Marx said "the criticism of religion is the basis of any other criticism." There are writings on religion by all these people and although not extensive they leave no doubt that there is a distinctive Marxist theory of religion which is at once unequivocally atheist but also recognizes that the problem of religion has colossal significance.

The development of liberation theology in Latin America is not the first time in history, nor is it the only example today, showing that religious movements are a powerful force in politics: the foundations of Christianity, the Reformation, the peasant wars in Germany, the radical sects in the Cromwellian revolution, the worker priests of France, Quakers and Shakers in American history, the civil rights movement and the politics of the Black movement today, the politics of the abortion movement today, religious liberty for Soviet Jews and Ukrainian Catholics, Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East, etc. To repeat, the problem of religion has colossal significance. The Marxist theory of religion is distinctive, not dismissive.

It is necessary for Marxists to study and understand these developments in order to move the class struggle forward; we do not let atheism stand between us and united

actions with priests, nuns, or anyone. In the interests of the working class we are nonsectarian: we march even with the devil.

The humanist and progressive impulses of liberation theologians should not persuade us that religion itself is contradictory, i.e., that it has a good side. The best that religion can offer is consolation for human suffering. At worst it maintains a cynical view of humanity and a passive response to oppression. I suspect that the radical activism of liberation theologians reflects not the positive side of religious belief but the intensity of the class struggle in Latin America today. Suspicions are not good enough for scientific Marxists, but they beat superstitions.

Whatever collaboration Marxists and religious people work out in the necessities of the class struggle, there remains no possible theoretical rapprochement between the two. Science and mysticism are fundamentally at odds. The pope understands that very well. We should not be less clear.

Mary Scully
Boston

R.L. Huebner Replies

In 1843 Marx wrote:

Religious suffering is at the same time an *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people. ("Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction," *Marx Engels Reader*, p. 54)

Whatever else Marx may have meant in the text above, it seems rather obvious to me that he did not mean simply what Mary Scully ascribes to him; namely, that religion is *only* "spiritual booze, fictitious knowledge, myth, superstition, fantasy." While reductionistic, schematic "Marxists" might readily agree with Scully, Marx himself is much more dialectical.

That religions have contradictory impulses and tendencies should be obvious from Scully's letter itself: witness the historical juxtapositions of such diverse religious movements as the Reformation, the radical sects of the peasant war in Germany and the Cromwellian revolution, worker priests in France, civil rights activists, etc., vs. anti-abortion Catholics and Protestant fundamentalists in the U.S.

But I was not reviewing the whole history of religious movements in my brief review of Michael Löwy's booklet. Rather, I was dealing with the concrete phenomenon of Latin American liberation theology. And if Scully would care to limit herself to this concrete historical development, we might be able to advance a *Marxist* understanding of religion in future discussions.

If the development of Latin American liberation theology represents, as Löwy and others have argued, the attempt of the oppressed to assert their initiative and autonomy in the religious sphere and thus empower themselves—symbolically and materially—in their struggle against oppression, then Scully's approach will seem to them to be something of a betrayal. Latin American

sociologist Otto Maduro has taken up this problem, arguing correctly against this kind of error even if crediting as Marxist some people who actually reflect Stalinist, Maoist, or other misrepresentations of Marxism that have long been prevalent in Latin America:

The current, prevailing Marxist critique of religion oftentimes becomes just one more means of oppression, a mechanism through which an elitist perception of the common people is reinforced. This elitist perception implies that the common people *do not know* what is good for themselves *and are unable* to find it by themselves; that only others (in the white urban male intellectual elite) *do know* what is good, and, consequently, that the common people should expect only *from the elite* the solutions to their riddles. Or, to put it in other terms: according to the praxis of Latin American liberation theology, Marxist elitist denial of folk religious creativity contributes to perpetuate the very system of oppression and privileges that Marxism claims to oppose. ("The Desacralization of Marxism within Latin American Liberation Theology," *Social Compass* 35:2-3, pp. 376-377)

As indicated in my review, I'm not convinced that there is a single distinctive Marxist theory of religion. Scully's atheism and anti-clericalism seem to derive as much from the bourgeois enlightenment critique of religion as they do from a Marxist one. Regardless, the task of historical materialists vis-a-vis radical religious movements is to analyze and understand them in their historical and sociological specificity. If "to be radical" means "to grasp things by their roots," then I'm afraid Mary Scully has not been radical enough in her approach to Latin American liberation theology.

Comment by Canadian Readers

We have been regular readers of your publication for the past three years. In recent months, in light of the global crisis of Stalinism, its unique value has become more and more evident, both to ourselves and to many of the activists we work with. It is clear that the left throughout the advanced capitalist countries and everywhere else is facing a period of remarkable change: disorientation, new debates, questioning, and real opportunities to put across the ideas of revolutionary Marxism. At times like this, it is especially unfortunate to see that disorientation on the left extends also to some currents long identified with Trotskyism and the Fourth International.

What impresses us most about your magazine's approach is the way it makes the rich arsenal of past ideas and experience in the revolutionary movement accessible to a new generation of militants. We can think of no other source which has been, for us, so effective and consistent not only defending but also *demystifying* Marxism and its practical application to the politics of class struggle today.

But this is only one aspect of the magazine's purpose and value. We also wish to express our support for the opinions contained in the article by Steve Bloom "Why We Need a Programmatic Discussion" (April 1990),

regarding Barry Sheppard and Socialist Action. It's difficult to understand, especially at a time like this, how any revolutionary activist in North America can brush aside the vital issue of political clarification as the only possible basis for building a future mass revolutionary movement on solid programmatic foundations. Trying to deal with the political divisions on the left by means of instant organizational unity is an attractive shortcut . . . onto a dead-end street.

It's no accident that the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* provides the highest quality analysis of all the revolutionary publications we know, and why its influence extends well beyond the borders of the U.S. Keep up your excellent work!

Asha Jugdutt, Andrew Rodomar
Edmonton, Alberta

Iran (Continued from page 28)

was essentially no revolution at all, but a reactionary movement from the beginning. That flies in the face of the facts. His assertion that, "The *mustazafeen*, organized by the mullahs and the lay missionaries of Islamic fundamentalism and led by the 'supreme guide,' Ayatollah Khomeini, thus formed the spearhead of the Iranian revolution in 1979," is an oversimplification. The spearhead of the revolution in 1979 was the proletariat and the *homafars*, and to the extent that they can be numbered among the "oppressed" (the *mustazafeen* of Islamic tradition), Jaber's statement is valid. However, the implication that the spearhead of the 1979 revolution was the subproletarians who later formed the *hezbollah* is completely false.

A different turn of events was possible. Khomeini's victory was not foreordained, but came about as a result of a struggle, and of a bloody and barbaric repression. This fact alone testifies to the progressive possibilities inherent in the events of 1979 which overthrew the shah, and which had to be overcome by the clergy before they could impose their unrestricted domination over Iranian society.

The massive outpouring of grief at Khomeini's funeral was not entirely, and probably not even primarily, a political statement, but a religious and patriotic one. How many Italians turn out to pay their respects when a pope dies? Thousands do. The Islamic fundamentalists' success in taking control of the revolution and destroying it, as well as their continuing base of support in the slums and villages in some parts of Iran, have causes rooted in Iranian history, as we have attempted to explain. But they are not insurmountable. Recognizing the Iranian left's weakness is necessary. Lamenting over it is useless. What is required now is a strategy for overcoming it.

What Should Be Done Now?

Jaber notes the rift which is widening within the Islamic leadership, between the "pragmatic" (that is, aristocratic) President Hashemi Rafsan-

jani and Hussein Ali Montazeri, whose base of support is in the poor communities. Jaber says, "Montazeri . . . has allied himself with the liberals grouped around Bazargan and become a champion of restoring democratic rights and liberties, thereby gaining further popularity." Without giving political support either to Bazargan or to Montazeri (let alone Rafsanjani) socialists should work with them to help force a democratic opening. They should exploit the divisions within the clergy to the benefit of the working class.

Since the war's end, it can be expected that the Iranian people will demand that their economic sacrifices end as well. Rafsanjani has promised prosperity as a consequence of his "pragmatic" (that is collaborationist) attitude toward the imperialist powers. As the post-Khomeini regime proves unable to deliver prosperity to the working people, the potential will exist for new organization of the workers in the oilfields, refineries, petrochemical plants, and other industries. This is another growing opportunity for the socialist movement.

Above all, socialists must draw the lessons from the defeat in order to prepare for the challenges of the future. Socialists need to organize a revolutionary party, which can combine abstract theory and concrete analysis of the political reality in order to carry out effective action, one which can lead the working class to power and provide a political alternative to the Islamic Republic, or whatever successor government may follow it.

The Fourth International's challenge is first to understand what happened in those exciting events eleven years ago so that it can in the future aid the emerging cadres in the building of a strong Iranian revolutionary party. This discussion is only beginning. As the entire revolutionary socialist movement participates in it, Iranian revolutionists will become better armed to involve themselves in the class struggle today and fight the decisive battles against the class enemy tomorrow. ●

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